



***EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

**2011  
ANNUAL REPORT ON THE  
CONDITION AND NEEDS  
OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA**

**PRESENTED TO  
THE GOVERNOR AND  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**DECEMBER 1, 2011  
VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **2011 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE CONDITION AND NEEDS OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA**

#### **Overview**

The *2011 Annual Report on the Condition and Needs of the Public Schools in Virginia* is a companion document to the Board of Education's *Comprehensive Plan: 2011-2016*, which sets forth the Board's goals for public education in Virginia.<sup>1</sup>

The first section of this report gives a concise and comprehensive assessment of the extent to which the Board's goals are being accomplished. Highlights of the policy decisions made by the Board of Education to address each of its seven goals are shown. Major actions to implement the policy decisions are briefly described, along with a candid snapshot of the current condition and needs of the public schools in Virginia.

In addition, the report highlights some of the impressive gains made by our students and our public schools. It is clear that Virginians have much to be proud of in the achievement of its schools and young people. The caveat to this success is that the good news should not mask the fact that Virginia's public schools have serious needs that remain to be tackled.

This report also contains the information required to be included by the *Code of Virginia*: information on compliance with the Standards of Quality and the Standards of Accreditation, report on charter schools, and the multidivision online provider report.

#### **Overarching Goal: College and Career Ready Graduates**

Schools must meet the increasingly diverse needs of students who will live, compete, and work in an expanding and complex global, technology-driven economy. To that end, the Board of Education's overarching goal is for all of Virginia's public school graduates to be college and career ready. Stated succinctly:

. . . "college and career readiness" refers to the content knowledge and skills high school graduates must possess in English and mathematics—including, but not limited to, reading, writing communications, teamwork, critical thinking and problem solving—to be successful in any and all future endeavors. Of course, readiness for college and careers depends on more than English and mathematics knowledge; to be successful after high school, all

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<sup>1</sup> The full document may be retrieved from <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/plan/comprehensiveplan.pdf>.

graduates must possess the knowledge, habits and skills that can only come from a rigorous, rich and well-rounded high school curriculum.<sup>2</sup>

### **Using Limited Fiscal Resources Effectively and Efficiently for Student Learning**

Raising student achievement is a priority that overrides fiscal difficulties. Virginia, as with most states, is experiencing unprecedented fiscal challenges at both the state and local levels. While funding adequacy and equity must remain a priority, ensuring that limited resources are used as effectively as possible is paramount.

Virginia's economic condition is better than most states, which has mitigated the impact of reductions to public education funding. Small budget surpluses were realized for both FY10 and FY11, indicative of the budgetary stability Virginia has accomplished through targeted reductions throughout state government and conservative revenue and expenditure budgeting by the administration and the legislature. While reductions had to be made to K-12 funding during the 2009 and 2010 legislative sessions, these reductions were focused on minimizing disruptions in classroom instruction. Unlike many states, Virginia was able to increase state support for K-12 education by over \$200 million from last year (FY11) to this year (FY12). Additional information on K-12 funding is shown in Appendix F.

As the economy and revenues improve, Virginia will have the opportunity to reinvest in public K-12 education. While Virginia leaders should look to fund basic operational funds to schools where warranted, with a focus on classroom instruction, new funding provides opportunities to implement new approaches in public education that increase innovation, choice, and flexibility, and that have demonstrated impacts on student achievement. Some of these approaches that will be priorities for Virginia to consider include:

- Providing incentives to focus and redirect local K-12 spending and SOQ spending on teaching and learning;
- Supporting value-added instructional delivery such as STEM, dual enrollment, industry credentials, and extended instructional time during and beyond the current instructional year;
- Combining increases in base teacher pay with differentiated compensation models based on difficulty of assignments and teacher impact on student achievement (e.g., hard-to-staff schools);
- Supporting innovative public school delivery approaches that provide choice and quality options such as charter, college lab, and virtual schools, and flexible funding that follows students choosing these approaches;
- Providing cost-effective models for the use of instructional time; and
- Reviewing the number of diploma types being offered and determining whether each type effectively meets its intended purpose.

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<sup>2</sup> Achieve. 2011. *What Is College- and Career-Ready?* Retrieved from <http://www.achieve.org/files/CollegeandCareerReady.pdf>



## **Continued Improvement Requires Continued Investment**

Virginia may be headed in the right direction in terms of student achievement, but schools have a long way to go if Virginia is to remain competitive nationally and internationally. This annual report points toward critical areas of need that will undermine our public schools' future success if not addressed quickly and effectively. Any decision regarding the allocation of time, money, or people must be focused on proven, effective policies and actions to reach the Board's goals. This is especially important during this time of tight budgets at the local, state, and federal levels.

