

Virginia Public Education Coalition



VPEC Position on Public Education



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Purpose



The Virginia Public Education Coalition (VPEC) provides a unified voice in advocating for and improving K-12 education in the Commonwealth of Virginia and believes that public education provides direct benefits to students and families, as well as society at large. The coalition views six key purposes* of public education as core to supporting families, communities, and student success.

- **Teach students cognitive and social skills**
- **Prepare students to be responsible, contributing citizens [in a democratic society]**
- **Build character**
- **Help students in a process of self-discovery**
- **Inspire students through the study of humanity's great works and missteps**
- **Prepare students for productive careers**

*from p. 35 in Wagner, T. & Dintersmith, T. (2015). *Most Likely to Succeed*. New York, NY: Scribner.

History

Since 1906, coalitions composed of the education stakeholder groups that now make up VPEC collaborated to advocate for students and adequate public school resources.

1908

Pensions

1980

Direct Aid and
Staff Pay

1926

Hot Lunches
for Students

1989

Ban Corporal
Punishment

1948

Sick Leave for
Educators

1989

State Health
Plans

1950

Salary
Schedule

1992

Local-Election
School Boards

1950s
1960s

Support for
Black Educators

1995

Retiree Health
Credits

1966

Breakfast
Program

1997

IEPs for Students
with Disabilities

1968

Continuing
Contract

1999

NBCT
Stipend

1970s

Retirement and
Cost of Living

2000s

Support Staff
Min Ratios

1979

Duty-Free
Lunch

2007

Increase in
Health Credit



2010s

- Minimized Recession Era Cuts
- New funding for high poverty schools through At-Risk Add-Ons

VPEC Members' Support for the Response to the Pandemic

VPEC represented parents, educators, and students through advocacy and support during the pandemic. This advocacy and support empowered our members to:

- Served nutritious meals to students and community
- Provided daycare facility to essential workers
- Designed innovative scheduling to open schools Fall 2020
- Strategically responded to changing information on the pandemic
- Created solutions to important traditions (e.g. back-to-school events, parent-teacher conferences, and graduations)
- Provided extensive staff development in synchronous-asynchronous instruction
- Continued to build strong family-to-school connections by re-inventing family engagement events (e.g. Drive-In Movies and Bingo, Virtual story time)
- Implemented flexible scheduling to meet parents' work schedules
- Reinforced educator-family relationships through technology innovation that enabled parents to see daily instructional resources and student work
- Coordinated school supply drop offs
- Conducted home-porch visits
- Influenced HVAC and learning loss legislation
- Problem-solved tech issues
- Successfully advocated for increased mental health resources and decreased ratios of specialized student support staffing
- Dropped off hotspots to families without wifi connectivity
- Provided buses with wifi in neighborhoods
- Provided one-to-one devices
- Provided paper option for assignments





Student Outcomes

Although our purpose grounds us, we are guided by desired outcomes for students that are aligned with Virginia's *Profile of a Graduate* and the shared goal of ensuring students are 'life-ready.' We know that a high-quality education leads to better life and health outcomes, stable relationships, lower incarceration rates, higher civic engagement, and many more benefits to individuals (or children), and society as a whole.

- We believe students should develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of literacy and numeracy as well as their ability to think critically and make logical, ethical, and responsible decisions.
- We believe that students should develop the necessary communication and social skills and emotional intelligence to build and sustain relationships with others in their various current and future roles as pupils, professionals, parents, partners, and productive community members.
- We believe that through a high-quality educational experience, students should also be able to explore personal interests. We believe education should prepare students for careers of the future by providing relevant work-based learning experiences, including opportunities for internships, externships, and credentialing (also supported in [Virginia Chamber of Commerce Blueprint 2030](#)).
- We believe our students should be informed citizens who contribute fully to civil society in Virginia and seek to collectively make our state and world a better place.



For Virginia's students to reach their full potential, public education goals must align with expected outcomes and with adequate resources and support. This can be accomplished by investing in critical services supporting public education students and the workforce who dedicate their lives to students. The pages that follow outline the high-level recommendations VPEC believes Virginia K-12 decision-makers should prioritize to improve learning and life outcomes for all Virginia students.

- *Expanding High-Quality Student Services*
- *Effectively Allocating Resources*
- *Reinforcing the Workforce*
- *Engaging Families*
- *Leveraging Community and Business Partners*
- *Modernizing Infrastructure*

Expectations

VPEC believes that constructive dialogue between elected state representatives and those who represent the largest education stakeholder groups is key to continuously improving the needs of public education and its role in Virginia's prosperity.

- 🍏 Ensure students have access to essential health services by providing adequate levels of school nurses, counselors, behavioral specialists, and psychologists.
- 🍏 Invest in advanced academic programs that are accessible to all students
- 🍏 Implement recommendations by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission for special education.
- 🍏 Improve access to affordable, high-quality early childhood education.
- 🍏 Create a balanced assessment system that facilitates deeper learning from the classroom through federal accountability requirements.

