

Dr. Yvonne W. Brandon Remarks Tuesday, January 27, 2009

I am deeply honored by the Board's appointment of me as the Superintendent of Richmond Public Schools.

Also, I am deeply humbled by not only the Board's confidence and faith in my vision for this wonderful school system, but by that of the parents, students and citizens of Richmond who have sent me words of encouragement since I became Acting Superintendent in August of last year. I thank you.

As a 30-year veteran of Richmond Public Schools, I have seen this district transform from one that was considered the second lowest performing district in the State to one that in just five years time has garnered not just national but international acclaim for its quick gains in academic achievement.

Two weeks ago, we were visited by Dr. Roland Fryer, a renowned professor from Harvard University who is heading up a \$50 million Educational Lab designed to lower the achievement gap in urban education. He came to observe our strategies and techniques to see if they can be replicated.

Tomorrow, we are being visited by a group of educational professionals from as far as the Netherlands who want to see how we have turned our school district around.

I credit our trajectory of success to the hard work of our students...
to the commitment and trust of our parents...
to the generosity of our partners from both the corporate and faith-based communities...
and most importantly to the dedication and indomitable spirit of our teachers, support staff and administration. I thank you.

And while we celebrate our phenomenal progress, we know that we are a district peppered by many challenges.

Today, we are positioned at the brink of greatness...This is not the time for us to sit on our laurels, and it is my goal to move this district forward from one of competence to excellence by...

- Restoring the trust of all of our stakeholders through increased fiscal efficiency and accountability;
- By decreasing our drop-out rate and increasing our graduation rate until 100 percent of RPS students graduate through increased instructional programs and strategies designed to address school readiness and the academic development of each individual student;
- By accelerating academic achievement efforts to ensure that we exceed previous accomplishments at both the state and federal levels;

- And by promoting an environment in all of our schools from the elementary to the high school level that is conducive to learning by working with the entire community to facilitate positive behavioral supports for our students

No, this is not the time to sit on our laurels. There is still a lot that needs to be done. With the continued support of students, parents, teachers, staff, business and community partners and community leaders, I will work diligently to ensure that Richmond Public Schools is the school system of choice not just for those living in Richmond, but for those considering moving into the City...

It is my vision that five years from now...Richmond Public Schools will be at the forefront of a national movement putting the value back into public education...

...that our students graduate not only with the skills that are valuable to the business community, but with the understanding of good citizenship.

...that Richmond Public Schools will be the crown jewel of this great community...the magnet that draws people to this City...

I have spent more than half of my life as a member of the Richmond Public Schools family—and I do mean family. That is why the pledge and promise that I make to the students, parents and staff of Richmond Public Schools are not mere words, but are in fact, inherent beliefs and convictions that I hold dear and will work every day to bring to fruition.