

2017-2018 VASS Legislative Positions

VASS is committed to seeking positive changes in public education and fostering what is best for students and staff in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Local communities along with the Virginia Board of Education and the Virginia General Assembly are in the process of trying to answer such questions as what should be included in the school curriculum, how should student progress be measured, what it means to be a Virginia High School Graduate, and what is appropriate school accountability.

While VASS supports the direction of these efforts, there are certain fundamental principles that are required for their success. These include the full funding of all mandates passed by the General assembly and required by the Virginia Board of Education. Also, local school boards should have primary authority in the implementation of these mandates. In addition to these two basic requirements, school divisions are facing some critical needs.

- The Shortage of Qualified Teachers:
 - Raise teacher salaries above the national average. 2012- 2013: VA-\$49,869, National Average - \$56,383(Niche)
 - The Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) should revise the Approved Program Regulations to allow education-based majors in teaching/education through the development of a four-year undergraduate major in teaching.
 - The Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) should provide an extension of a teacher's provisional license time period from three years to five years based upon the superintendent's recommendation.
 - The Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) should provide increased flexibility in teacher licensure for individuals with core content knowledge of the subject.
- Modernizing the Assessment System to Strengthen Virginia's Standards of Learning:
 - Supplant standardized tests with more effective assessments that encourage student acquisition and application of deeper knowledge and skills.
 - Assessments used to determine student academic growth as part of the SOA should be funded by the state.
- State Budget:
 - SOQ staffing changes recommended by the State Board and required by the revised SOA's must be accompanied by appropriate state funding in addition to staffing flexibility if qualified applicants cannot be found to fill these added positions. Removal of the SOQ Support CAP will be critical toward this effort.
 - Additional State funds for technology and facility improvements are needed to meet SOA requirements and better manage student learning needs.

- Discipline.
 - Amend the Code of Virginia to eliminate the requirement in Va. Code § 22.1-279.3:1(D) that principals report to law enforcement any act that may constitute a misdemeanor offense.
 - The General Assembly should provide school divisions with additional funding needed to implement proven methods of preventing and addressing misbehaviors that lead to suspension and expulsion (i.e., VTSS, Restorative Justice, Regional Programs, Virtual Services, and community-based/parental services).
 - The General Assembly should provide school divisions with additional funding for local and regional alternative education programs such that alternative education programs are available for elementary and secondary students in every school division.
 - The Virginia Board of Education should revise its Standards of Accreditation (or VDOE issue guidelines) to include provisions for assisting school divisions that exhibit chronically high suspension and expulsion rates through the implementation of evidence-based intervention programs and community-based/parental services.
 - The Virginia Department of Education should expand its Student Code of Conduct Policy Guidelines to include non-punitive effective practices; limit the use of suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to law enforcement; and establish a graduated system of reasonable consequences for student misbehavior.