









While the past few years have challenged school divisions in Virginia as perhaps no other time in recent memory, we have seen our school divisions and schools rise to the occasion. We acknowledge and are appreciative of the significant financial support provided to schools from local, state and federal governments. Thus, as we endeavor to set the VASS 2023-24 Legislative Platform, there are several items in terms of actions involving state government that will have a direct impact on K12 education in Virginia. These include:

- New Administration Priorities
- JLARC study on SOQ Funding
- 2023 elections in both the House of Delegates and Senate of Virginia with new electoral districts
- The results and recommendations of the HB 585 study (a study of possible revisions to the SOL assessments)

As a result, VASS believes the following are of critical importance:

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|  <span style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">1</span> <i>Governance and Budget</i> |  <span style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">3</span> <i>Assessments</i>                        |  <span style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">5</span> <i>Student/School Safety</i>                                       |
|  <span style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">2</span> <i>Teacher Shortage</i>    |  <span style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">4</span> <i>Accountability and Accreditation</i> |  <span style="font-size: 1.2em; font-weight: bold;">6</span> <i>Dual Enrollment and the Virginia Community College System</i> |

1) **GOVERNANCE AND BUDGET:** VASS has long maintained the position that the Commonwealth of Virginia should fully fund all state mandates. In addition, VASS maintains that local school boards should have primary authority in the implementation of these mandates and how resources from State Government are utilized at the local level. The July 2023 JLARC report on the SOQ funding formula released in July 2023 confirmed many of the lack of funding issues that VASS has identified for years. VASS will work with the Joint Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Funding to support the following recommendations:

- a. Eliminate cap on support positions, re-instate the non-personal cost categories removed in FY09 and FY10, and re-instate the previous federal fund deduction methodology
- b. Calculate salary and other cost assumptions using the division average, rather than the linear weighted average.
- c. Adjust SOQ formula to include all division central office positions, remove cap on non-personal cost assumptions and account for facilities staff cost.
- d. Change the local composite index to be calculated using a three-year average of the most recently available data, rather than a single year of data every other year.

VASS recommends the following additional funding actions:

- a. Added state funding is needed to allow school divisions to adjust their career and technical education programs to better meet the changing workforce needs within their communities.
- b. In addition to the newly established construction grants, direct lottery and casino profits, in whole or in part, should be used to fund school construction and maintenance as part of basic aid in the State budget.
- c. Funding should be provided to establish a recovery high school program in each of the eight superintendent regions to assist students with substance abuse issues.

- 2) **TEACHER SHORTAGE:** The lack of teachers and need for greater teacher diversity in the classroom have reached a critical stage.
- Provide an 8% teacher salary increase in the next biennium to bring Virginia above the national average.
  - Teacher licensure requirements should immediately be made more flexible on a statewide basis to enhance the teacher pipeline and address the teacher shortage issue. This should include the reinstatement of the one year locally awarded license. While this locally awarded license would be non-transferable, it could be renewed based on the superintendent's recommendation.
  - Teacher salaries should be provided in line with equivalent professionals outside the field of education.
  - Provide state funding to assist local school divisions to attract and retain teachers (such as student loan forgiveness, provide day care and housing assistance)
  - Funding provided for SOQ positions by function, instead of by title/licensure. This is critical for school divisions to hire the staff necessary to address current needs.
- 3) **ASSESSMENT:**
- VASS supports the use of SOL tests as the key tools in the assessment component of school accountability.
  - Cut scores on SOL assessments should not be changed during the current school year.
  - VASS is open to exploring a change in the SOL cut scores that are made using evidenced based guidelines. Any change in cut scores should be accompanied by appropriate supports to assist with students meeting these new requirements.
  - Create an alternate assessment for students receiving special education services who do not receive a modified curriculum but who require additional support to access and demonstrate comprehension of grade level content standards. This assessment would complement, not replace, the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP), which is available to only a limited number of students who receive a modified curriculum due to their significant cognitive disabilities.
  - VASS supports the VASCD position – "Develop stakeholder assessment and data literacy, efficacy, and engagement. Create a comprehensive accountability system that uses multiple measures of the most essential student learning outcomes. Reduce the number of required proficiency tests to an appropriate level."
  - All students should have access to expedited retakes in consultation with parents, students, and schools.
- 4) **ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACCREDITATION:** VASS supports the State Board's efforts to separate school accountability and accreditation. In doing so, VASS feels that the following are important:
- VASS asks that the State Board re-evaluate the use of chronic absenteeism as an accreditation indicator and either remove it or amend the definition so that all absences are not counted the same.
  - If NAEP scores are used for accountability purposes, the Virginia Department of Education must ensure that State standards are aligned with the NAEP standards. This would enable an apples-to-apples comparison with other states.
  - In addressing issues with the current accreditation/accountability system, VASS believes the following are important:
    - Create a growth focus
    - Simplify the measures, system and communications
    - A reduction on duplicative tests
    - Focus on building leaders and citizens
- 5) **STUDENT/SCHOOL SAFETY:**
- VASS supports full state funding to provide added school safety measures based on the needs of the individual school.
  - Provide increased support for mental health services in schools.
- 6) **DUAL ENROLLMENT AND THE VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM:** Dual enrollment has become an integral and critical part of education at the secondary level.
- School divisions need greater flexibility in assigning staff to teach dual enrollment courses at the local high school.
  - Dedicated funding from the state to the community college system is needed to allow those colleges to provide dual enrollment at no cost to the student or school division.