



For Immediate Release

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Vision To Learn and Conexus Celebrate Free Glasses Program in Richmond Public Schools

20,000 Students across RPS Served by Project

Richmond, VA (June 13, 2019) — 20,000 students in Richmond Public Schools (RPS) have benefited from a free program providing vision screenings, vision exams and glasses, celebrated today at an event featuring state and local leaders. The Richmond program, which began in October 2017, helped students in schools across RPS to ensure every student has the glasses they need to see the board, read a book, and participate in class.

An event on June 13th commemorated the entirety of the project, which combined the efforts of the city and school district staff with nonprofit providers Vision To Learn and Conexus. 24 students at Miles Jones Elementary School tried on their new glasses for the first time, an example of the thousands of students helped by the program. In all, over 20,000 students were provided vision screenings, over 3,000 with eye exams and over 2,200 with glasses – free of charge – without ever having to leave school.

“Vision To Learn was proud to work with RPS and Conexus to bring free eye exams and glasses to students throughout Richmond,” said Vision To Learn President Ann Hollister. “By providing students access to vision care who otherwise would go without, we help them succeed in school and in life.”

“This project showed the enormous need for vision services among our Richmond students, and the ability of mobile vision care to reach those kids,” said Conexus Vice President Robin Mead.

Mayor Levar Stoney, who introduced Vision To Learn and Conexus to Richmond Public Schools in 2017, congratulated the program: “Because of this transformative and productive partnership, thousands of kids throughout Richmond are able to see clearly at

school and better understand the world around them. Enabling our students to see better makes them better learners and gives them a clear path to success inside and outside the classroom. For the student, their family, and their schools, the impact is immediate and long lasting.”

Richmond Public Schools staff worked closely with the nonprofit providers to ensure that every student had an opportunity to receive the free services. “It’s critical that we provide our students with the whole child supports that they need to be successful,” said RPS Superintendent Jason Kamras. “Thanks to the partnership with Vision to Learn and Conexus, providing free eye exams and glasses to our students is one way that we’ve been able to do that.”

The initiative is supported with funding by Virginia Health Care Foundation, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Richard S. Reynolds Foundation, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation, Robins Foundation, Community Foundation for a greater Richmond and Rathmann Challenge Grant.

“Vision to Learn is a wonderful model for improving access to vision care for students, statewide,” said Virginia Health Care Foundation Executive Director Deborah D. Oswalt. “We think it is applicable to the entire state.”

Over 100,000 kids in Virginia go to school every day without the glasses they need to see the board, read a book or participate in the classroom. The primary hurdle is a lack of access to vision services for students in low-income communities. To solve this problem, this initiative brings vision services to students at school using mobile clinic vans.

About Vision To Learn

Vision To Learn, a non-profit charity, started with one van in Los Angeles in 2012 and now helps kids in low-income communities in over 320 cities in 13 states. Vision To Learn serves the needs of the hardest-to-reach children; about 90% of kids served by Vision To Learn live in poverty and about 85% are kids of color. Since its inception, Vision To Learn has helped provide vision screenings to over 1,000,000 kids, provided over 220,000 kids with eye exams and over 170,000 with glasses, all free of charge to students and their families. For more information on Vision To Learn, please visit www.visiontolearn.org.

About Conexus

Conexus, a Richmond, VA based nonprofit organization, eliminates poor vision as a barrier to children’s success in school and in life. The Conexus VisioCheck comprehensive vision program is quickly becoming known as the gold standard for identifying children with undetected vision problems, particularly in schools and preschools. Detecting vision problems early is the first step in providing life-changing services to children sitting in classrooms unable to see workbooks and white boards clearly. For more information about Conexus, visit: www.ConexusVision.org