



The School Board of the City of Norfolk

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Norfolk Public Schools 2017 Legislative Agenda

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Adopted October 19, 2016

The School Board of the City of Norfolk adopts the following action items as its priorities for the 2017 session of the General Assembly.

- The Virginia Pre-School Initiative (VPI) funding distribution formula should be revised to give greater priority to schools in challenging environments.

VPI funds are currently distributed using a formula that includes the percentage of projected fall kindergarten membership that is eligible percentage for free lunch (which is weighted at 40%) and the Local Composite Index (which is capped at 0.5000). Free lunch is used as a proxy for determining whether a student is at-risk. Increasing the weight assigned to this factor will ensure those areas with the greatest number of at-risk children receive adequate funding.

- Provide additional flexibility to meet the unique needs of at-risk children in the community by increasing the percentage of a division's VPI slots (currently 15%) that may be filled based on locally established eligibility criteria.

Rigid formulas developed in Richmond do not recognize the unique needs of individual schools and their students. Local school divisions are closer to the community and far better able to identify the types of children who need the services available through the VPI. Examples of local criteria that would support greater enrollment include: active military who would otherwise not qualify due to income; single parents regardless of income or factors such as other adults living in the home resulting in an overall household income that places them outside of eligibility requirements; children raised by guardian other than their immediate family; and English language learners.

- Provide all lottery funds directly to school divisions rather than using them to supplant state general funds for the state share of public education costs and give local school boards greater autonomy in determining the best uses of lottery funds.

From 1999-2004, 40 percent of the lottery proceeds were paid directly to school divisions for use as either capital or operating support, however fifty percent of this amount was required to be used for capital expenditures. This period also saw an increasing portion of the remaining lottery proceeds being used to supplant state general funds for Basic Education funding. During the 2004-2006 biennium, lottery proceeds began to also be used to supplant general funds for incentive and categorical funding for K-12 while the during the Great Recession all lottery proceeds were provided as operating support for the state's share of K-12 education funding at the state level and direct payment to school divisions were eliminated. In the 2016-2018 biennium, changes were made to restore the 40% of lottery proceeds paid directly to school divisions for use as either capital or operating support, however fifty percent of this amount is required must be used for capital expenditures.

- The Commonwealth should fund its share of pay increases for all SOQ required positions rather than just SOQ instructional positions.

The Commonwealth currently only funds salary increases for its share of SOQ instructional positions; it does not fund its share of salary increases for either non-instructional SOQ positions or positions that exceed the minimum SOQ requirement. This practice results in local matching costs for salary increases far exceeding the amounts provided by the state.

- Target additional funding for Career and Technical Education, career readiness and workforce readiness to projects that expand or build upon regional needs and successful programs already in place.

The need for additional CTE programs is well documented. Increased funding should be directed to incentivize regional efforts and to build upon those existing programs with a proven record of success.

- Increase funding for VPI, K-3 reduced class size and the early reading intervention programs.

A 20 percent boost per concentrated levels of free lunch students would go far in improving the level of services necessary to meet state SOL, SOA, and graduation requirements for at-risk students.

- Provide a state childcare tax credit for teachers who teach in schools in challenging environments.

Attracting and retaining quality teachers to work in our most challenging schools is an on-going struggle. This is one item that should be in a basket of incentives that we think may help in that effort.

- The Local Composite Index of Ability to Pay (LCI) should be reviewed to identify the demands on local revenue for serving a high percentage of at-risk children.

The LCI formula is heavily weighted towards real property values, adjusted gross income and taxable sales. A few outliers can easily skew these factors resulting in a representation of greater wealth than actually exists. The formula also does not include elements that recognize the demands on local revenue for serving a high percentage of at-risk children. The LCI should consider the additional demands on a division's available local resources required to serve a large at-risk student population. Norfolk's main resource is real property tax revenue. The limits on Norfolk's real estate tax base greatly reduce the City's ability to provide funding – additional state funding is critical.

- The General Assembly should provide funding for mixed-income pre-K classes with a focus on schools in difficult environments.

The Virginia School Boards Association reported in 2014 that emphasis on funding and educational efforts in schools located in challenging environments is critical to the educational health of Virginia's population. See report at: http://bit.ly/VSBA_Challenging_Environment. The report demonstrates that pre-K increased funding will lead to better students of the future and a workforce that is more capable. More immediately, the costs of educating those students will be reduced when they are more able to learn through their education.

- The Commonwealth must incentivize school divisions to create, enhance and support socio-economically diverse schools and learning environments, and reward those divisions that do so.

When student bodies are economically diverse, the future adult citizens who are students learn to participate in the full world that is Virginia's environment today. It is very healthy for students from

all backgrounds to mix with their peers from different backgrounds. The Commonwealth should work to encourage such mixing and should reward school divisions that create such schools.

- The Commonwealth should encourage the development of gifted students through additional funding for gifted programs.

Virginia's department of education requires school divisions to identify and provide instructional services to meet the needs of gifted students, from kindergarten through 12th grade. The Commonwealth should fully participate in this important work by funding the extra efforts needed to meet those students' needs.

The School Board of the City of Norfolk adopts the following policy positions for the 2017 session of the General Assembly.

Oppose:

- Any reduction in local school board autonomy and all unfunded and underfunded state mandates and programs. The Commonwealth must provide funding for the programs that it requires local school divisions to operate – if the Commonwealth considers a program important enough to mandate it, it should also consider it important enough to pay the costs.
- Non-Public School Students Participating in Virginia High School League Activities unless those students are held to the same standards as students enrolled in our public schools.
- Changes in Charter School Authority that would bypass local school boards and authorize the Virginia Board of Education to establish charter schools without the concurrence of local school boards.
- Changes in Virtual School Approval Authority that would allow virtual schools to be established or operate outside the jurisdiction of the State Board of Education, local divisions, and local school boards. This would disrupt the established constitutional framework and the roles these entities play in ensuring the appropriate governance of schools, regulatory compliance, and positive student outcomes.

Support:

- Additional Support for Schools in Challenging Environments
 - Specialized training and professional development;
 - SOQ flexibility to match resources with needs and demands;
 - Expansion of broadband and technology infrastructure to close the technology resource gap between students in poverty and other students;
 - Incentives for high-quality, highly effective teachers in schools for hard to staff positions across the division and for schools in various levels of accreditation, including student-loan forgiveness, bonuses, stipends, housing incentives, or tuition assistance to extend certifications in critical needs areas;

- Funding for extended school year and extended school day;
- Funding for the proposed Virginia Teacher Incentive Improvement Fund;
- Sustained funding for the Teacher in Residency (TIR) Program (ODU administered for NPS) for 15 teachers;
- Sustainable funding for pre-k early learning.
- Flexibility in Staffing Requirements
 - The staffing formulas in the Standards of Quality are often rigid and not reflective of differences in local needs. Increased flexibility in meeting the staffing requirements of the SOQ would allow NPS to move staff from one SOQ category to another based on individual school and student needs.
- Flexibility in Meeting Student Learning Needs
 - Increased local control of the school calendar, including extended day, extended year and year round school options without having to request a waiver;
 - Establishment of a balanced assessment and accountability system, as defined by local school boards, that utilizes a more complete picture of student learning by providing both measures of achievement (such as the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests) and state-approved, authentic measures of individualized student growth over time;
 - Reduction in the number of SOL tests to carefully selected grade-levels and content-areas to permit the reallocation of assessment dollars and instructional time;
 - Local control of SOL testing windows including flexibility to provide opportunities for early SOL test administration.