

The City of Fairfax School Board



2017

Legislative Program

*Positions on State and Federal Legislation,
Policies and Regulations*

CITY OF FAIRFAX SCHOOL BOARD
2017 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

Positions on State and Federal
Legislation, Policies, and Regulations

The 2017 Legislative Program is available at www.cityoffairfaxschools.org

Adopted January 9, 2017

CITY OF FAIRFAX SCHOOL BOARD

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CITY OF FAIRFAX SCHOOL BOARD 2017 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

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City of Fairfax City Council & Mayor and City of Fairfax School Board Joint Legislative Positions 2017 General Assembly Session

Fully fund the State's portion of K-12 education costs including Cost of Competing

The City of Fairfax School Board and the City Council and Mayor support:

- Realistic and fully-funded Standards of Quality;
- Recognition of cost of living variations in state funding formulas, to more accurately determine a locality's true ability to pay, particularly for high cost of living areas;
- Restoration of full funding for Cost of Competing Adjustment (COCA) for support positions, a factor in the funding formula recognizing the competitive salaries required in high cost of living regions to attract and retain the highest quality instructional and support personnel (the 2016-2018 Biennium Budget included \$11 million in COCA funds for FCPS);
- Appropriate recognition in state funding formulas of the increased costs required to serve children with higher level needs, including special education students (a category encompassing students with intellectual or physical disabilities as well as those with mental/behavioral health issues for whom costs are approximately 100 percent greater than general education), those learning English as a second language (costs are approximately 30 percent greater than general education), and those living in economically disadvantaged households (costs are approximately 10 percent greater than general education); and,
- Increased state resources for early childhood education programs, which help young children enter kindergarten prepared to succeed.

Additionally, the City of Fairfax School Board and the City Council and Mayor oppose:

- State budget cuts that disproportionately target or affect Northern Virginia; and,
- Structural cuts or formula changes which further weaken the partnership between the state and localities.

The funding burden for K-12 has increasingly shifted to local governments, in spite of the fact that the state has significantly more diverse revenue options than localities in order to meet those responsibilities. Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) noted in its recent review of K-12 spending that localities provided a majority of total funding for school divisions in FY 2014. There is a growing imbalance between local funding effort and the state in this partnership.

Investing in early childhood and K-12 education can reduce or eliminate the need for more costly interventions and remediation.

Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Examination Funding

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- State and federal funding of the student costs for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate end-of-course examinations and other related fees.

After-School Programs, At-Risk Youth, and Gang Prevention

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Comprehensive and flexible after-school programs and other preventive interventions addressing expanded learning opportunities and academic success, positive peer and adult relationships, adolescent substance abuse, behavioral issues, and gang participation.
- The availability of local, state and federal resources focusing on after-school programs, summertime programs, and initiatives with a proven record of effectiveness that enhance social, physical, and emotional development.
- The coordination of resources and activities across local, state and federal agencies, and with local nonprofit and community organizations, aimed at prevention of gang violence and in support of academic enrichment programs.
- The development of and growth of statewide policies fostering collaborative partnerships to sustain new and existing high quality after-school and summer expanded learning programs.

Alternative Education Programs

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Continued local school board authority and discretion for offering alternative education programs to students, including those who have been suspended, expelled, excluded or otherwise disciplined.
- Adequate state funding for alternative education with the necessary flexibility for local school boards to operate their own diverse programs.

Attendance and Truancy

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Attendance and truancy laws and policies that are clear, and that place a greater emphasis on encouraging attendance through engagement, prevention and early intervention, and that provide appropriate timelines for addressing attendance issues.

The City of Fairfax School Board respects:

- A parent's right to request an exemption from compulsory school attendance for their student under Virginia Code Section 22.1-254 by reason of "bona fide religious training or belief," but believes that requirements to report on the academic progress of students

receiving such an exemption should be aligned with reporting requirements already required of all other students receiving home instruction under §22.1-254.1.

Charter Schools

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Reserving ultimate and final authority over decisions whether or not to approve or revoke the formation of a charter school for local school boards. Charter schools can play an important role in the education of Virginia’s children and can be an important tool to address student learning needs; but local school boards, and not alternative chartering authorities outside the local community, are in the best position to determine whether or not a charter proposal fits within the context of a school division’s own unique needs and student population.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes

- Charter school or other “alternative Governance” proposals (such as granting the State Board of Education local chartering authority) which override the local school board’s primary decision making responsibilities over charter formation and school governance

College Accessibility

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Increased state funding for the additional faculty and buildings needed to accommodate the growing number of qualified Virginia high school graduates seeking admission to the Commonwealth’s community colleges and four-year colleges and universities
- Maintaining suitable ratios of in-state and out-of-state students in each of the Commonwealth’s institutions of higher education
- Eligibility for in-state tuition for students who are lawfully present in the United States under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, provided they meet Virginia’s domicile requirements.