The point that cannot be missed is this: Continued improvement in our public schools will require continued investment. This is not simply a matter of putting more money into our schools; rather it is a matter of carefully and thoughtfully focusing all available resources where they can be most effective.

## **The Board's Performance Measures: Are Goals Being Met?**

The Board of Education's *Comprehensive Plan: 2011-2016* defined seven goals and the strategies it will implement to meet its goals. The goals directly address the realities and challenges our public schools face in ensuring all graduates are ready for college and a career. In the body of this annual report, the Board's recent policy actions related to each of its goals are highlighted. Along with each goal, the Board set performance measures in order to gauge its progress in meeting its goals.

The following pages summarize the Board's performance measures and where Virginia's public education system stands in terms of results for each of the seven goals, including a brief overview of programs and initiatives in place that address each goal. Also included is a summary of the needs of Virginia's public schools as seen from an examination and analysis of data and assessment results.

## A Report Card on the Board's Performance Measures

<b>Performance Measures to Gauge Progress in Meeting Goals</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>One Year Trend</b>	<b>3 Year Trend<sup>3</sup></b>
	<b>Performance Improving ↑</b> <b>Performance Declining ↓</b> <b>Performance Maintained ↔</b> <b>Data Not Available X</b>		
Percent of third-grade students reading on grade level	83%	↔	↓ (-3%)
Percent of middle school students enrolled in Algebra I or higher	48.8%	↑ (3.9%)	↑ (9.4%)
Virginia On Time Graduation Rate	86.6%	↑ (1.1%)	↑ (3.3%)
High school dropout rate	7.2%	↑ (-0.6%) <sup>4</sup>	↑ (-0.8%)
Students earning Advanced Studies or Standard Diplomas in at least four years <sup>5</sup>	81.6%	↑ (1.7%)	↑ (4.7%)
Percent of graduates earning advanced studies diplomas	47%	↑ (1.6%)	↑ (3.1%)
Percent of graduates who enroll in institutions of higher education (IHE) nationwide <sup>6</sup>	58%	↓ (-2%)	↓ (-4%)
Percent of students scoring advanced proficient on statewide assessments			
English (Reading and Writing)	36.2%	↓ (-0.2)	↑ (0.1%)
Mathematics	39.1%	↓ (-0.3)	↑ (1.3%)
History and Social Science	28.6%	NA <sup>7</sup>	NA
Science	28.5%	↓ (-0.2%)	↑ (0.9%)
Percent of schools rated fully accredited	96%	↓ (-2%) <sup>8</sup>	↓ (-2%)
Number and percent of schools and divisions that demonstrate relatively high growth in student achievement <sup>9</sup>	X	X	X
Number of schools earning recognition under the Virginia Index of Performance	728 schools	↑ (6 schools)	↓ (-256 schools) <sup>10</sup>
Number of schools that are chronically low performing by state and federal standards	7 schools	↑ (2 schools)	↑ (4 schools)
Number and percent of schools and divisions meeting or exceeding federal accountability measures <sup>11</sup>	38% schools	↓ (-22%)	↓ (-33%)
	3% divisions	↓ (-6%)	↓ (-43%)

<sup>3</sup> Change since the 2008-2009 school year

<sup>4</sup> The high school dropout rate fell from 7.8% in 2010 to 7.2% in 2011

<sup>5</sup> Federal Graduation Indicator

<sup>6</sup> Data are based on annual high school graduates. Postsecondary enrollment data based on information from the National Student Clearinghouse

<sup>7</sup> New History and Social Science tests were implemented in 2010-2011. Comparisons are not appropriate.

<sup>8</sup> The Board of Education introduced a "graduation and completion index" in 2010-2011 as a new accountability factor for high schools, in addition to student achievement on state tests

<sup>9</sup> Growth measure is currently under development

<sup>10</sup> The Board of Education changed the criteria for the 2010 implementation

<sup>11</sup> The benchmarks were five points higher in reading and six points higher in mathematics in 2010-2011 than the objectives for assessments taken by students during 2009-2010

**Goal 1: Expanded Opportunities to Learn:** The Board of Education will continue to improve the standards for public schools in Virginia in order to expand learning opportunities needed for Virginia’s public schools. Our schools will lead the nation in rigor and quality and our students will compete and excel in postsecondary education and/or in the global workplace.

**Major Policy Actions to Address Goal 1:**

Policy actions include adopting policies on charter school application criteria and procedures, and procedures for college partnership laboratory school applications; reaffirming recommendations on revisions to the Standards of Quality; adopting criteria for approving multidivision providers of online courses and virtual school programs; approving additional Governor’s STEM academies; and approving additional industry certification examinations to meet graduation requirements.

**Major Actions to Implement Policies for Goal 1:**

Governor’s STEM Academies: Virginia has 10 Governor’s STEM academies up and running.

