



NEWS RELEASE

Dr. Yvonne Brandon, Superintendent
Felicia Cosby, Communications Officer
Public Information Office: 780-7100

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**SUPERINTENDENT CORRECTS *STYLE WEEKLY'S*
INACCURATE REPORTING REGARDING THE DISTRICT'S
DATA SUBMISSION PROCESS**

I am writing in reference to the recently published article by Chris Dovi entitled, "City Schools Submits False Expulsion Data" (October 14, 2009).

The information reported by Mr. Dovi in the article is ironically, incorrect. Mr. Dovi questioned the integrity of the latest revised expulsion numbers Richmond Public Schools (RPS) sent to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). He stated that the VDOE's website reflected numbers different than those RPS reported to *Style Weekly* and to former school board member Carol Wolf. In fact, Richmond Public Schools' expulsion numbers on the VDOE's website are indeed the same numbers as those reported to *Style Weekly*. Mr. Dovi, however, reported the number of offenses for which a student was recommended for expulsion—also noted on the website—as opposed to the actual number of students expelled for the school years in question. A student may be expelled for committing several offenses.

Despite the revised and corrected numbers now appearing in the web version of this story, what remains baffling is why Mr. Dovi would print the inaccurate data even when the VDOE clarified the difference in the data sets within the time frame for accurate reporting.

One of the first priorities I implemented when I became superintendent in January 2009 was a quality audit of the multiple sets of data RPS was required to send to the VDOE beginning March 31, 2009. This data audit revealed that the data entry software used in one of our departments was not interfacing with our Comprehensive Information Management System (CIMS). We immediately rectified inaccurate data previously submitted resulting from transmission errors, and have since put procedures in place to improve data quality controls, such as mandating that all departments use our central CIMS software, requiring data edit checks both after data entry and once data has been submitted to our Information, Communication and Technology Services department, and developing a data report review process for all departments responsible for submitting VDOE required statistics.

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In Richmond, our number one mission is student achievement. In order to realize progress, a student must be *in* school. Expulsion is not a decision that is made lightly and is recommended only after all other recourses have been exhausted in adherence with School Board policy and regulations. Every expulsion recommendation is reviewed and can be overturned by the School Board by way of an appeal hearing. Accordingly, our expulsion numbers may be impacted when we take into consideration a student's right to due process and subsequent results. Responses to requests for reports are taken as a snapshot that is reflective of information at that moment in time.

Granted, accurate student data collection, aggregation and analysis are tasks superintendents across the country and in this state are grappling with, and can represent a cauldron of confusion to a lay person. Data issues such as what to collect, the collection process, how to present data, and how best to interpret data have spurred heated debate as the nation looks at using data to develop key performance indicators to further student achievement. And, while leading schools of thought and best practices are still being developed, one truth has been noted in the infancy of these discussions: our student data cannot be viewed through a prism of the subjective bias if one truly wants to effect lasting, systematic change for the greater good of our students.

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