

Feedback: Proposed VSBA Legislative Positions

The Virginia School Boards Association is currently seeking feedback from local divisions regarding proposed legislative positions. Appropriate members of ACPS division leadership have informed the following statements regarding VSBA's five proposals.

Proposal 1: Conversion of Accrued Sick, Personal, and Vacation Leave for VRS Years of Service

In principle, we don't oppose this proposal, but are hesitant to endorse it wholeheartedly due to a lack of information. In order to determine the financial impact, Human Resources would have to identify numerous pieces of information, such as determining the scope of this behavior in ACPS, and determining reimbursement amounts. The use of the verb "permit" in the first sentence leads us to believe that this would be optional for local school divisions, which we feel would be an appropriate approach, as this behavior could be more severe in some school divisions than in others.

Proposal 2: Educational Technology Funding Staffing

In general, we support increases to ED Tech investments, especially in the case of unfunded mandates. That said, we would prefer if VSBA's new position included a greater emphasis on funding for broadband infrastructure. Specifically, we would like school divisions to be able to compete for the development and broadband infrastructure grant funds that are available to other local entities.

Proposal 3: Staff Preparation and Development

We know that job-embedded staff development—like instructional coaching—adds significant value to school divisions, yet there is no mention of job-embedded staff development present in this proposal. Furthermore, staff development and staff preparation should be separated. Staff preparation occurs in teacher education programs (before a teacher is hired), and staff development occurs in public schools (after a teacher is hired). Bullets 2, 3, 4, 5 and 11 relate to staff preparation, and they should be handled in the realm of higher education, not K-12. Additionally, bullet 8 (or any proposal aimed at one specific skill) is problematic because it's a one-size-fits-all approach. Does a highly-educated, highly-valuable administrator in a division that posts consistently strong reading scores need to spend his or her time reporting the already demonstrated writing strengths of his or her division when perhaps his or her focus should be on improving a school or a division's weaknesses?

Proposal 4: Virginia Preschool Initiative Student Eligibility Criteria

In general we support this proposed position, though we do worry about complete flexibility. While we want to see all available slots utilized, local divisions may not do their due diligence in finding at-risk students, so the most needy students may not be found and less needy but easier to access students may fill seats.

Proposal 5: Comprehensive Services Act

This proposal appears to endorse flexibility for school divisions, and on the surface that appears to be quite positive. However, we have serious concerns about the details (that which is not written) in this provision.

For example, if the proposed flexibility being offered will come at the expense of CSA's current "sum sufficient appropriation," and lead to finite resources being allocated (whereby the CSA and regional programs become "capped"), we should not support this proposal, and we should urge legislators and the VSBA to reconsider their support for this measure.

The side effect of such a structural / financial change will have profound negative fiscal implications for the localities—namely school boards—who will become responsible for any increases in costs and services of children previously served through CSA placements.

Of the presentations on CSA and regional programs made in the past, the only problems noted to justify a change are:

- 1) increased costs for CSA expenditures, and
- 2) a perceived belief that school divisions are inappropriately utilizing these resources (this has not been confirmed or investigated)