College Readiness and Post Secondary Education

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Increased coordination of college and work readiness standards between K-12 and higher education
- Collaborative dual-enrollment partnerships and better coordinated credentialing of faculty between local school divisions and institutions of higher learning which allow high school students, with minimal student financial impact, to earn college credit or facilitate their pursuit of technical training for industry certifications while still attending high school.

Cost of Competing

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Continued use of an appropriate and up-to-date cost of competing factor for both instructional and support personnel in the Standards of Quality reimbursement formulas which recognize the necessity to pay higher wages in identified high cost of living and competitive wage market regions to attract and retain the highest quality workforce.

Early Childhood Education

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- State provision of high quality early childhood programs, provided that the state furnishes full funding for the implementation and on-going operation and increases the per pupil funding of such programs
- In the absence of state provision of full funding, particular attention should be paid to increasing the per pupil funding, minimizing start-up costs; reducing or eliminating any required local match and funding assistance for capital facilities.
- Flexibility to account for local at-risk criteria, including regional variations in cost of living, when setting eligibility standards for early childhood programs; particularly for the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI).

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- Shifting mandated responsibility for early childhood programs and capital facilities funding to localities or subjecting such funding to state equalization formulas.

Early Intervention and Remediation Programs

The City of Fairfax School Board supports;

- Sufficient state funding for early intervention and remediation programs for all eligible students;
- Reasonable reporting requirements, guidelines, and regulations for both early intervention and remediation programs that do not compromise their objectives of improving student academic achievement.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- The use of standardized test scores as the sole basis for decisions regarding a student's appropriate grade level assignment.

Federal Education Funding and Policy

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Full and adequate federal funding to implement federal mandates, such as those found in the newly reauthorized Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), as well as grants of broad flexibility to empower states and localities to fulfill these mandated programs' requirements.

- Federal and state policies, laws, regulations, and procedures that promote and facilitate local access to and flexibility in the use of federal education-related funds.
- Mandatory funding for special education to meet the federal commitment to fund 40 percent of the “excess costs” of special education as promised since the 1975 adoption of federal special education laws (currently known as IDEA).
- Allowing local school divisions to use additional special education funds to supplant local funds that since 1975 have been expended to make up the deficit in promised federal support.
- Continuation and full funding of the Title I, Part A grant within the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that serves schools with the highest percentage of children from low-income families.
- Continued reliance on Title I formula grants to provide critical and consistent funding to all eligible school divisions and not solely on competitive grant programs.
- Giving schools greater flexibility for using Title I funds to address persistent performance gaps, including allowing school divisions to flexibly supplement local funding where appropriate as well as reducing the number and amount of mandated fund set-asides.
- Continued reliance on Title I formulas that allocate funding based on both a school division’s overall poverty rate as well as on the division’s absolute numbers of students in poverty.
- Continued and adequate funding for teacher quality and professional development (Title II); educational services for students with limited English proficiency (Title III); to offset the local impact of federally-connected students and impacts associated with federal Base Realignment and Closure Commission’s (BRAC) relocation decisions (Impact Aid); for vocational and technical education (the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act); for educational technology and internet connectivity (E-Rate); for at-risk youth; and for quality after school and summer programs (21st Century Community Learning Centers Initiative).
- Additional federal funding aid to help address the needs of unaccompanied children who have been relocated to Fairfax County through the federal Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- The imposition on local school divisions of federal mandates that are not adequately funded, that impose undue administrative burdens.
- Arbitrary across-the-board cuts to, or federally-imposed caps upon, education spending, such as those envisioned by “sequestration.”
- Overly restrictive interpretations of “supplement, not supplant” provisions for federal funding which infringe on a local school board’s authority to set their own budget and staffing priorities.
- Turning Title I or other federal program funding into portable vouchers.

