

Statewide Responses to Virginia's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Challenge

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School Staff Shortages in Virginia

- Statewide and national trend exacerbated dramatically by the pandemic. Shortages impacted both teachers and many other support staff positions.
- Virginia data is anecdotal so far, but new data should be available this month.
- The growing shortages has been a focus of statewide policymakers in recent years, including emphasis on teachers of color and special education teachers.
- This has resulted in a variety of policy actions in recent years, including some in the wake of JLARC reports last fall and legislation from the 2021 session.
- Federal pandemic relief funds can and should be used to address staffing challenges.

Statewide Trends

Trends in teacher retention and atrophy during pandemic still largely anecdotal, but data collection is expanding.

- Anecdotally, we have seen larger numbers of teachers retire and will likely be reporting more issues with teacher shortages this year.
- HB376 (2020) expanded vacancy data collection to include licensed and unlicensed personnel. Data typically collected annually in October and anticipated for release this month (January 2022).
- Expanded exit survey program and data collection in 21-22 will provide insight to individuals leaving divisions and/or the profession.
- New statewide collection on school bus driver critical shortages (pursuant to 2020 legislation) will provide new insight on bus driver needs.

Statewide Strategic Plan for Recruitment & Retention

The VDOE has developed a comprehensive plan designed to support a educator recruitment and retention statewide, including policies and practices that address the following goals:

- Goal #1: reduce the barriers for qualified individuals to enter the profession;
- Goal #2: attract greater numbers of promising candidates (pipeline strategies) and retain them once employed; and
- Goal #3: raise the quality of teaching overall in the Commonwealth.

Recent Statewide Investments

\$11.5M	RIPE grants for recruitment between August 15 and November 15, 2021
\$1M	USED Grant to provide 5 year support to 2-3 divisions with acute SPED teacher shortages
\$2M	School bus driver recruitment and retention incentive grant program
\$5.2M	Build capacity of and retain math and literacy specialists via teacher and graduate program cohorts (part of Onward & Upward Grants/ ESSER III)
\$2M	Continuing Education Support (CES) Grants for 20 divisions with high percentages of provisionally licensed staff
\$10M	Other Teacher Recruitment & Retention via ESSER III - HBCU residency program, mentorship support for first-year teachers, communities of practice for aspiring superintendents, Praxis and VCLA support, Educators Rising support, etc.

Recruitment Incentive for Public Education (RIPE)

The 2021 Special Session II appropriated \$11.5M to support recruitment efforts for school divisions hiring to fill instructional positions between August 15, 2021, and November 15, 2021.

- The data collection was a snapshot of vacancies reported on August 15.
- 76 divisions reported 4,922 vacancies.
- The most significant amount of vacancies are in Special Education (937) and Elementary Education (1388), which were anticipated because those are the top two categories that show up in the critical shortage data collected every year.
- An eligible teacher will receive a \$2,500 incentive award for filling a non-hard-to-staff position, or an incentive award of \$5,000 for a hard-to-staff position as defined by the critical shortage list.

Continuing Education Support Grants

In early January the VDOE announced \$2M of federal pandemic relief funding is available for the Continuing Education Support Grants.

- Twenty school divisions with relatively high percentages of provisionally licensed teachers were invited to apply for grants to cover the tuition and fees for required coursework leading to full licensure.
- The eligible divisions all have rates of provisional licensure of 10% or higher or, in the case of divisions employing 1,000 or more teachers, 5% or higher.
- The Continuing Education Support Grant program is open to all employees in the identified divisions – including school counselors, social workers and support staff – who are seeking full state licensure.

**Pending available funding, a second round of grant awards will be available to all divisions later this year.*

Other ESSER III Educator Initiatives

In addition to the \$2M for CES Grants, the ESSER III statewide set-aside funds will support the recruitment and retention of school staff by investing approximately \$10M in:

- Educator Preparation Program Paid Internships
- HBCU Residency Collaborative
- Communities of Practice for Aspiring Superintendents program at William & Mary
- Mentorship Training Incentive Grants to support mentoring programs for first-year teachers in school divisions with significant teacher shortages.
- Online MentorVA Training to support the expansion of George Mason University's online clinical faculty and mentor training initiatives statewide for all eight Superintendent Regions.
- Praxis and Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment Assistance competitive grants to cover costs of test fees, tutoring, workshops and other efforts to prepare provisionally licensed teachers and pre-service candidates for assessments required for full licensure.
- Support for the annual Educators Rising Conference

Recruiting and Retaining Early Childhood Educators

Similar to K-12 experience, early childhood providers are facing severe recruitment and retention challenges. Federal pandemic relief child care funds are assisting providers.

Additionally, the Governor's Proposed FY23-24 budget includes:

- Creates grant opportunity to support a *Grow Your Own* program between schools and institutions of higher ed to (\$1M/\$1M)
- Continued state support for ongoing early childhood educator incentive program (\$5M/ \$5M)

Recruiting and Retaining Special Education Teachers

Special Education is an area of critical shortage in Virginia as well as across the nation. The VDOE continues to build upon successful partnerships with local school divisions and secure additional outside support to seek innovative solutions to ensuring support for students with disabilities.

- Continuation of the Journey into Teacher Academy, a yearlong professional development initiatives for teachers completing their second year as a provisionally licensed special education teacher
- Support through the Virginia Tiered Systems of Support and a grant from the U.S. Department of Education aimed at reducing turnover and promoting retention of special education teachers
- Technical assistance grant from the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) Center

Other Relevant Budget Proposals

Governor Northam's Proposed FY23-24 Budget Includes:

- Staff Raise - 5% each year (\$249M/ \$513M)
- Support for programs increasing minority computer science teachers (\$1.5M/ \$1.5M)
- Support for Richmond Teacher Residency (VCU) to pilot program for 20 SPED teachers (\$500,000 in FY23)
- Expand focus of previously funded VDOE recruitment and retention positions to all critical shortage areas

Questions & Discussion