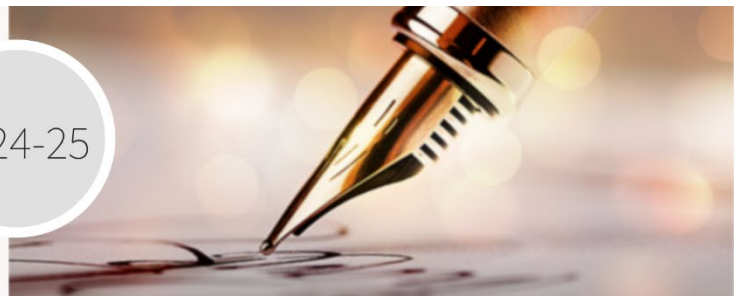




2024-25

Legislative Advocacy



2024 will be a significant year in the history of K12 public education in Virginia. The Virginia Board of Education is establishing a new accountability system and the Virginia General Assembly is scheduled to address some of the long-term recommendations of the JLARC report on public school funding. We acknowledge and are appreciative of the significant financial support provided to schools from local, state and federal governments. Thus, we are endeavoring to set the VASS 2024-25 Legislative Priorities, to address these and other important issues involving K12 education in the Commonwealth.

1 *Governance and Budget*

3 *Assessments*

5 *Student/School Safety*

2 *Teacher Shortage*

4 *Accountability and Accreditation*

6 *Dual Enrollment and the Virginia Community College System*

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 confirmed many of the lack of funding issues that VASS has identified for years. While the General Assembly began to address some of these recommendations during the 2024 Session, much work is still needed. 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. VASS thanks the General Assembly for the establishment of expanded school construction grants. In addition to these grants, we feel that 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. VASS wants to thank the General Assembly for funding recovery high schools in Regions 1,2 and 4. We ask that funding be extended to the remaining 5 of the 8 superintendent regions to assist students with substance abuse issues.
- d. State funds should be provided to cover the full costs of any required training of school staff.

2. **TEACHER SHORTAGE:** The lack of teachers and need for greater teacher diversity in the classroom have reached a critical stage.
 - a. Teacher salaries should be above the national average.
 - b. Continued work is needed to make teacher licensure requirements immediately more flexible on a statewide basis to enhance the teacher pipeline and address the teacher shortage issue. We thank the General Assembly for the initial work on the locally awarded license but ask that this license be made renewable based upon the superintendent's recommendation. In addition to address continuing shortages in such areas as school counselor and mathematics, consideration should be made to giving added flexibility to make it easier for teachers to add these and other endorsements.
 - c. Teacher salaries should be provided in line with equivalent professionals outside the field of education.
 - d. Provide state funding to assist local school divisions to attract and retain teachers (such as student loan forgiveness, provide day care and housing assistance)
 - e. 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:**
 - a. VASS supports the use of SOL tests as the key tools in the mastery and growth components of the accountability system.
 - b. Cut scores on SOL assessments should not be changed during the current school year.
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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.”
 - e. The option for local growth assessments should be extended
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:
 - a. VASS asks that the State Board re-evaluate and amend the definition of chronic absenteeism so that all absences are not counted the same.
 - b. In addressing issues with the Virginia Performance and Support Framework. VASS believes the following are important:
 - i. Reweight Mastery Index of Performance - VASS asks that you reweight the mastery index to make below basic weight at least .50.
 - ii. Parent Refusal should NOT count as “0” in the mastery index of performance
 - iii. Readiness Indicators that are performance tasks for elementary and middle school need further development and review with educational stakeholders before implementation in 25-26
 - iv. Keep the GCI as our Graduation Indicator.
 - v. Keep EL semester guidance at 11 semesters not 3 semesters for SOL tests
 - vi. Replace the proposed “Off Track” summative category with “Needs Support.”
 - vii. Provide funding to VDOE's Office of School Quality that allows them to offer a plan of systematic supports for schools who receive a designation as “Off Track” or “Needs Intensive Support.”
5. **STUDENT/SCHOOL SAFETY:**
 - a. VASS supports full state funding and greater flexibility in providing added school safety measures based on the needs of the individual school.
 - b. Provide increased support for mental health services in schools.
 - c. Require that Internet Companies doing business in Virginia be responsive to law enforcement investigations of threats against schools made by electronic means to reduce trauma, fear, and lost instructional time due to school closings.
6. **DUAL ENROLLMENT AND THE VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM:** Dual enrollment has become an integral and critical part of education at the secondary level.
 - a. School divisions need greater flexibility in assigning staff to teach dual enrollment courses at the local high school.
 - b. Given that the General Assembly has established the College and Career Ready Virginia Program (HB1087/SB 627) to provide dual enrollment at no cost to students, 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 divisions.