The City of Fairfax School Board strongly supports:

- State funding for elementary and secondary education that adequately and appropriately supports quality programs for all students in the Commonwealth, with the state fairly sharing responsibility with each local school board for the true costs to localities of implementing Virginia’s Standards of Quality (including the Standards of Accreditation and Standards of Learning) as well as state mandated programs not otherwise included in the Standards
- Fair, equitable, and up-to-date state funding distribution formulas, including the Local Composite Index (LCI), that accurately reflect local ability to pay, revenue generation capacity, local cost of living, and the resource needs of local school division
- Amendment of Article VII of the Virginia Constitution, to mandate that the General Assembly “ensure” (as opposed to merely “seek” to ensure) that an educational program of high quality is established and continually maintained
- Increased state funding for instructional and support position salaries without revenue contingencies.
- More realistic and accurate calculations of true average salaries and other educational costs for state funding purposes
- Funding formulas that distribute state aid for early intervention and remediation programs by using the local school division’s composite index or .5000 – whichever is lower
- The recognition of absolute population numbers as well as percentages when distributing state funds for special needs programs
- Use of formulas based on individual school populations, rather than solely on aggregate system-wide data
- Continued distribution of some funding on a uniform state/local match, such as technology grants
- Funding formulas which account for student population growth, measured both by percentage as well as by absolute population growth, as a key factor driving education funding needs in high growth localities;
- Funding formulas used for infrastructure needs, such as for technology and construction, which recognize variations in school enrollments and student population growth, rather than basing distribution on a per-school basis or on the Local Composite Index (LCI);
- Additional state funding support to help offset the increasing costs of Career and Technical Education certification;
- Increasing the proportion of state tax dedicated to public education;
- The current mechanism for distributing sales tax revenues on the basis of each locality’s number of school-age children rather than through other mechanisms that would further equalize sales tax distributions.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- Artificial limitations on the growth of state expenditures, such as limiting expenditure growth to the rate of inflation and general population increases;
- The continued practice of shifting Standards of Quality and other recurring cost programs into the state’s lottery funded accounts;

- Measures that would reduce the discretionary authority local school boards currently have to set their own budget priorities, such as requiring school divisions to spend certain percentages of their budget on certain activities or budget categories;

Education Technology

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Increased state and federal contributions for local educational technology costs to improve and enhance classroom instruction, to fulfill mandates for virtual instruction and online assessment, and to assist with the mandated collection and reporting of student achievement and teacher quality data
- Sufficient state funding to implement a 5-year replacement cycle based on a minimum one-to-one student-to-computer ratio as well as a regular replacement cycle for administrative computers;
- Allowing school divisions the flexibility to use state technology funds to either purchase or lease technology equipment and software;
- The provision of additional and adequate state funding to address the ongoing technology infrastructure and staffing needs associated with the online Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment initiative and the state's increasing use of computer adaptive testing and the growing number and scope of other high stakes online testing initiatives;
- Flexibility for school divisions to pursue locally developed technology plans as well as innovative approaches to the development and funding of educational technology, including partnerships with higher education and private industry;
- Creation of a state clearing house to facilitate the movement of student records for students who transfer between school divisions in Virginia;
- Policies and specific state funding to enhance the accessibility of technology and broadband connectivity to all schools and students, including one-to-one computing, Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiatives, and access outside of regular school hours.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Implementation

The City of Fairfax School Board strongly supports the ideals embodied by the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, namely that every child is capable of learning and that every school and school division must be held accountable for educating every student to his or her potential.

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Common-sense federal accountability programs to ensure fair, accurate, and meaningful assessments of student achievement, and that leave the ultimate determination of the best ways to measure student, school and school division accountability to the states and localities;
- Facilitating having high quality teachers in every classroom and high quality principals in every school;

- Making certain that any federal interventions appropriately address the academic needs of a school’s population;
- Federal programs which encourage and enhance the use of successful evidence-based improvement models, appropriately emphasize the achievement of particular goals rather than rigid and inflexible “top down” or “one size fits all” reform models, and which are not in conflict with provisions found in other major federal education laws.
- The incorporation of measures of student academic progress, such as a common scale across all grade level assessments, when calculating student achievement;
- Emphasis on the broad-based college and workplace readiness skills necessary for success in the 21st Century;
- Allowances for determinations of reasonable and meaningful student assessment, including the use of alternative assessments for special education and limited English proficient students where appropriate;
- Addressing the issue of counting students multiple times across multiple subgroups;
- Focusing interventions on students who fail to meet achievement benchmarks and on positive supports that fit the circumstances under which schools fail to meet accountability benchmarks to improve student achievement rather than on sanctions or overly burdensome reform monitoring requirements that punish underperforming schools;
- Attention to cost and logistical considerations as key components in reauthorization;
- Recognition and sharing of exemplary school performance resulting from proven best practices.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- Rigid imposition of school reform models that rely on the removal of a principal as the only or ultimate way to turn around an underperforming school;
- Making policy decisions, such as teacher and principal evaluation that are solely or overly reliant on student scores on standardized, high-stakes tests.

