

VIRGINIA PUBLIC EDUCATION COALITION



Virginia Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals
Virginia Association of School Superintendents
Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals
Virginia Congress of Parents and Teachers

Virginia Counselors Association
Virginia Education Association
Virginia Middle School Association
Virginia Professors of Educational Leadership
Virginia School Boards Association
Virginia School Counselor Association
Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

July 10, 2019

President Dan Gecker
Virginia Board of Education
James Monroe Building
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear President Gecker:

The Virginia Public Education Coalition, represented by the twelve education associations noted in the letterhead, recommend the specific language amendments below regarding the proposed Standards of Quality pertaining to teacher leaders and teacher mentors. Please note the qualifying statements at the end of the document.

Thank you for all you do and the work that the State Board has undertaken to improve the Standards of Quality. Do not hesitate to let me know if you have questions.

Teacher Leader and Teacher Mentor Programs

Establish a new Teacher Leader program, and expand the existing Teacher Mentor program, whereby additional compensation and additional time is provided during the instructional day for locally-designated staff to serve in leadership and mentorship program roles.

Proposed Language

§ 22.1-253.13:2. Standard 2. Instructional, administrative, and support personnel.

D. School boards shall provide teacher leadership, and mentorship programs, as provided in § 22.1-253.15:5(H). Teacher leaders support all teachers through peer-level leadership, observation, consultation, and coordination of mentorship programs and professional development. Teacher mentors (i) assist new teachers with a successful transition into the teaching profession and (ii) ensure adequate supports are in place for new teachers. To support these programs and roles, school boards shall provide full-time equivalent positions based upon the following ratios:

1. One position for every 24 first-second-**and third** year teachers, or fraction thereof; and
2. One position for every 100 teachers, **or fraction thereof**, with ~~three~~ **four** or more years of experience.

3. One position for every qualifying school in each school district.

School boards are encouraged to deploy these positions on a fractional basis shared among current teachers to provide current teachers opportunities to serve as leaders and mentors while remaining in active teaching roles. School boards shall not utilize these positions to fill teaching positions, or to serve school administrator functions, such as coordination of student discipline or testing.

Instructional staff filling these full-time equivalent positions shall be provided a compensation adjustment of at least 20 percent of the state-recognized statewide prevailing salary, on a pro-rata basis if the position is shared among several staff, as provided in the Appropriation Act.

For the purpose of this subsection:

(i) "qualifying school" means a school where at least [75/70/65/60] percent of the students are identified as economically disadvantaged.

§ 22.1-253.13:5. Standard 5. Quality of classroom instruction and educational leadership.

H. The Board of Education shall establish, and school boards shall provide, teacher leadership and mentorship programs utilizing specially trained public school teachers. The Board shall issue guidelines for teacher leadership and mentorship programs and shall set criteria for beginning and experienced teacher participation, including self-referral, and the qualifications and training of teacher leaders and teacher mentors. Such guidelines shall provide that the programs be administered by local school boards, with the assistance of an advisory committee made up of teachers, principals, and supervisors.

§ 22.1-303. Probationary terms of service for teachers.

A. A probationary term of service of at least three years and, at the option of the local school board, up to five years in the same school division shall be required before a teacher is issued a continuing contract. ~~School boards shall provide each probationary teacher except probationary teachers who have prior successful teaching experience, as determined by the local school board in a school division, a mentor teacher, as described by Board guidelines developed pursuant to § 22.1-305.1, during the first year of the probationary period, to assist such probationary teacher in achieving excellence in instruction.~~ During the probationary period, such probationary teacher shall be evaluated annually based upon the evaluation procedures developed by the employing school board for use by the division superintendent and principals in evaluating teachers as required by subsection C of § 22.1-295. A teacher in his first year of the probationary period shall be evaluated informally at least once during the first semester of the school year. The division superintendent shall consider such evaluations, among other things, in making any recommendations to the school board regarding the nonrenewal of such probationary teacher's contract as provided in § 22.1-305.

~~§ 22.1-305.1. Mentor teacher programs.~~

~~A. The Board of Education shall establish, from such funds as may be appropriated by the General Assembly, mentor teacher programs utilizing specially trained public school teachers as mentors to provide assistance and professional support to teachers entering the profession and to improve the performance of experienced teachers who are not performing at an acceptable level.~~

The Board shall issue guidelines for such mentor teacher programs and shall set criteria for beginning and experienced teacher participation, including self-referral, and the qualifications and training of mentor teachers. Such guidelines shall provide that the mentor programs be administered by local school boards, with the assistance of an advisory committee made up of teachers, principals, and supervisors, and that mentors (i) be classroom teachers who have achieved continuing contract status and who work in the same building as the teachers they are assisting or be instructional personnel who are assigned solely as mentors; (ii) be assigned a limited number of teachers at one time; however, instructional personnel who are not assigned solely as mentors should not be assigned to more than four teachers at one time; and (iii) guide teachers in the program through demonstrations, observations, and consultations to promote instructional excellence. Local school boards shall strive to provide adequate release time for mentor teachers during the contract day.

B. The local school board shall serve as fiscal agent for the participating school boards in matters concerning the mentor teacher programs. The Department of Education shall allocate, from such funds as are appropriated, moneys to participating school divisions for the purpose of supporting such programs which shall include, but not be limited to, compensation for mentor teachers.

We support the establishment of staffing standards to mentor new teachers and to support all teachers.

Our recommendations are:

1. Include third year teachers in the count for staffing ratios of new teachers.
2. Change three years of experience to four to differentiate from our proposal on the language in number 1. We also recommend adding language "a fraction thereof" to ensure that school divisions with fewer than 100 four year and high experience teachers are able to receive state support for staffing to support their newer teachers.
3. Add number 3 to target specific staffing to high poverty schools and teachers who teach there. We recommend keeping the definition of a "qualifying school" as it originally existed in the Targeted Compensation Proposal.

We believe that by adding these positions for support of new teachers, more experienced teachers, and targeted support for high poverty schools, the Board of Education's goal of addressing both teacher retention and disparities of staffing at high need schools can be addressed.

Sincerely,



Howard B. Kiser
VASS Executive Director
Co-Chair of the Virginia Public Education Coalition