Expanding High-Quality Student Service



- 🍏 Expand entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and trades skills education beginning in elementary school
- 🍏 Expand and enhance career and skills development through academic advising, curriculum and resources that support the accessible exploration of careers including internships, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships.
- 🍏 Expand access to global studies and world languages beginning in elementary school.
- 🍏 Create opportunities for more personalized learning through smaller class sizes, increased tutoring and volunteer programs, educator training, additional classroom aides, and formative assessments.

\$ Revise the Standards of Quality to more accurately reflect local school divisions' actual costs; staffing levels; and resources to meet the needs of all students and account for the increased needs of schools with high poverty, English learners, students with disabilities, and communities that have been historically disinvested in via state policy.

\$ Fully lift the 'support cap' that has arbitrarily limited critical support staff positions for more than a decade in public schools and greatly reduced educators' capacity to focus on learning and teaching.



Effectively Allocating Resources

\$ When possible, invest resources in research-based approaches shown through multiple longitudinal studies to improve student outcomes.

\$ Invest in high-quality after school activities and transportation so that all students have access to extracurriculars that enrich their lives and enhance school outcomes.

\$ Transition to a new accreditation model that offers not fully accredited schools substantial support from VDOE and additional resources beyond consulting.

\$ Ensure that students, teachers, and school leaders throughout the Commonwealth have access and exposure to innovative technologies.

- ♡ Establish long-term strategies to improve the attraction/retention of educators.
- ♡ Provide research-based early career supports to ensure greater effectiveness and retention.
- ♡ Establish and implement a plan to increase and sustain teacher salaries in Virginia to a competitive pay scale of similarly educated professionals.

Reinforcing the Workforce



- ♡ Grow the early education workforce by ensuring access to affordable, competency-building credentials and provide a robust investment in a competitive pay scale commensurate with experience and expertise that addresses the severe worker shortage.
- ♡ Provide time and resources to implement quality professional development that is job-embedded and encourages peer-to-peer support that increases educators' capacity to creatively deliver content to engage all students.
- ♡ Support a flexible calendar and local autonomy in the use of time for school districts to develop and implement quality curricula.



Fully fund and provide resources to schools and school divisions to communicate in multiple languages, including access to grades, resources, and regular communication means.



Provide add-on funding for a community relations specialist for schools with the greatest need.



Engaging Families



Fostering collaborative partnerships between families and schools is essential to student success and thriving communities. Families should feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class. To foster regular meaningful two-way communication, VPEC encourages local school divisions to:

- Foster active school-based parent communities
- Regularly survey families on school climate
- Host parent and student feedback work sessions as part of policy development
- Provide regular opportunities for parents to strengthen their knowledge about basic school operations and instructional methodologies
- Communicate student and school improvement plans and metrics that define success
- Provide translation services for School Board meetings
- Provide the School Quality Profiles in multiple languages and available in a more accessible dashboard.

 Establish policies that bridge public education and higher education.

 Establish policies that facilitate building stronger connections between schools and the local business community.

 Enhance work-based learning opportunities, internships, and apprenticeships throughout the education system.



Leveraging Community and Business Partners





Modernizing Infrastructure



Implement the recommendations from the Commission on School Construction and Modernization.



Establish standards and increase state funding of school construction and maintenance to ensure all students in rural, urban, and suburban communities have access to safe schools that enable collaborative learning and meet modern health, safety, and technology standards.



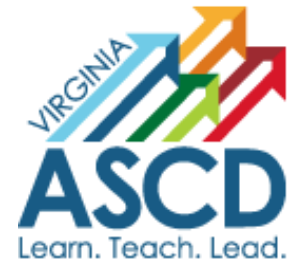
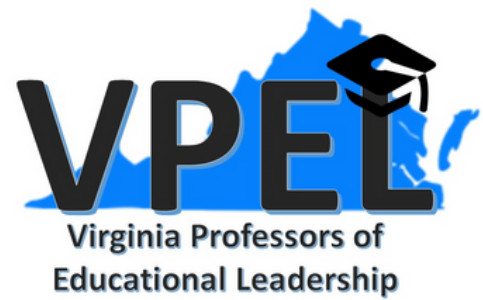
Assist schools in adapting to challenges posed by increasingly extreme weather and flooding, and add green technology that provides important learning opportunities for students.



Provide access to affordable high-speed internet.



**VIRGINIA
ASSOCIATION
OF ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**



**Virginia Association of Colleges
for Teacher Education**

**Virginia Association of
Elementary School Principals**

**Virginia Association of School
Superintendents**

**Virginia Association of
Secondary School Principals**

**Virginia School Boards
Association**

**Virginia Association for
Supervision and Curriculum
Development**

**Virginia Counselors
Association**

Virginia Education Association

**Virginia Middle School
Association**

**Virginia Congress of Parents
and Teachers**

**Virginia School Counselor
Association**

**Virginia Professors of
Educational Leadership**

VPEC - Collaborating Since 1906