English Language Learners

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Increased federal and state support to ensure the provision of appropriate academic and English language instructional programs for students with limited English proficiency (LEP);
- Assessment programs (including alternate assessments) for LEP students that are linguistically appropriate, that accurately and meaningfully assess both a student’s English language proficiency as well as academic achievement, and that are funded in the same manner as the state pays for other assessments required for state or federally mandated accountability programs;
- Funding for local school division or community provision of family literacy programs for LEP students and their parents as well as adult English classes for the parents;
- Developing a “Total English Learner” accountability subgroup that would include both current English learners (level 6 students; and students who had been levels 1-5 at any

time in their K-12 schooling) to more accurately measure the overall achievement for students covered by this subgroup and better reflect the successes of achieving language proficiency.

Fiscal Autonomy of Elected Local School Boards

The City of Fairfax School Board recommends that the General Assembly initiate a study to examine the complex issues involved in elected school boards making progress toward fiscal autonomy.

Freedom of Information Act

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Revision and amendment of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and companion regulations, such as those issued by the Library of Virginia regarding records retention, in order to achieve the appropriate balance between the considerable investment in time and money required for compliance, protection of personal information, and ensuring the people of the Commonwealth have ready access to public records;
- Addressing and potentially adjusting FOIA requirements in light of the growth of the use of electronic communications to communicate more quickly and efficiently with the public, including but not limited to web pages and “social media.”;
- The creation of a “third party disclosure” FOIA exemption that would allow for the redaction of private information from emails that would not otherwise be subject to FOIA except for the fact they had been forwarded to an email address subject to FOIA;
- Clarification of current FOIA exemptions for human resources investigations;
- Reimbursement for state and federally mandated redactions from requested documents;
- Granting local school boards and other local public bodies expanded authority to conduct electronic communication meetings;
- Flexibility in how to fulfill mandates for required legal notices for certain public hearings and meetings.

Governor’s Schools Funding

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Funding for all regional academic year Governor’s Schools based on actual uncapped enrollment, with annual adjustment of the add-on per pupil amount for academic year Governor’s Schools in conjunction with the basic aid per pupil adjustment;
- State funding support for capital construction and improvements at regional academic year Governor’s Schools;
- Funding sufficient to maintain or expand summer residential Governor’s Schools that offer academic programs.

Local Composite Index

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Establishing an incentive in basic aid funding to encourage contracting for school services
- Fair, equitable, and up-to-date state funding distribution formulas, including the Local Composite Index (LCI), that accurately reflect local ability to pay, revenue generation capacity, local cost of living, and the resource needs of local school divisions;
- Lowering the current .8000 cap on the LCI to increase the state's minimum share of education funding for every local school division;
- Hold harmless provisions to mitigate the effects of biennial changes in the LCI.
- Comprehensive study of the LCI formula in its entirety prior to the implementation of any changes to the formula itself. Such a study should include the impact of unequal city and county taxing authority on local ability to generate revenue; the impact of tax-exempt federal property on a locality's ability to pay; the impact cost of living has on a locality's ability to pay; and the incorporation of measures of service burden such as student demographics, concentrated areas of poverty, limited English proficiency population, special education population and other programmatic demands. The study should also update the 2002 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission's (JLARC) findings on potential additions and changes to the LCI formula and its calculation methodology that would make the formula better reflect current local economic conditions.

Mandates

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Recognition that burdensome reporting requirements without associated resources for administrative time/staffing constitute unfunded mandates;
- Comprehensive evaluation of the appropriateness of existing mandates on school divisions and school division personnel, particularly those which have been implemented with little or no state funding support.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- State and federal mandates requiring school division actions or services that do not specifically provide for adequate resources (which includes both funding and the availability of instructional/administrative time) required for the mandate's implementation. Because funding for education is a shared local, state and federal responsibility, implementation of mandates from any level includes a local funding component which places additional pressures on local budgets. This is particularly true in jurisdictions that have a high Local Composite Index and receive a proportionately smaller share of state funding for implementation.
- The practice of shifting previously unallocated revenue streams to "fund" new mandates, instead of providing new revenues to implement the new requirements.