Charter Schools: The Board’s Charter School Committee developed procedures for receiving and reviewing charter school applications and criteria used in reviewing applications. The four charter schools currently operating in Virginia all earned full accreditation and all made the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets.

College Partnership Laboratory Schools: The Board’s College Partnership Laboratory School Committee developed procedures for receiving college partnership laboratory school applications as well as criteria used in reviewing them.

Multidivision Online Providers: In 2011, the Board approved criteria for the first set of multidivision online providers. Fourteen organizations submitted applications and course correlation documents. Thirteen of these organizations were approved by the superintendent of public instruction to offer online instruction.

Standards of Quality: The Board of Education reaffirmed its recommendations for flexibility for divisions to use funds provided in the appropriation act for certain staffing standards related to instructional staff in mathematics, limited English proficiency, reading, technology and assistant principals. The term “Support services” was also clarified. The Board’s recommendations were subsequently adopted by the 2011 General Assembly.

**What the Data Showed:**

On-Time Graduation Rate Improved: Virginia’s on-time high school graduation rate rose one point this year to 86.6 percent, and the statewide dropout rate fell 0.6 percent to 7.2 percent. The graduation rate for black students rose 6.3 points, and the rate for Hispanic students rose 7.9 points since 2008. However, the dropout rates for blacks, Hispanics, and students with limited English proficiency remain unacceptably high compared to their white and Asian peers. This is also true for economically disadvantaged students and for students with disabilities. For example, the dropout rate for black students is more than twice that for white students. For Hispanic students the rate is three times higher.

Higher Percentage of Graduates Earned the Advanced Studies Diploma: The percentage of Virginia students graduating with an Advanced Studies Diploma increased by 1.6 percent, and the number of advanced diplomas awarded exceeded the number of Standard Diplomas. However, 71 percent of Virginia’s Asian graduates earned the Advanced Studies diploma, while 55 percent of white students, 37 percent of Hispanic students, and 29 percent of black students earned the Advanced Studies diploma.

**The Needs of the Public Schools: What Remains to be Done to Accomplish Goal 1?**

Types of Diplomas Offered: Is Each Fulfilling Its Intended Purpose? The Board of Education needs to consider the various types of diplomas offered in Virginia and determine if each type is fulfilling its intended and original purpose. The Board also needs to explore effective models for the use of instructional time.

The Achievement Gap Continues to Limit Opportunities for Some Students: Economically disadvantaged students and minority students are less likely than all students to graduate in four years and the subgroups show disparities on those earning the advanced credentials.

**Goal 2: Accountability of Student Learning:** The Board of Education will support accountability for all public schools by providing leadership and by establishing policies that help schools and school divisions increase the academic success of all students, especially those who are at-risk or in underperforming school systems. Using improved longitudinal data systems, the Board will monitor schools' progress in closing achievement gaps among groups of students.

**Major Policy Decisions to Address Goal 2:** Policy actions include adopting a supplement to the Curriculum Framework for the 2009 Mathematics Standards of Learning to fully align with national and international standards; criteria for the Virginia Index of Performance to promote student achievement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); new cut scores for History and Social Science Standards of Learning tests in Virginia Studies, U. S. History; the Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA), and the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program; and modifying the Academic Review Process for low performing high schools.

**Major Actions to Implement Policies for Goal 2:**

**New Ways of Assessing Student Progress:** New mathematics, English, and science assessments will be administered primarily online, and will include technology-enhanced items that require students to demonstrate content mastery in ways that were not possible with multiple-choice tests, enabling the Board to establish new and challenging cut scores as a part of the Virginia College and Career Readiness Initiative.

**Growth Measures:** Virginia's growth measure, currently under development, will provide information about student progress relative to other students with similar achievement the previous year.

**Requirements Will Become More Rigorous:** Students will take more rigorous Standards of Learning mathematics tests beginning in 2011-2012 and more rigorous tests in reading, writing, and science the following year.

**What the Data Showed:**

**Important National Comparisons:** Results from the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that Virginia public school students continue to rank among the nation's highest achievers in reading and mathematics and outperform their peers nationwide, and Virginia now ranks among the top on Advanced Placement results. Virginia now ranks third in the nation in achievement on Advanced Placement (AP) examinations. Only Maryland and New York had higher percentages. Nonetheless, disparities in subgroup performance remain. For example, NAEP results show that black and Hispanic students trail their white peers by more than 22 test-score points on the reading assessments at 4th and 8th grades. In mathematics, NAEP results at the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades show, respectively, a 22- and 29- test-score point difference between black students and their white peers.

**Students Earning Industry Credentials Increased:** In 2011, students passed more than 36,000 industry certification, occupational competency, or workplace readiness exams, or achieved state licensure in areas eligible for student-selected certified credits.

