

# Virginia Beach City Public Schools 2018 Legislative Agenda

## Budget

Due to the budget constraints facing the Governor and the General Assembly during the 2018 session, Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) requests that the recent investments in education remain untouched. As our mission as a school division continues, we must be in the best position to meet the needs of our 68,000 students and 10,000 employees. According to a JLARC study released on September 14, 2016, spending on K-12 public education since 2005 had declined by 7% per pupil. After adjusting for inflation and increased enrollment, Virginia now spends 9% less on K-12 instruction than it did in 2005. According to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), Inflation Adjusted State Per Pupil Funding declined from \$4,275 in 2009 to \$3,647 in 2016 or by \$628 per pupil. Costs for educating students have not declined during the same period.

## Re-benchmarking

In the summer of each odd-numbered year, the VDOE provides the Governor and the General Assembly with an estimate of the “re-benchmarked” cost of continuing the existing Direct Aid to Public Education programs for the next biennium. This re-benchmarking is part of the biennial budget development process and includes updates in the input data to determine the current cost of the programs. The cost projections should not reflect any changes in policy or technical methodology.



Since re-benchmarking is a process to update the state funding formulas to reflect the current costs facing Local Education Agencies (LEA) – such as increases in fuel costs, health care costs, teacher salaries, etc. – failure to fully fund re-benchmarking would signify a decrease in the state’s commitment to funding K-12 education. VBCPS supports full funding of the biennial re-benchmarking of the Standards of Quality funding formulas. VBCPS opposes any formula changes to the re-benchmarking methodology that would artificially decrease the actual costs to fund K-12 education.

## Uncap Instructional Support Positions in the Standards of Quality (SOQs)

VBCPS supports additional enhancements to the SOQs that better reflect the staffing and financial needs of school divisions. For example, VBCPS supports funding student support positions, as well as instructional personnel support positions (*e.g. social workers, school counselors, school psychologists, and instructional personnel support*) under Standard 2 on a prevailing cost basis, rather than the current capped basis. Enhancements such as these will provide additional funding directly to the classroom and give teachers additional resources to support students.

## Eliminate or Fund Currently Unfunded Mandates

As of September 2017, the total impact of state and federal unfunded mandates to VBCPS was \$44 million. Of that \$44 million, approximately \$16 million are mandates that originated from either the General Assembly or the Virginia Department of Education. These mandates range from new reporting requirements, to new policies and procedures, to unfunded equipment requirements. VBCPS is opposed to any state mandates requiring local school divisions to assume additional responsibilities or provide additional services without the state’s share of funding such mandates. VBCPS supports the elimination of unfunded mandates or the full funding of all mandates.



### **Special Education Funding**

VBCPS has more than 7,900 students who qualify for special education services. In Fiscal Year 2016 VBCPS spent more than \$106.1 million, or approximately \$13,400 per qualified student, on special education programs and services. That is the highest amount since 2011. Of this total expense, approximately 15% comes from the Federal government (of the 40% IDEA has called for since 1965), 20% from the state and 65% from local funding. VBCPS is opposed to any change in the delivery of special education services or special education funding that would shift an even larger portion of the funding responsibility to the locality. This includes any changes to regional special education programming that would either reduce the overall state allotment or reduce the funding to an individual regional program. Any reductions in state funding would not reduce VBCPS's obligations under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and would unfairly increase an already disproportionate responsibility to the locality. VBCPS supports efforts by the Virginia General Assembly to work with our federal delegation to encourage the U.S. Department of Education and Congress to fully fund their portion of special education services in Virginia.

### **Lottery Fund Usage**

While VBCPS supports the additional flexibility provided through recent investments in lottery proceeds, VBCPS is opposed to any measure that would shift the Standards of Quality or other recurring costs to the Lottery Funds. Shifting additional mandatory operating costs to the Lottery Fund reduces the amount of money available to school divisions for school construction and other necessary discretionary spending. The Lottery funds should be used exclusively to supplement current public education funding and not be used to supplant ongoing SOQ funded programs.

### **Dual Enrollment**

High quality dual enrollment programs are an important part of preparing students for the workforce and will allow students to earn college credit or even an associate degree while still in high school. VBCPS supports legislation and/or regulatory reforms that allow school divisions and local community colleges to negotiate individual rates for public school students who, through their local school division, take dual enrollment courses through the local community college.

VBCPS also supports the establishment of clear transfer maps for each public, four-year institution for dual enrollment courses. These transfer maps should be established in conjunction with recommended guidelines by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). These steps will ensure that dual enrollment programs are accessible for all students, as well as provide a stepping stone to post-secondary education and programs for all students.