In the event that new requirements are imposed, the City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Recommendations for elimination of existing mandates to free up resources in conjunction with the adoption of new requirements;
- Granting sufficient time and implementation guidance must be given to school divisions prior to the policy change's effective date.

Poverty and Student Achievement

The City of Fairfax School Board support:

- Additional state-level K-12 resources targeted to assist schools with high levels of poverty. Poverty is well documented as one of the most influential factors affecting student achievement. FCPS and other state and national research findings show that schools that have large concentrations of students from families in poverty are significantly less likely to reach achievement benchmarks, independent of other factors. However, the Board recognizes that while they would definitely be helpful, even new resources for K-12 can only go so far in overcoming the cumulative negative effect that overall community poverty has on student achievement.
- Coordinated local, state and federal policies and resources to help address the root causes of poverty within the larger community and not just within the schools' walls, including efforts to reduce concentrations of poverty through strategic community planning in collaboration with the City of Fairfax Mayor and City Council.

Retirement/Virginia Retirement System (VRS)

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Returning the VRS payment schedules to the original timeline set in 2012, which would bring VRS employer rate contributions to 100 percent of the full actuarial rate in FY 2019, rather than the accelerated schedule approved during the 2016 General Assembly.
- State funding for the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) as to sustain long term fiscal solvency and to meet its legal obligations to vested school system employees;
- Increased state funding contributions for VRS, allowing for lower required local contribution rates;
- VRS consideration of the impacts that teacher retirement contribution rates can have on local school divisions during their rate setting process;
- Post-retirement employment options which do not adversely affect the employer and that encourage educational employees to work after they have accrued the maximum retirement benefits.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- Caps upon, or the establishment of, rates below what localities will be required to bear of the state share of VRS contribution rates for teachers;

- Mandating the inclusion of salary supplements for temporary voluntary activities such as club sponsorship or coaching in the definition of creditable compensation.

Revenue Alternatives

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- A tax structure in the Commonwealth that provides localities with sufficient state revenue, to better address the resource demands of state and federally-mandated education programs;
- Local revenue flexibility to accommodate various economic and demographic conditions and assist local governments in creating systems of taxation that are sensible, fair, stable, and reflect local priorities;
- Revisions to the tax structure of the Commonwealth that truly result in long-term additional revenue capacity, not revenue-diminishing or revenue-neutral changes among different taxing sources;
- Expanding local taxing authority and the flexibility over the use of generated revenue available to the Commonwealth's 95 counties to match authority already available to its 39 cities, including referendum authority to raise local sales taxes with revenues dedicated to school facilities;
- Addressing the issue of collecting state sales tax on internet purchases;
- Retention of local school board flexibility to charge appropriate fees for programs and activities that are not directly related to core educational programs.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- Tax restructuring changes that would restrict already limited existing local taxing authority, such as state mandated restrictions on local property taxes;
- Tax restructuring measures that would adversely affect the financial condition of counties, cities, and towns.

School Calendar

The City of Fairfax School Board strongly supports:

- School board control over the school calendars and the school day, including allowing local school boards to set opening day of school..

In the absence of outright repeal of the prohibition on opening school prior to Labor Day, the City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Additions to existing Code provisions defining good cause for opening school prior to Labor Day to include: additional instructional time, particularly prior to nationally-administered assessments of student academic achievement; the provision of appropriate summer intervention programs for students; and increased professional development opportunities for staff.

School Construction

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- The development and funding of adequate and equitable state and federal programs to assist localities with public school construction, renovation, and major maintenance projects;
- School construction funding formulas should rely upon absolute numbers of students as well as rates of growth when accounting for student population; recognize the amount of local debt incurred for school construction; and not be overly reliant on the Local Composite Index;
- Exempting contractors from the retail and sales use tax on materials purchased while under contract by local school divisions for construction, repair, or other real-estate related services;
- Full restoration of local government authority to accept cash and in-kind proffers.

Special Education

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Special education programs which help every child learn to his or her potential, which necessarily includes additional and mandatory federal and state funding to help local school divisions deliver those services;
- The availability of appropriate and valid alternative assessments of student achievement as deemed appropriate by a student's IEP team;
- A uniform set of rules and guidelines allowing school districts to claim administrative and transportation expenses associated with Medicaid eligible services to students served under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA);
- Adherence to language in IDEA asking states to minimize the number of additional rules, regulations, and policies imposed upon local school divisions above and beyond the requirements already imposed by IDEA;
- Leaving the ultimate determination of the provision of appropriate services for each student covered under IDEA to that particular student's IEP team, subject to due process protections;
- The existing convention which places the burden of proof during due process proceedings on the party bringing the action;
- Authority for local school boards to apply timely and fair discipline to all students, regardless of disability status, who commit violations involving drugs, weapons, and assaultive behavior endangering others at school or chronically disrupting the education of other students, where the violation is determined by the student's IEP team not to be a manifestation of their disability.