**The Needs of Public Schools: What Remains to be Done To Accomplish Goal 2?**

**Raising the Rigor of Virginia's Academic Standards:** Virginia's fourth- and eighth-graders perform better in reading and mathematics than their peers nationwide; however, less than two-fifths have a solid grasp of reading and less than half have a solid grasp of mathematics based on NAEP's definition of proficiency.

As schools implement more rigorous standards and tests in English and mathematics, starting with mathematics this year and followed by English during 2012-2013, there may be further declines in accreditation. As more rigorous standards and assessments become effective, a new trend line will begin, but we must not become alarmed or discouraged. We must not give into temptation to preserve the status quo. Raising standards is the right thing to do and our teachers and schools will rise to the challenge and Virginia students will be better prepared as a result.

**Virginia and the Nation: Far Behind in International Comparisons:** Studies suggest that for Virginia and the nation to remain competitive in the global economy, the U.S. is going to need to make substantial gains in mathematics and science achievement.

**Eliminating Achievement Gaps:** Persistent gaps show up in on-time graduation rates, dropout rates, Standards of Learning test performance, NAEP, SAT, Advanced Studies diploma rates.

**Goal 3: Nurturing Young Learners**

The Board of Education will work cooperatively with partners and will promote new and innovative partnerships to help ensure that all young children are ready to enter kindergarten with the skills they need for success.

**Major Policy Decisions to Address Goal 3:**

Policy actions include affirming that teacher competencies for the PreK-3 and PreK-6 teaching endorsements were aligned with Virginia's *Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Comprehensive Standards for Four-Year-Olds* and the recently produced document from the state's Early Childhood Education's Alignment Project, *Milestones of Child Development and Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals*. Additional policy actions include augmenting the *Foundation Blocks* with indicators for the physical and motor and personal and social domains, in addition to the existing domains in reading and writing, mathematics, science, and history and social science.

**Actions to Meet the Goal:**

Board of Education member Rob Krupicka serves on the Virginia Early Childhood Advisory Council, and Dr. Virginia McLaughlin serves on the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation.

**What the Data Showed:**

Participation in Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) Increased: In 2011, VPI served 15,881 children. This represents a six percent increase for one year and a 21 percent increase in the percentage of children served since the 2007-2008 school year.

Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) funded program attendance is beneficially associated with a reduced likelihood of repeating kindergarten. In terms of literacy skills, attending a VPI-funded program showed a beneficial association for all students. This positive effect is maintained through first grade for Blacks and Hispanics, and students with disabilities.<sup>12</sup> In this study, analysis of preschool and kindergarten literacy Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) results showed a strong association between VPI participation and PALS scores. In addition, more than 91 percent of principals surveyed said that the positive effects of students' participation in preschool continue through at least first grade.<sup>13</sup>

The number of school divisions participating in the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) has grown from 75 in the 2001-2002 school year, to 113 school divisions in the 2011-2012 school year. More than 17,000 Virginia teachers are using PALS to assess the readiness of their students.

**The Needs of Public Schools: What Remains to be Done To Accomplish Goal 3:**

Despite the growth in the number of school divisions participating in VPI and in the number of children served, the number of at-risk four-year-olds in Virginia continues to be a concern because an estimated 6,700 qualified children remain unserved. Without providing high quality preschool to all at-risk four-year-olds, many at-risk five-year-old children will continue to enter kindergarten without adequate preparation to be fully ready to learn.

<sup>12</sup> *Differential Effects of Preschool: Evidence in Virginia Early Childhood*. Research Quarterly-Curry School of Education (Francis L. Huang, Marcia A. Invernizzi, E. Allison Drake -April 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) Findings 2007. Retrieved from: <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/reports/Rpt364.pdf>.

**Goal 4: Strong Literacy and Mathematics Skills**

The Board of Education will establish policies that support the attainment of literacy and mathematics skills for all students, pre-K through grade 12.

**Major Policy Decisions to Address Goal 4:**

The Board's policy actions include revising Virginia's textbook review process; adopting the process for state approval of textbooks for K-12 English/Language Arts and K-12 Science; adopting the list of state-approved textbooks for K-12 mathematics; adopting *Guidelines for Local Textbook Approval*; and reaffirming its support for College and Career Ready Standard.

**Actions to Meet the Goal:**

College and Career Readiness Initiative (CCRI): The Virginia College and Career Readiness Initiative builds on the revised standards and is designed to: a) ensure that college and career ready learning standards in reading, writing, and mathematics are taught in every Virginia high school classroom; and b) strengthen students' preparation for college and the work force before leaving high school.

