



2015-16 VASS Legislative Positions

Since 2008, drastic reductions in state funding for public education and maximum efforts by localities to replace lost funds have placed Virginia's schools at the limit of their human and financial resources to meet the new round of education reforms being required by the Virginia Board of Education, the Standards of Learning Innovation Committee and the Virginia General Assembly. This has been especially true in school divisions challenged with issues of poverty and rapidly changing student populations.

Given that these funding cuts have placed most Virginia school divisions in the position of reducing staff, increasing class sizes, eliminating programs, and cutting spending on professional development, the curriculum infrastructure required to address these issues is no longer present. Thus issues of funding, assessment and accountability must be addressed if Virginia is to meet the challenges of preparing students to be successful in today's workforce and society.

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

Budget and Funding

- i. 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.
- ii. VASS recognizes that the Support Position Cap has eliminated an estimated \$754 million 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 positions directly related to instruction in the classroom be funded as they were prior to the initiation of the SOQ Support Position Cap.
- iii. VASS supports the need for added resources and expertise to provide professional development, disseminate models, and support collaboration to help educators implement high-quality systems of assessment to support instruction.

- iv. VASS believes that school divisions need the flexibility to assign various personnel by function and receive the associated state financial support. Thus, VASS supports the funding of all positions identified in the Standards of Accreditation by function (i.e. - curriculum development and support, instructional technology, and individual school leadership) rather than individual position description.
- v. VASS supports added state funding to allow school divisions to adjust their career and technical education programs to better meet the changing workforce needs within their communities.

While the State Budget is the VASS number one priority for the 2016 General Assembly Session, we recognize that policy changes in assessment and accountability must continue. These policy changes also have funding implications for the State and localities. Thus, VASS supports the following:

Assessments and Accountability

- vi. VASS supports the work of the SOL Innovation Committee 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 financial needs and diversity of student populations.
- vii. VASS supports the SOL Innovation Committee's recommendation that academic success at the school level be represented by both "point-in-time achievement" and individual student growth measures.
- viii. VASS supports establishing varied pathways for students to earn credits toward graduation and/or CTE credentials. This would allow for a more individualized path to achieving a Career and College ready designation at the secondary level.
- ix. VASS supports the reduction of mandated Standards of Learning assessments to only those required by ESEA.