Standards of Accreditation and Standards of Learning

In recent years, the proliferation of high stakes standardized testing and the increasing role played by those test scores in key educational policy decisions, while well intentioned, has resulted in a narrowing of the instructional mission of schools and caused a focus on compliance rather than on instructional improvement.

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Standards of Accreditation (SOA) that establish an accountability program that appropriately assesses and provides educationally-valuable information regarding the achievement of all students—through the Standards of Learning (SOL)—and holds students, parents, teachers, and schools accountable for the results;
- Reforms to the state accreditation system to provide more nuance and in-depth information to parents and the community about each individual school’s performance across a variety of measures;
- Closer alignment between state accreditation and federal accountability expectations in terms of specific academic targets used to determine whether a school meets content area accreditation benchmarks, to help reduce confusion for both parents and school staff when comparing vastly different school success criteria;
- State content standards curriculum guidelines and assessments that strike an appropriate balance between a broad overview of a subject area, in-depth exploration of components within and interrelationships between subject areas, and the acquisition and mastery of the skills required for every graduate to be able to engage in a lifelong pursuit of learning as a communicator, collaborator, ethical and global citizen, creative and critical thinker, and goal-directed and resilient individual.
- School improvement guidelines and expectations that are grounded in evidence of effectiveness, and that allow flexibility for school divisions to adopt evidence-based improvement models that align with their specific goals and improvement focus.
- A balanced state assessment program that provides authentic and cost-effective measures of student achievement, including the ability to gauge student academic progress over time; and that is nonintrusive on the learning process, reliable, valid, fair, and, to the extent possible and appropriate, aligned with federal accountability provisions;
- Assessment reforms to help refocus the state’s assessment system as a tool to help evaluate a student’s acquisition of subject knowledge and skills and to address concerns about the frequency of standardized student testing;
- Systemic reforms to Virginia’s assessment system which may include:
 - the use of statistically valid sampling techniques as utilized by assessments such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) among others;
 - opportunities to allow students to forgo standardized assessments in certain years based on previous high achievement levels; and
 - Expanded use of internationally benchmarked assessments in place of SOL assessments.
- In the absence of more systemic change, the City of Fairfax School Board supports changes within the existing SOL system to grant additional flexibility such as earlier test

administrations for students who can demonstrate mastery regardless of “clock hour” requirements;

- Expanded and simplified opportunities to make use of substitutes for SOL tests like College Board’s Advanced Placement Exams, including streamlined mechanisms for the submission of substitute test scores;
- Continued alternate assessments for students with disabilities for whom participation in the regular SOL testing program is deemed inappropriate by their IEP team which meet the same criteria of reliability, validity and fairness as other assessments;
- Alternate assessments for students with limited English proficiency that are linguistically appropriate and yield accurate information on these students’ mastery of subjects other than English;
- The continued availability of alternate assessments in paper versions where appropriate for an individual student’s needs;
- Continued work toward a faster return of student and school test score data, particularly with regard to the return of alternative assessment results;
- Ensuring students have multiple pathways to earn a diploma and the flexibility explore career clusters of interest in preparation for post-secondary opportunities, which may include:
 - increasing the number of courses listed in the Virginia Board of Education’s “Approved Courses to Satisfy Graduation Requirements for the Standard, Advanced Studies, and Modified Standard Diplomas in Virginia Public Schools;”
 - reconsideration of the student-selected verified credit requirement, particularly in conjunction with SOL assessment reform;
 - additional routes to fulfilling personal finance graduation requirements in lieu of a year-long course, including recognition of relevant coursework in middle school;
- Continued and extended support for high school redesign as well as extending redesign efforts to align changes with middle and elementary schools;
- The current authority local school divisions have to implement changes in graduation requirements that go beyond those mandated by the state to meet the educational needs of their particular jurisdictions;
- Conditioning any statewide changes in instructional program requirements, including high school graduation requirements, on sufficient input of the State Board of Education and major stakeholders as well as studies of the fiscal and instructional implications of such changes for all students and local school divisions;
- Leaving the ultimate decisions regarding appropriate policy or school governance interventions to address instructional and operational issues should remain with local school boards, as made in collaboration with parents and the local community.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- Oversimplifying school achievement measurements by aggregating the wealth of data already available about school performance into a single score, such as a grade on an A-F scale. Even if the metrics underlying the single score are comprehensive, the Board believes that such an aggregated system actually provides far less information to parents, the community, policy makers, and educators to understand a particular school’s achievements and/or shortcomings and to assist in developing strategies to address student and school performance concerns.