Virginia Index of Performance: The recent revision made by the Board added components that provide additional incentives for school divisions and schools to promote student achievement in the STEM areas and college and career readiness in general. The revisions also increased the importance of foreign language instruction in elementary schools.

Textbook Review and Selection Procedures: In 2011, the Virginia Board of Education approved a revised and strengthened textbook approval process. The new process places primary responsibility on publishers to ensure the accuracy of their textbooks. It is the Board's intent to incorporate the procedures to regulations as soon as possible.

Helping Students Meet Academic Standards: Current programs that have helped students meet and exceed existing standards include the Virginia Preschool Initiative; K-3 Class Size Reduction; At-Risk Add-on; SOQ English as a Second Language programs; Early Intervention Reading Initiative; the Algebra Readiness Initiative; Project Graduation; Remedial Summer School; SOQ Prevention, Intervention, and Remediation; and the Regional Alternative Education Programs.

**What the Data Show:**

Increased Rigor: The most recent SOL revisions (2009 and 2010) led to more rigorous content standards that are supported as college and career ready by nationally recognized organizations, the College Board, ACT, and Achieve. New end-of-course mathematics assessments will be implemented in 2011-2012 and new reading and writing assessments will be implemented in 2012-2013. The new assessments will be administered online, and include technology-enhanced items that require students to demonstrate content mastery in ways that were not possible with multiple-choice tests.

Increased Proficiency in Mathematics: The percentage of grade-8 students who met or exceeded the rigorous NAEP standard for proficiency increased by a statistically significant four points to 40 percent in 2011, compared with 36 percent in 2009 when the national tests were last administered. Forty-six percent of Virginia fourth-grade students scored proficient or above in mathematics — six points higher than the percentage nationwide and a three-point increase since 2009.

**What Remains to be Done to Accomplish Goal 4:**

For the College and Career Ready Initiative to be successful, educators must have access to and participate in appropriate professional development. The Virginia Department of Education has identified existing funds that allow the agency to work with our partners—such as institutions of higher education—to develop and implement high quality professional development to support local educators and to implement the revised mathematics and English Standards of Learning. In the next few years, as new resources are limited, continued emphasis on programs for at-risk students will be even more critical for Virginia's students, as the more rigorous standards are put in place and tested.

As schools implement more rigorous standards and tests in English and mathematics, starting with mathematics this

year and followed by English during 2012-2013, there may be further declines in accreditation.

**Goal 5: Highly Qualified and Effective Teachers and Administrators**

The Board of Education will establish policies and standards that improve the preparation, recruitment, and retention of Virginia’s educational personnel, including meaningful and ongoing professional development, especially in teacher shortage areas and in hard-to-staff schools.

**Major Policy Decisions to Address Goal 5:**

Policy actions include criteria for identifying quality alternative routes to teacher licensure; cut scores for the Praxis Braille Proficiency Test, the Praxis Technology Education Assessment, the Praxis Art: Content Knowledge Assessment, the Reading for Virginia Educators (RVE): Elementary and Special Education Teachers Assessment, the Reading Specialist Assessment, and the Special Education Teachers Assessment. Policy actions also include establishing *Guidelines Pertaining to the Employment of Substitute Teachers* and revising the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* and *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*.

**Actions to Meet the Goal:**

Teacher Evaluation Guidelines: The *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* provide school divisions with a model evaluation system, including sample forms and templates that may be implemented “as is” or used to refine existing local teacher evaluation systems. The model recommends that 40 percent of teachers’ evaluations be based on student academic progress, as determined by multiple measures of learning and achievement, including, when available and applicable, student-growth data.

Performance-Pay Initiative: Twenty-five schools across Virginia are participating in performance-pay pilot programs during the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years. The participating schools must implement the performance standards and model teacher-evaluation system approved by the Board of Education in April 2011. With participating schools located in 13 of the 132 school divisions in the Commonwealth, or 10 percent of Virginia’s school divisions, the program will have a broad debut for a pilot effort.

**What the Data Show:**

Highly Qualified Teachers and Administrators: In 2010-2011, 99 percent of teachers in core academic classes were considered highly qualified. For the first time, these teachers are distributed evenly among high poverty and low poverty schools statewide. This is an improvement from 2006-2007, when 5 percent of core academic classes in high-poverty schools were taught by teachers who were not highly qualified, compared to 2 percent of core classes in low-poverty schools.

**What Remains to be Done to Accomplish Goal 5:**

Though certainly not new, issues of teacher quality and effectiveness will be front and center in 2011 as Virginia’s school divisions work to improve student readiness and success. Data on teacher effectiveness are to be used to identify and reward effective teachers as well as to inform professional development. In that regard, results of the performance pay pilots will be crucial to shaping this program into a solid, useable one.