## Continued Reform of the Assessment System

VBCPS supports legislation responsive to recommendations by the SOL Innovation Committee that reforms Virginia's SOL assessments by focusing on authentic growth measures to allow students to demonstrate 21st century skills such as communicating effectively, thinking critically and creatively, and solving problems. VBCPS also supports the reduction of the number of required tests to allow school divisions to continue to transform the traditional classroom to better meet the needs of our students to compete in a global marketplace. Rather than the 29 SOL tests currently mandated, VBCPS supports legislation that allows school divisions to replace current SOL assessments with performance-based assessments that will better prepare students for success in higher education and in the workplace. Since 2008, VBCPS has successfully developed an increasing number of performance-based assessments that are used on a division-wide basis.



In addition to student growth measures, VBCPS supports a teacher, principal, and superintendent accountability system that includes additional measures such as student participation and performance in Advanced Placement courses, post-graduate measures that provide information on how students transition after high school, and qualitative measures of overall school performance beyond assessments.

## Flexibility for Addressing Teacher Shortages

The number one school-based predictor of student success is access to highly effective teachers. Virginia is facing a national teacher shortage, partly because we are seeing fewer students enrolling in education majors, and therefore fewer teachers coming out of college. Also, those considering entering the profession are faced with salary and benefit packages that have remained stagnant for the better part of a decade. Sadly, due to increases in VRS contributions and healthcare costs, teachers are making less today after adjustments for inflation than they did five years ago. Funding for increased teacher compensation must be a top priority for Virginia to continue to attract high quality individuals to the teaching profession.

The continued expansion of the requirements for teacher licensure and recertification are another challenge for teacher recruitment and retention with a growing number of new licensure requirements including, most recently, hands-on, emergency first aid training. Also of concern is an antiquated, licensing process for initial licensure and renewal which creates unnecessary challenges for new and returning teachers alike. VBCPS supports a moratorium on any new requirements for teacher licensure and recertification as well as streamlining the licensing process by allowing for more electronic submission of documentation.

## Mandatory Funding of Virtual School

VBCPS recognizes that virtual learning can play an important part in a child's overall academic development and achievement. However, VBCPS is opposed to any legislation that would require any portion of state or local funding to follow the student when the student chooses to enroll in a virtual school outside his or her school division. VBCPS supports online blended models that incorporate the individual needs of the student, as well as a full-time state operated virtual program through Virtual Virginia.

## Charter Schools

VBCPS fully supports creating learning environments that meet the individual needs of the community and the students it serves, including academies, innovative programs, Governor's Schools and charter schools; however, for these alternative models to be successful they must have the support of the local community and school division. For this reason, VBCPS is opposed to any legislation that would remove the local school board's authority to approve charter schools within its boundaries, including any change to the Virginia Constitution or legislation that would give the Virginia Board of Education the authority to create regional charter schools.

## Participation in Interscholastic Athletic Programs by Nonpublic School Students

VBCPS opposes legislation that allows nonpublic school students to participate in interscholastic programs in public schools. A fundamental principle of the Virginia High School League (VHSL) rules is to provide a level playing field for competition such that all participants are following the same standards of eligibility. Previously proposed legislation in the General Assembly runs counter to this principle, whereby nonpublic school students would have to abide by only one portion of the Transfer Rule (i.e., living in the proper school district) and demonstrate evidence of progress academically. However, discipline and consequences for violating behavioral expectations and attendance requirements, as set forth in the VHSL Handbook and Policy Manual, could not be applied to nonpublic school students to the same extent as with students enrolled in the public schools. Further, the potential for academic eligibility disparities is significant, since local academic requirements, including a minimum grade point average and/or mandatory study halls, could not be applied to nonpublic school students.

## Student Safety

We believe in positive behavioral supports to help students learn self-discipline while still holding them accountable for their actions and keeping our schools safe. VBCPS opposes limiting options to safely manage schools including the ability to suspend students whose behaviors warrant such action. While we work to keep our students with us more, by reducing out-of-school suspensions, we also need to help students build resiliency and coping skills through alternative disciplinary practices. VBCPS supports legislation that promotes alternatives to suspension and funding at the elementary level for additional instructional personnel support specialists (*e.g. social workers, school counselors, and school psychologists*) to support these alternatives. This work is complex and takes time, patience and flexibility.

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To seek resolution of grievances resulting from alleged discrimination or to report violations of these policies, please contact the Title VI/Title IX Coordinator/Director of Student Leadership at (757) 263-2020, 1413 Laskin Road, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23451 (for student complaints) or the Section 504/ADA Coordinator/Chief Human Resources Officer at (757) 263-1133, 2512 George Mason Drive, Municipal Center, Building 6, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23456 (for employees or other citizens). Concerns about the application of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act should be addressed to the Section 504 Coordinator/Executive Director of Student Support Services at (757) 263-1980, 2512 George Mason Drive, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23456 or the Section 504 Coordinator at the student's school. For students who are eligible or suspected of being eligible for special education or related services under IDEA, please contact the Office of Programs for Exceptional Children at (757) 263-2400, Laskin Road Annex, 1413 Laskin Road, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 23451.

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