



LIFT SUPPORT CAP & FUND STAFFING STANDARDS

Virginia ranks 41st of 50 for state per-pupil funding and is facing critical teacher and school-staff shortages. In Aug. 2022 there were 3,300 teacher vacancies, a 25% increase from Oct 2021. School divisions are relying on provisionally-licensed teachers. Teachers not fully endorsed in their content area more than doubled in the past year. This directly impacts academic success. The General Assembly should fund school staff at levels that reflect actual school division staffing practices, and invest in teacher retention programs.

- **Lift the Support Cap:** Lift the 2009 recession-era Support Position Cap. Support staff balance teacher workload and provide student services that impact academic success
- **Fund the Standards of Quality (SOQ):** Essential staff should be prescribed for every school. Virginia PTA supports the Board of Education's SOQ recommendations.
 - Assistant principal for schools with more than 400 students
 - Specialized Student Support Personnel at a ratio of 4:1,000
 - Professional School Nurse for every school
 - Full technology teacher and full-time librarian for every elementary school
 - Teacher Mentorship & Principal Mentorship Programs
- **Funding for Low Income Schools:** (At Risk Add-On) Address inequitable learning opportunities faced by our most vulnerable students with targeted funding.

MENTAL HEALTH

Virginia school climate surveys indicate significant mental health concerns; 34% of middle schoolers and 40% of high school students reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more. In 2021, youth emergency rooms visits for self-harm increased. Student mental health impacts academic success and school climate, however, many students are not receiving care due to stigma and a shortage of qualified mental health providers.

- Support funding Unified Mental Health teams at nationally recommended ratios of (1:250) for school counselors; (1:500) for psychologists; and (1:250) for social workers
- Support flexible funding and partnering with community-based mental health providers and telehealth providers to connect students with care

LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Reading is foundational to student academic success. Scientifically-based reading research and evidence-based practices for instruction, intervention, and assessments are essential to reading success and future academic achievement.

- Support increase in reading specialists for grades 4-8 (1:550), literacy coaches, and support staffing based on students identified as not proficient on PALS and SOL assessments.
- Support funding Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) to mitigate pandemic learning loss
- Support full time librarian for every school

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

More than 1 in 8 Virginia students are current English Language (EL) or former EL students. English Language students faced unique challenges during the pandemic and had the most significant drop in state achievement scores of any student groups measured for state reading, math, and science tests.

- Support scaled staffing ratio that takes into account the different proficiency level of students and the instructional staff required to support EL students.
- Increase funding for school division translators and resources to increase communication with parents.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT & ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability systems that provide multiple measures of student growth and achievement provide valuable information to students, families, teachers, and school leaders to guide new instruction.

- Support reducing total testing time and mandated assessments to the federal minimum.
- Support through-year growth assessments to inform personalized learning.
- Support development of materials and training that allows teachers to leverage growth assessments and identify learning gaps as part of new instruction.
- Support improved communication to students and parents regarding: how to leverage growth assessments; strategies to support learning at home; school-wide assessment results and academic goals.

SCHOOL QUALITY PROFILE DATA

Factors that impact student success should be publicly available to parents on the School Quality Profiles.

- Support School Quality Profiles being available in commonly spoken world languages
- Support school level reporting of teacher diversity including race and languages spoken
- Support annual principal report to parents citing performance and improvement plans
- Support inclusion of School Climate Survey data on the School Quality Profiles
- Support reporting Mental Health Programs, Staffing, and Threat Assessments

SCHOOL SAFETY

School violence and disciplinary problems have escalated as students return to the classroom. Students and educators have a right to attend schools that are safe and conducive to learning and achievement.

- Support Memorandums of Understanding with local law enforcement agencies, training programs for School Resource Officers, and funding for SRO grant programs.
- Support funding to research the causes and effects of gun violence on youth and communities
- Support funding to implement evidence-based strategies and increased mental health resources to reduce bullying, school violence, and shootings.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & CHILDCARE

Education received during the first five years of a child's life is important to a child's long-term academic success. Reliable, high-quality, affordable child-care also enables families to work and earn an income.

- Funding and programs that expand access to pre-school for at-risk three- and four-year old children.
- Programs, funding, and initiatives that improve and expand childcare affordability for all families.

- Communication about the measures of quality for childcare that enables families to make informed choices, provides feedback to teachers, and is indicative of positive child outcomes.
- Support evidenced-based, integrated, and comprehensive curriculum for early childhood education
- Support programs and funding for ongoing training and retention of early childcare teachers.
- Supports legislation that provides families with paid, flexible sick and leave policies to care for children.

FOOD SECURITY & SCHOOL NUTRITION

Proper nutrition is imperative to the health, development, and academic achievement of children. More than 590,000 students rely on free or reduced-price meals and many also face food insecurity in the evening and on weekends.

- Support continuation of the free school meal program for all students.
- Support infrastructure funding to modernize equipment in school cafeterias and provide training programs that expand access to meals that are scratch-cooked using whole, fresh, and/or minimally processed ingredients.
- Expand access to grants, incentives, and staffing that enables schools to procure and serve more locally grown food and provide hands-on learning in school gardens.
- Support high-quality, high-nutrition school meals and discontinuing competitive food sales at mealtimes.
- Support daily school meal offerings that are inclusive of dietary, religious, or cultural meal options.
- Support inclusion of students, parents, and school staff on school meal and wellness committees.

SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE & BROADBAND

Quality of school buildings is a health, safety, educational, and environmental equity issue for families and communities, which needs dedicated funding.

- Building Modernization: Dedicated funding for renovation, new construction, and debt service costs to meet modern health and technology standards.
- High Speed Affordable Broadband: Support an increased budget for Virginia Telecommunication Initiative (VATI) and initiatives that streamline utilization of federal broadband affordability programs.
- Electric School Buses: Dedicated funding, grants, and incentive programs that enable school districts to purchase electric school buses and install charging stations and electric transportation infrastructure.
- Solar Panels for Schools: Increase access to clean energy solutions by removing net metering limits and barriers that limit school district's use of Power Purchase Agreements.

CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Career Technical Education programs prepare students for high wage, high skill, and high demand careers in existing and emerging industries, while meeting the Commonwealth's need for well-trained and industry-certified technical workers.

- Support funding CTE programs, including registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, expansion of career education pathways, and market-driven compensation for CTE instructors.
- Support communication and programs that celebrate and encourage participation in CTE programs.