The current economic downturn for the state and the localities will impact teacher recruitment and retention. Due to budget limitations, many localities are proceeding with slimmed-down teacher recruitment and hiring. For some divisions, teacher and staff layoffs may be unavoidable. At least in part a result of economic hard times, hiring new teachers will likely decrease because current classroom teachers will stay put by holding on to their jobs or by deferring retirement.

Additional underlying demographics will impact teacher recruitment and retention. Finding and retaining qualified teachers in chronic shortage areas have been persistent problems for many local divisions. Shortage areas include special education, mathematics, some foreign languages, and teachers of English as a Second Language. Of particular concern, too, is recruiting and retaining teachers for STEM programs.

**Goal 6: Sound Policies for Student Success**

The Board of Education will provide leadership to develop and implement the provisions of state and federal laws and regulations in ways that improve and expand opportunities for all of Virginia's schoolchildren to excel academically.

**Major Policy Decisions to Address Goal 6:**

Policy actions include applying to the U.S. Department of Education for waivers from specific requirements of No Child Left Behind and engaging stakeholders in this process; and revising and consolidating Board of Education regulations governing local school divisions, pupil transportation, career and technical education programs, residential programs for students with disabilities, Standards of Accreditation, driver's education programs, and competitive foods in the schools.

**Actions to Meet the Goal:**

Alternative Federal Accountability Model: The Board is drafting an alternate federal accountability model that is based on Virginia's successful Standards of Learning accountability program, including, but not limited to:

- College- and career-ready Standards of Learning and corresponding assessments being implemented in Virginia's mature and validated Standards of Accreditation (SOA) accountability program;
- Annual determinations for schools and divisions that make valid and meaningful performance distinctions and recognize overall student and subgroup growth;
- Accountability provisions that accurately identify schools and divisions most in need of support or interventions and recognize and reward exemplary performance;
- Support and interventions, identified through diagnostic reviews, designed to remedy the specific conditions that may cause schools and divisions to underperform;
- Capacity-building to allow divisions to support their underperforming schools in sustainable ways; and
- Aggressive reform for the lowest-performing schools and divisions.

Board Regulations and Local Reporting Requirements: The Board is focused on eliminating any duplication or unnecessary reporting requirements placed on local divisions by revising and updating a number of its current regulations, including new regulations entitled *Regulations Governing Local School Boards and School Divisions*. This regulatory action will repeal or consolidate 13 of the Board's current regulations into one comprehensive regulation, thus eliminating outdated provisions and streamlining requirements to a considerable degree.

**What the Data Show:**

Fiscal Realities: Small budget surpluses were realized for both FY10 and FY11, indicative of the budgetary stability Virginia has accomplished through targeted reductions throughout state government and conservative revenue and expenditure budgeting by the Administration and the legislature. Unlike many states, Virginia was able to increase state support for K-12 education by over \$200 million from last year (FY11) to this year (FY12).

Reporting Requirements Streamlined: A comprehensive review of all reports required from local divisions has eliminated any reports not required by federal or state law or those reports necessary to determine funding levels for certain programs.

**What Remains to be Done to Accomplish Goal 6:**

Develop Realistic Accountability Model: Virginia needs a new model for federal accountability that maintains high expectations for student achievement, recognizes growth—overall and by subgroup—and accurately identifies schools most in need of improvement.

Fiscal Challenges: As the economy and revenues continue to improve, Virginia will have the opportunity to reinvest in public K-12 education. While Virginia leaders should look to restore basic operational funds to schools where warranted, with a focus on minimizing disruptions to teaching and learning, new funding provides opportunities to implement new approaches in public education that increase innovation, choice, and flexibility, and that have demonstrated impacts on student achievement.

## **Goal 7: Safe and Secure Schools**

The Board of Education will provide leadership to create safe and secure school environments.

### **Major Policy Decisions to Address Goal 7:**

Policy actions include policies on *Guidelines for Policies on Concussions in Student-Athletes*, *Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Abuse in Virginia Public Schools*, and *Elementary School Gun Safety Guidelines and Curriculum*. Policy actions also include continuing to support Bullying Prevention programs and examination of data on effective discipline initiatives.

### **Actions to Meet the Goal:**

**Guidelines for Interactions between Students and Teachers:** The Board of Education adopted *Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Abuse in Virginia Public Schools* to help school divisions create and implement policies and procedures that establish clear and reasonable boundaries for interactions between students and teachers, other school board employees, and adult volunteers.

**Policies on Student-Athlete Concussions:** On the student health front, the Board of Education worked with the state's health care leaders and other interested stakeholders to develop guidelines for concussions in student-athletes.

**Cyberbullying:** The Virginia Department of Education has provided its own research and resources by focusing on the use of online, interactive, story-based lessons on various Internet safety issues, including cyberbullying. The resulting research demonstrated that these lessons had a positive impact on the behavior of fourth-grade students. Subsequently, this project has been continued using Garfield characters and created in cooperation with the Professor Garfield Foundation.