- State “takeovers” of underperforming local schools.

Standards of Quality

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- The adoption and maintenance of appropriate and fully-funded Standards of Quality (SOQ) which accurately reflect actual local instructional and support priorities and operating expenses, best practices, and needs; and which keep pace with ever evolving accountability requirements within the Standards of Accreditation and “college and career ready” content standards and assessments under the Standards of Learning.
- Funding for the Standards of Quality that fully cover the total state share (55 percent) of the costs of establishing and maintaining an educational program of high quality, as envisioned in the Constitution of Virginia;
- Providing full and appropriate funding for the biennial re-benchmark of the SOQ funding formulas; as well as fund its full share of the costs of continuing the existing categorical, lottery funded, and incentive programs that are included in direct aid to public education. Should the General Assembly fail to fully fund the biennial re-benchmark of the SOQ funding formulas, the state should grant waiver requests from certain mandated SOQ requirements in proportion to the shortfall.
- SOQ staffing standards for instructional and support positions which more accurately reflect local educational needs and conditions;
- Staffing standards that are flexible enough to address varying local service needs and accommodate innovative instructional practices.
- SOQ staffing standards that are adequately funded to fully support the actual costs of classroom instructional priorities and state and federal accountability requirements, but which are flexible enough to address varying local service needs and accommodate innovative instructional practices;
- Specific inclusion in the SOQ of the positions and support necessary to carry out mandates found in other sections of the Code, in other Virginia Board of Education regulations or in federal law;
- Specific recognition within the Standards of the critical role that both school facilities and technology infrastructure play in the successful implementation of the instructional program prescribed by the SOQ. The elimination of the arbitrary state funding cap on support positions, or, in the absence of elimination, shifting specific positions out from under the cap.
- Increasing the provision of English as a Second Language (ESOL) teachers within the Standards of Quality from 17 per 1,000 LEP students to levels commensurate with local staffing practices;
- Provision of the state share of funding for two pupil personnel positions per 1,000 LEP students;
- Building SOQ staffing standards around high school schedules that almost universally run longer than the state’s currently assumed six period day;

- A comprehensive empirical study of the SOQ, which should include an assessment of the accuracy with which the state measures local SOQ-related input costs, the adequacy of the current SOQ, and an update to the many recommendations related to the Standards of Quality from the 2002 JLARC *Review of Elementary and Secondary School Funding* that to date have not been implemented.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- The state shifting its Constitutional responsibility for funding public education onto the localities and local taxpayers;
- Changes in the state’s biennial re-benchmarking process which further erode the connection between what the state is obligated to pay for K-12 education and the actual costs of providing services;
- Deducting local or federal revenues from the Basic Aid funding calculation;
- Eliminating or scaling back current SOQ requirements, without sound best practice or other research based evidence that the requirements are no longer necessary.

Student Activities

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- Mandates to require local school boards to allow students who are not currently enrolled full time in a public school in their locality to participate in student athletics and activities.

Student Discipline

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Maintaining the current statutory authority of local school boards to adopt regulations permitting them to choose among alternative discipline procedures specified in the Code of Virginia for handling cases of suspension, expulsion, and exclusion;
- Regulations and procedures that enable prompt, understandable, consistent and fair disciplinary action for all students;

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- Legislative imposition of universally-applicable restrictions on local school board authority to take disciplinary action against students for specific actions or behaviors;
- Legislative requirements that a local school board use any particular disciplinary measure, unless it is required by federal law; and mandates to provide educational services to students (other than those served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) whom the local school board has suspended, expelled, or excluded.

Student Health and Wellness

The City of Fairfax School Board recognizes the role schools play in the provision of school health services, but views the local health department as the primary provider of such services. School divisions should not be required to assume the responsibility or costs of additional non-instructional services, particularly as they impact existing instructional time, nor should they be mandated to staff school clinics with registered nurses or other licensed medical personnel.

