

2016-2017 VASS Legislative Positions

Public Education in the Commonwealth of Virginia is undergoing a significant time of change and renewal. Schools and communities are being asked to reconsider such questions as what should be included in the the school curriculum, how student progress should be measured, and what it means to be a Virginia High School Graduate. Changes in school accountability and accreditation will naturally follow these revisions. Recognizing that VASS supports the direction on these changes, the issues become how will these changes be accomplished and will the resources be provided to allow school divisions to make these revisions.

As a result, VASS has identified the following as critical:

Budget:

- **VASS supports the full funding of all mandates passed by the General Assembly. The partial funding or absence of funding for these mandates results in an added burden on local schools.**
- **VASS recognizes that the Support Position Cap has eliminated hundreds of millions of dollars in state funding and reduced the ability of local school divisions to meet the changing needs of their students and requirements from the State. VASS supports the State Boards request that SOQ Support Position Cap be removed.**
 - *Because support services positions are essential to the effective operation of schools, and provide vital support to instructional staff, the General Assembly should return to its prior practice of funding support services to school divisions based upon actual local school division practices.*
- **While VASS appreciates and overall supports the SOQ staffing changes recommended by the State Board, these changes must be accompanied by appropriate state funding in addition to staffing flexibility if qualified applicants cannot be found to fill these added positions. Until these conditions are met and the Support Position Cap removed, VASS opposes the State Board's recommendation that the Class Size and Staffing Waivers contained in the Appropriations Act be eliminated.**
- **VASS requests that the Virginia Department of Education provide a cost estimate to local school divisions of any changes made to the Standards of Accreditation prior to their approval.**
 - *§ 22.1-17. Statements concerning regulations. Not less than sixty days prior to the adoption of any regulation affecting school divisions, the Board of Education and the Department of Education shall prepare a statement as to the administrative impact of such regulation on school divisions and the projected costs of implementation of and compliance with such regulation and shall send a copy thereof to each division superintendent.*

- **VASS supports the General Assembly returning to the 2019-2020 biennium for full funding of the VRS Board of Trustee recommended rate.**

Assessments and Accountability:

- **VASS supports the work of the State Board of Education in identifying and implementing a revised balanced assessment and accountability model. This model must address issues of equity between both individual schools and school divisions based upon individual community needs and diversity of student populations.**
- **There is a need to provide School Divisions with flexibility in the time, cost and staffing it takes to come into compliance with parts of the new model being recommended by the State Board of Education. (i.e. - graduation and staffing requirements).**
- **The 2016 General Assembly enacted the following requirement:**
 - . The Board of Education shall consider assessments aligned to the Standards of Learning that are structured and formatted in a way that measures the content knowledge of students who are English language learners and that may be administered to such students as Board of Education-approved alternatives to Standards of Learning end-of-course English reading assessments.*

VASS supports the Virginia Department of Education moving forward with the development of an appropriate alternative for English language learners to be used as part of the school accreditation process.

- **VASS opposes any acceleration of the timeline to remove the VGLA for use with English language learners in determining school accreditation that is in advance of the date required provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act.**