The Board has expressed its interest in a discipline program called Effective Schoolwide Discipline as a proven effective way to not only improve student behavior, but also to improve academic performance.

### **What the Data Show:**

**Incidents of Crime and Violence in Public Schools Drop:** In 2009-2010, there were 41,913 fewer required reporting incidents than reported in 2008-2009. Comparison of the most frequently reported incidents shows a decline in incidents of attendance, classroom/campus disruption, disrespect, other school violations, bullying, obscene language/gestures, and minor insubordinations. Incidents that show an increase were incidents of defiance, cellular phones, inappropriate personal property, possession of obscene/disruptive literature, and drug use possession or sales/distribution of Schedule I or II.

### **What Remains to be Done to Accomplish Goal 7:**

A high priority for the Board is dealing effectively with the realities of schooling for some children who face difficult personal circumstances such as high poverty, high crime in their neighborhoods, high rates of unhealthy behaviors, poor nutrition, and other circumstances that obstruct their learning at school. The Board must continue to stress the importance of successful, communitywide partnerships in the development of procedures and policies that most effectively support healthy, safe, orderly and disciplined school environments.

As more and more research in Internet safety shows, it is clear that bullying behavior and cyberbullying are among the most pressing issues involved in keeping public schools and the children in them safe.

Integral to safe and healthy school environments is parent and family involvement. To do this, schools need to promote and enhance cooperative partnerships in which families are allies in the efforts of teachers and schools.

## Critical Needs of the Public Schools in Virginia

The data and performance measures in this report show that, while the Board of Education has made progress in meeting its goals, much remains to be done. A challenging year is ahead as Virginia's public schools face the economic headwinds that have developed in recent years. With fiscal challenges as the reality, the Board of Education must redouble its efforts to help schools raise student achievement by focusing policies and targeting resources in the most effective place for student learning: in the classroom.

Studies suggest that for Virginia and the nation to remain competitive in the global economy, the U.S. is going to need to make substantial gains in mathematics and science achievement. A recent study found that “the percentages of high-achieving students in the United States—and in most of its individual states—are shockingly below those of many of the world’s leading industrialized nations.”<sup>14</sup>

Another study, which also provided a state-by-state comparison, showed that even the top performing state—Massachusetts—is behind 14 countries who participated in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) assessment.<sup>15</sup> Virginia ranks 6th in the U.S., but there remain 22 countries in which more students reach advanced levels of mathematics than in Virginia.<sup>16</sup>

With that perspective, the critical needs of Virginia’s public schools may be summarized as follows:

- Schools need continued investment in resources that are integral to improving student performance, closing achievement gaps, and graduating all students college and career ready. School leaders are struggling with how to best allocate resources essential to their core mission of educating young people in this era of limited state, federal, and local resources.
- The need to comply with federal laws, programs, rules, and regulations has led to a significant strain on fiscal and staff resources at the state and local levels. Virginia needs a new model for federal accountability that maintains high expectations for student achievement, recognizes growth—overall and by subgroup—and accurately identifies schools most in need of improvement. To that end during the fall of 2011, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Board of Education are engaging stakeholders in discussing

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<sup>14</sup> Hanushek, E.A., Peterson, P.E., & Woessmann, L. (2010). Teaching math to the talented. Which countries--and states--are producing high-achieving students? Reported by: Educationnext, Winter 2011/Vol 11, No. 1. <http://educationnext.org/teaching-math-to-the-talented/>. Cambridge, MA: Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard Kennedy School.

<sup>15</sup> PISA is a triennial survey of the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds. More than 400,000 students from 57 countries making up close to 90% of the world economy take part. The focus was on science but the assessment also included reading and mathematics.

<sup>16</sup> Phillips, Gary W., (2007). Chance Favors the Prepared Mind: Mathematics and Science Indicators for Comparing States and Nations. American Institutes for Research: Washington, DC.

process options and parameters for developing a request for federal regulatory relief while maintaining and strengthening Virginia’s educational accountability program. This will be a critically important discussion with far-reaching outcomes for Virginia’s public schools.

