

Albemarle County Public Schools
2015 Legislative Agenda Draft 10.23.14

2015 Legislative Priorities

I. Public Education Funding

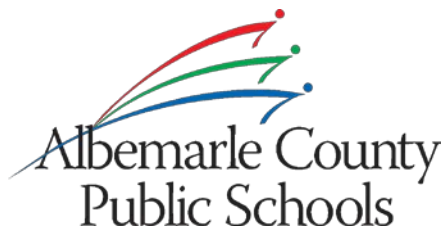
It is essential that the state provides the funding necessary to support educating students in the 21st century.

The gap between Standards of Quality funding and the actual local costs of providing a high quality education continues to grow. In FY 2009, Direct Aid to Public Education received 35.2% of the General Fund revenues; in FY 2015, this has decreased to 29.7%. Structural policy changes in this time period have significantly altered the state's funding obligations to public education going forward, such as the introduction of a cap on funding for support staff and the elimination of inflationary updates for non-personal costs like utilities. Per pupil spending remains well below FY 2009 levels unadjusted for inflation.

Increased expectations of students, educators, and schools- like the more rigorous reading, writing, science, and mathematics Standards of Learning tests introduced since 2011- are not matched by a commitment to adequate funding. The percentage of schools meeting state accreditation standards has declined for a second consecutive year: only 68% of Virginia's schools remain Fully Accredited for the 2014-2015 school year, a decrease of more than 26%.

- We support legislation to amend the Composite Index Funding Formula by re-defining the local true value of real property component of the formula to include the land use taxation value of real property rather than the fair market assessed value for those properties that have qualified and are being taxed under a land use value taxation program.
- We support the restoration of funds to the Virginia Retirement System to maintain the long-term solvency of the plan without further devolving the funding responsibility to localities.
- We oppose any mandates on local school divisions without full funding methods provided.





II. Assessments and Accountability

Albemarle County Public Schools supports a rigorous curriculum accompanied by a meaningful system of accountability, and we applaud the General Assembly's actions last session to replace five Standards of Learning assessments in grades 3-7 with locally developed, authentic measures of student learning. We support further reductions in Standards of Learning tests that allow for balanced assessments which measure the development of lifelong learning competencies, such as critical and creative thinking and problem solving. We support opportunities for local school divisions to improve upon and innovate in the delivery of assessments.

- We support the use of statistically valid sampling techniques in student assessments.
- We support the availability of waivers to high performing school divisions to implement alternative performance-based assessments.
- We support increased access to expedited retakes of the Standards of Learning assessments.

III. Flexibility

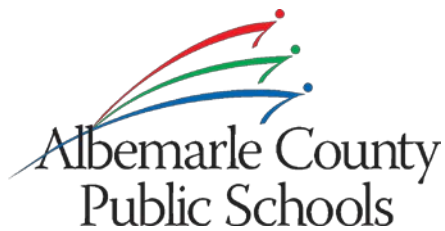
We support legislation that provides increased flexibility for school divisions to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and to better meet the needs of local communities.

- We support additional flexibility in the use of State Technology Grant funds that will enable school divisions to provide expanded access to electronic devices to students. The guidelines for funding available under the technology grant do not reflect the vast changes and improvement to available educational technology over the last ten years.

IV. Equalized Revenue Authority

We support legislation that will equalize the revenue-raising authority of counties with that of cities. This initiative, supported by the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, will provide counties with additional tools to address inadequate state funding for public education and increased state mandates that put significant pressure on local budgets.





Legislative Positions and Policy Statements

Blood Borne Disease Testing: We support legislation to that will require parental consent for a school division to test a minor for blood borne diseases.

Discipline Policies. We oppose any restrictions on the local school board authority to develop student disciplinary policies.

Non-Public Student Participation in VHSL Activities. We support a JLARC study on the issue of participation by non-public school students in VHSL activities.

Primary Elections. We support legislation to move the date of June primary elections to the third Tuesday of the month to avoid conflicts with local school calendars.

Redistricting. We support a redistricting process that is fair, transparent and accountable to the citizens of the Commonwealth. Virginia's state and congressional districts belong to its citizens and not to any legislator, interest group or political party. Districts should be drawn with citizen's interests in mind, encouraging healthy debate and public participation in the process.

School Bus Video-Monitoring Systems: We request that the General Assembly amend Virginia Code Section 46.2-844 to allow for service by mail similar to the provisions contained in Virginia Code Section 15.2-968.1's traffic signal enforcement program.

School Grading. We support efforts to eliminate the A-F grading of schools as well as any efforts that will further delay the implementation of the A-F grading system passed during the 2013 General Assembly session.

