

2010 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM
Virginia Association of School Business Officials (VASBO)

VASBO recognizes the very difficult times facing the Governor and the General Assembly in the development of the budget for Fiscal Year 2011 (FY 2011). The items listed below remain priorities and deserve additional consideration once the budget climate improves. In the likely event that budget reductions become necessary for FY 2011, the Governor and/or General Assembly should make commensurate adjustments in regards to state requirements and mandates.

1. PERMANENCE OF SOQ SUPPORT COST REDUCTIONS

The Virginia Association of School Business Officials encourages the General Assembly to fully fund the cost of the Virginia Standards of Quality; reductions imposed for FY 2011 should be considered temporary and restored when the economic climate improves. In the interim, the General Assembly should provide school divisions with the authority to exceed SOQ requirements until funding is restored.

2. REBENCHMARKING OF K-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Virginia Association of School Business Officials encourages the General Assembly to fully fund the cost of the Virginia Standards of Quality. The rebenchmarking assessment is estimated by the Virginia Board of Education, and takes into account variables such as staffing ratios, salaries, fringe benefits, prevailing support costs, and inflation. Rebenchmarking also includes the cost to educate additional students. The SOQ are the minimum state standards for public schools, and approximately 90 percent of the state money spent on public education pays for SOQ requirements. It is important to note that rebenchmarking applies to existing programs; it does not include new programs or initiatives. Instead, it applies to costs of public education already being delivered at the local level.

3. FULLY FUND VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION SOQ RECOMMENDATIONS

The Virginia Association of School Business Officials encourages the General Assembly to fund the seven additional revisions to the SOQ that were put forward by the Virginia Board of during the 2007 session. The Constitution of Virginia requires the Board of Education to determine and prescribe standards of quality for the public schools of Virginia, subject to revision only by the General Assembly. These standards are known as the Standards of Quality (SOQ) and form part of the Code of Virginia. The Virginia Board of Education adopted seven proposed revisions to the SOQ that were put forward in proposed legislation in the 2007 session at an estimated FY 08 cost of \$173 million. None of the recommendations, listed below, were approved by the legislature:

- require one full-time reading specialist for each 1,000 students in average daily membership for the school division
- require one full-time principal in every elementary, middle, and high school
- require one full-time assistant principal for each 400 students in every elementary, middle, and high school
- require one speech-language pathologist for every 60 cases
- require one full-time mathematics specialist for each 1,000 students in grades kindergarten through eight

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- require one full-time data manager or test coordinator for each 1,000 students in grades kindergarten through 12
- employ instructional and paraprofessional staff for the blind or vision impaired

4. PRESERVE K-12 EDUCATION AT-RISK INCENTIVE FUNDING

The Virginia Association of School Business Officials encourages the General Assembly to continue or increase funding for at-risk incentive funds, which are essential for ensuring that K-12 students who are at risk of failing are receiving the quality education needed. At-risk incentive funds are currently used for a number of effective programs, including Reading Recovery and AVID, aimed at helping students earn a high school diploma and preparing them for post-secondary education and a successful career.

5. SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION FUNDING

VASBO encourages the General Assembly to reinstate full funding of the School Construction Program, which was reduced by 50 percent by the 2002 General Assembly. With nearly half of Virginia's public schools over 30 years old, school divisions have pressing construction and renovation needs. These needs are compounded by state mandates and incentive programs such as those related to class size, special education students and alternative education programs. Too often the additional space required for these beneficial programs is not accounted for by the state. It is essential that the state restore full funding (\$55 million annually) to prevent a further decline in the safety and quality of public school facilities.

6. TECHNOLOGY FUNDING

VASBO seeks legislation to increase state funding for technology, including software and training needs, to enable school divisions to meet requirements found in the Virginia Standards of Learning.

7. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF TEACHERS

VASBO urges the General Assembly to seek additional ways to attract and retain highly qualified individuals to the teaching profession in Virginia. VASBO specifically supports the following initiatives:

- **Raising Teacher Pay:** VASBO urges the General Assembly to provide the state share of funding to move teacher pay in Virginia to the national average. During the past decade, teacher pay in Virginia has dropped significantly below the national average.
- **Effective Date for Teacher Salary Increases:** In concert with the above position, VASBO encourages the General Assembly to set July 1 as the date from which all future pay increases for public school personnel will be calculated.
- **Revision to the current formula used to calculate average teacher pay:** VASBO believes the state's use of the linear weighted average approach in calculating statewide salary figures for instructional personnel is faulty, resulting in state payments that are based on an artificially low average teacher salary.
- **Dollar-Match Benefits:** VASBO encourages the General Assembly to provide school division employees a similar "dollar match" benefit that is currently provided to state employees who contribute to a tax-deferred annuity through Virginia's Deferred Compensation Plan.

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The following issues remain important to VASBO and the school districts in Virginia but are not major funding issues:

8. CHARTER SCHOOLS

VASBO opposes efforts to broaden Virginia’s charter school law, especially opposing any efforts that would create an appeals process, specify a funding formula without negotiations, or require judicial review. Amendments such as these would serve only to complicate the process and produce a chilling effect on the consideration of charter applications if there is a likelihood that the rules may change in mid-stream or that school boards will be required to defend in court any action taken regarding a proposed or active charter school.

9. SCHOOL CHOICE/TUITION TAX CREDITS

VASBO opposes any legislation which provides for: the use of vouchers or tax credits for non-public school students; a state-mandated program of choice which supersedes the local school board's authority to establish school zones; or allows for resegregation of schools.

10. BINDING ARBITRATION

VASBO opposes any legislation that would amend the Constitution of Virginia by limiting the authority of local school boards to make decisions affecting personnel matters.

11. PART-TIME ENROLLMENT OF NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

VASBO opposes legislation that would require local school boards to provide for the part-time admission and enrollment of non-public school students. Many issues related to liability, attendance, safety, discipline, transportation, course availability, student morale, and financial costs would have to be addressed prior to considering such a mandate.

12. NON-PRESCRIPTION DRUGS ON SCHOOL GROUNDS

VASBO opposes legislation that would restrict a School Board’s authority to establish discipline policies regarding the possession of non-prescription drugs on school grounds.

13. TRIENNIAL CENSUS

VASBO supports the revision of the current Triennial School Census, which counts school-age children (ages 5-19) in a time-consuming and costly process every three years, with no state funding provided. A revised methodology should:

- Have a relationship to student population;
- Be an understandable formula;
- Be of no cost to school divisions;
- Have a high degree of accuracy;
- Eliminate safety concerns in data collection.

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14. “65 PERCENT” LEGISLATION

The Virginia Association of School Business Officials encourages the General Assembly to oppose efforts to define “instructional spending” in a narrow and limited manner that does not include items and programs essential to student learning. In recent years, legislation was introduced to require each local school division to allocate 65 percent of its operating budget to instructional spending. Dubbed the “65 Percent” bill, there are numerous concerns about this legislation, especially in that the 65 percent does not appear to include a host of services that are very important to students and parents. **NOT INCLUDED:**

- Principals and other school administrators
- Guidance Counselors
- School Nurses
- Librarians and Media Services
- Student Support Services like attendance takers and social workers
- Security guards
- Transportation — buses or drivers
- Food Services including breakfast and lunch programs
- Teacher training
- Curriculum development
- Operation costs—heating/cooling classrooms
- Maintenance costs
- Background checks for employees
- Testing programs to comply with NCLB and SOLs
- Translation services to facilitate communication to non-English speaking households