



Virginia Association of School Superintendents

Educational Services Review Program

OVERVIEW

An Educational Services Review (ESR) is one of several professional services offered by the Virginia Association of School Superintendents for both new and incumbent superintendents, particularly those who are considering new programs or modifications in their division's educational programming.

There are two major objectives of a Review. One is to identify key strengths of a school division's governance, administrative, instructional, business, and operations functions. A second objective is to identify areas for improvement within any of these areas and give specific recommendations for improvement. The Association's most popular Review is the specific program review.

Superintendents request Reviews by contacting the VASS Executive Director, the VASS ESR Project Coordinator, or a VASS ESR Consultant.

BENEFITS

A VASS Educational Services Review provides the following benefits to participating school divisions:

- An independent analysis and objective point of view regarding division programs and operations;
- New ideas for delivering instructional programs, carrying out day-to-day operations, improving communications and planning;
- An opportunity for division personnel to give their perceptions of division strengths and areas for improvement;
- A springboard for setting priorities on specific areas for improvement;
- An assessment of 'improvement focus' – how well the division/school assesses needs, people, and program effectiveness;
- An evaluation of adequacy of internal fiscal controls;
- Initiative to continue self-evaluation, modification of division goals and objectives for improvement of all educational programs.

SCOPE

Superintendents may contract with VASS for a comprehensive Review of all division services, a specific area Review or Study (for example a study of financial services or special education services), or a compensation plan study. A comprehensive Review covers the following areas:

Administration

- Governance
- Communications/Public Relations
- Human Resources/Staff Development
- Planning and Evaluation

Curriculum and Instruction

- Regular Instructional Programs
- Special Education
- Other Instructional Programs (e.g. Vocational)
- Student Services (e.g. Guidance and Counseling)

Business and Operations

- Accounting and Payroll
- Budgeting
- Cash Management
- Data Processing
- Purchasing
- Auditing
- Risk Management/Safety
- Maintenance/Facilities Management
- Food Service
- Transportation

REVIEW PROCESS

Reviews are led by Team Leaders who are active or retired Virginia superintendents. VASS also uses experienced central office and school-level specialists on peer teams. These individuals are selected to match the needs of the school division requesting the Review. VASS teams use multiple data-gathering methods -- confidential personal interviews, surveys, focus groups, school division documents and reports -- to obtain information and to produce a formal, written report for the superintendent.

VASS requires a meeting of the team leader and team consultant with superintendents inviting projects prior to initiating a contract for services, selecting team members, or completing on-site visits. Once a contract is approved, the school division inviting the Review appoints an on-site coordinator to work with VASS to organize the Review process. Teams are generally on site for 2-3 days to gather information. Teams range from 4 to 8 members. Review reports are usually completed within 6-8 weeks from the time of the site visit.

FINAL REPORT

The written report produced at the completion of a Review includes:

- An objective overview of the key strengths and areas for improvement of the division's [or specific] programs;
- Identification of areas where organizational or fiscal effectiveness may be improved with specific observations of current practices and recommendations for new practices;
- An assessment of how well central administration [individual school administration] is supporting programs reviewed;
- An analysis of the division's use of 'best practices' as they would be most effective in that division;
- A chart of recommendations from which the superintendent, board, and staff may set priorities for improvement action.

CONTRACT AND COSTS

All Reviews are conducted under contract between VASS and a school division. The engagement contract and costs are negotiated with VASS staff. A negotiated contract represents professional costs, including team leader and consultant fees, coordinating activities, and cost of copying, assembling, and presenting the final report according to the requirements of the school division. In addition to a contract fee, the division inviting a Review pays costs of team travel, lodging, and meals.

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AVAILABLE

A school division may contract with VASS for limited problem-solving services such as on-site technical assistance and consultation services on issues that may not require a full team review.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES MISSION

The Virginia Association of School Superintendents is a non-profit professional organization dedicated to the mission of providing leadership and advocacy for public education throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. VASS has fulfilled this mission since 1885, and the Association continues to be a prominent leader on education issues as it serves the superintendents of all 135 Virginia school divisions, other key education decision-makers, and business affiliates.