- Schools need help and resources to implement new learning opportunities for students, including an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs; charter school programs; college partnership laboratory programs; and online learning programs. And these programs must thrive along with the more traditional courses, such as the arts and foreign languages.
- Raising the rigor of Virginia’s academic standards is a challenge faced by the Board of Education in its drive to focus on college and career readiness standards—including workplace skills and knowledge—that are internationally competitive. This is what citizens and parents expect and what our students deserve.
- One of the most pressing education-policy challenges that Virginia currently faces is the persistent achievement gaps that exist among subgroups of students. The disparity shows up on statewide and national measures of achievement, including on-time graduation rates, dropout rates, Standards of Learning test performance, NAEP, SAT, Advanced Studies diploma rates. Some specific examples of the gaps include:
  - Economically disadvantaged students and minority students are less likely than all students to graduate in four years. There is a 9-, 11-, and 12- point achievement gap for black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students, respectively, compared to the overall graduation rate.
  - The most recent results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that that black and Hispanic students trailed their white peers by more than 22 test-score points on the reading assessments at 4th and 8th grades. In mathematics, NAEP results at the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades show a 22- and 29- test-score point difference between black students and their white peers. Similar gaps exist for economically disadvantaged and for limited English proficient students, which are two of Virginia’s fastest growing subgroups.
  - These gaps persisted in the NAEP results even though the score differentials between black and white students narrowed between 1992 and 2007 in 4th grade mathematics and reading and 8th grade mathematics.
  - Seventy-one percent of Virginia’s Asian graduates earned the Advanced Studies diploma, while 55 percent of white students, 37 percent of Hispanic students, and 29 percent of black students earned the Advanced Studies diploma. Eight percent of students with disabilities and 26 percent of economically disadvantaged students earned the Advanced Studies diploma.
- Another form of achievement gap is the gap between the academic performance of students in the United States compared to other countries. For Virginia and the nation to remain competitive in the global economy, the U.S. is going to need to make substantial gains in mathematics and science achievement.

- Promoting high-quality preschool programs is important. Almost 16,000 children are now served by the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI); however, almost 6,700 more eligible children are not served. In terms of literacy skills, attending a VPI program showed a beneficial association for all students. This effect is maintained through first grade for blacks and Hispanics, and students with disabilities.<sup>17</sup> Thus, increasing the number of children served by the VPI program is of critical importance to preparing Virginia's students for success early in their school years.
- A high priority for the public schools is dealing effectively with the realities of schooling for some children who face difficult personal circumstances such as high poverty, high crime in their neighborhoods, high rates of unhealthy behaviors, poor nutrition, and other circumstances that obstruct their learning at school. The Board must help local divisions by providing solid, workable guidelines and policies to assist those who are being tripped up by factors that go beyond the school doors.
- Attracting the best and the brightest individuals into the teaching profession is a high priority. Finding and retaining qualified teachers in chronic shortage areas have been persistent problems for many local divisions. Shortage areas include special education, mathematics, some foreign languages, and teachers of English as a Second Language. Of particular concern, too, is recruiting and retaining teachers for STEM programs.
- As schools implement more rigorous standards and tests in English and mathematics, starting with mathematics this year and followed by English during 2012-2013, there may be further declines in accreditation. As more rigorous standards and assessments become effective, a new trend line will begin, but we must not become alarmed or discouraged. We must not give into temptation to preserve the status quo. Raising standards is the right thing to do, and our teachers and schools will rise to the challenge. Virginia students will be better prepared as a result.

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<sup>17</sup> Understanding the Head Start Impact Study. (2011). Retrieved from:  
[http://developingchild.harvard.edu/index.php/resources/briefs/evaluation\\_science\\_briefs](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/index.php/resources/briefs/evaluation_science_briefs)

## **Closing Statement by the Virginia Board of Education**

The condition and needs of Virginia's public schools described in this report should be viewed as guideposts for action. The information in this report points toward critical areas of need that will undermine Virginia's future success if not addressed quickly and effectively. Public education benefits everyone. It is the key to ensuring quality of life and economic prosperity for Virginia's citizens both now and in the future.

The encouraging progress made by Virginia's schools and students should not mask the realities of schooling for some children who may face difficult personal circumstances such as high poverty, high crime in their neighborhoods, and other circumstances that obstruct their learning at school. Moreover, the condition and needs of schools surely reflect the condition and needs found in their communities. While the achievement gaps that exist among groups of students are narrowing, the gaps persist and provide a huge challenge to our public schools.

Raising the rigor of Virginia's academic standards is a challenge faced by the Board of Education in its drive to focus on college and career readiness standards that are internationally competitive. As schools implement more rigorous standards and tests in English and mathematics, there may be further declines in accreditation. We must not become alarmed or discouraged. We must not give into temptation to preserve the status quo. Raising standards is the right thing to do and our teachers and schools will rise to the challenge and Virginia students will be better prepared as a result.

The Board of Education is bold in its expectations and the actions taken as a result. It also acknowledges the challenges our students will face as they grow into productive adult citizens of the global economy—the rapid growth in technology, the changing demographics of our communities, and greater demands for skills for all citizens.

With its comprehensive plan of action as its roadmap, the Board of Education's overarching goal is for all of Virginia's public school graduates to be college and career ready.