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Significantly increased state resources for local school divisions to help school divisions implement recent state-mandated student physical and mental health initiatives.
- Continued attention to the issue of childhood obesity in Virginia's public schools. Any such consideration should include the collection and dissemination of best practices for nutrition, physical activity, and sleep which may help combat childhood obesity; but which allow local school divisions to retain flexibility in how they address this problem through local wellness policies;
- Maintaining locally-based authority and the flexibility to choose to establish policies relating to health and mental health issues;
- Increased state reimbursement for both the school lunch and school breakfast programs.

Student Safety

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- The provision of and funding for a safe and secure learning environment for its students and personnel, which includes securing physical facilities as well as educating students regarding the safe use of the internet and other instructional technologies;
- State funding sufficient to support a uniformed school resource officer in each middle school and high school in the Commonwealth;
- State support the active monitoring by state and local offices of probation and parole of individuals in the State Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry;
- Incentive funding for local school boards to use in ensuring safe, secure, and respectful school environments through effective programs such as peer mediation, conflict resolution, character education, threat assessment, door access technologies, video surveillance, radio interoperability with public safety agencies, exit door numbering protocols, visitor screening, and other proactive initiatives appropriate at the local school level;
- Interpretations and provisions of law that allow local school boards to be rigorous in banning the possession of weapons on school property in order to protect the safety of students in the school environment;
- Specific authorization for localities to ban possession of dangerous weapons in recreation centers and prohibition of the sale of look-alike firearms, particularly BB and pellet guns, to minors; and maintaining the confidentiality of school specific and district-wide emergency/crisis plans.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- Requiring the designation of officials to carry concealed handguns in schools;
- Specific state mandates to place School Resource Officers (SROs) in schools; such personnel decisions should remain with local school boards.

Student Transportation

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Measures that foster safe transportation for pupils as well as the efficient operation of school buses and school division transportation systems;
- Renewed focus on the enforcement of the prohibition on passing stopped school buses, including removing barriers to implementation of stop arm photo monitoring cameras on school buses.
- Allowing localities the flexibility to evaluate the potential effectiveness and appropriateness of using alternative communications devices on school buses.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- Legislation which would involve local school boards in the provision of transportation for nonpublic school students.

Teachers and Instructional Personnel

The City of Fairfax School Board supports:

- Local, state, and federal initiatives that help to attract and retain the highest quality teachers and instructional personnel of diverse backgrounds. This includes: support for competitive salaries; alternative licensure and Career Switcher programs (which include an internship or classroom practicum requirement); mentoring; monetary awards for National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification; clinical faculty programs; professional development schools; the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program and other tuition reimbursement programs; property and income tax relief; and other support for housing related expenses;
- Rigorous and fair performance evaluation systems including the ability to remove ineffective teachers;
- Significantly increased opportunities for high quality professional development to better prepare teachers and school administrators to successfully manage such challenges as educational accountability, addressing achievement gaps, and the integration of technology for the purpose of improving student achievement;
- A comprehensive evaluation of the appropriateness of initial teacher licensure and licensure renewal requirements, particularly in light of the accumulation of new mandates added over the last several years;

- An evaluation of Virginia statutes governing teacher employment, grievance, suspension and dismissal, including in particular the impacts of the changes adopted by the General Assembly in 2013;
- Reform to the process for submission of licensure applications and renewals to the state, with the goal of streamlining processing and reporting;
- Better alignment between content included in teacher preparation programs and the actual skills required by teachers to be successful in the classroom as well as those mandated by state and federal policymakers.
- Additional routes to provisional or conditional licensure in high-need fields, including English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) and special education, and incorporation of additional flexibility in provisional or conditional licensure for teachers seeking to add further endorsement areas (even in non-high need fields) when those individuals are able to secure an intention to hire from a school administrator in a high poverty school.
- Additional state resources and policies to facilitate and accelerate the process of conducting teacher background checks, including state approval for specific local positions authorized to conduct teacher background checks.

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- The elimination of continuing contracts;
- Changes to the grievance process that do not preserve adequate due process protections.

Vouchers, Tuition, Tax Credits, and Tax Deductions

The City of Fairfax School Board opposes:

- Diverting public education funds to nonpublic schools in the form of tuition tax credits, tax deductions, or vouchers as means of reimbursing parents for their children's educational expenses, grades K-12;
- Measures requiring the transfer of local taxpayer funds to other jurisdictions or to private providers should a student choose to attend a virtual program outside of their home school division;
- Mandates for choice programs between school divisions or choice programs that include private schools; as well as state or federal mandates for intra district choice programs (within one school division).