

2025-2026 VASS Legislative Priorities – Draft

1. GOVERNANCE AND BUDGET: VASS has long maintained the position that the Commonwealth of Virginia should fully fund all state mandates. In addition, VASS maintains that local school boards should have primary authority in the implementation of these mandates and how resources from State Government are utilized at the local level. VASS feels that any decision regarding collective bargaining should be left up to the local school board.

While the General Assembly made significant strides in funding addressing the staff support cap 2025 Session, much work is still needed. VASS will work with the Joint Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Funding to support the following recommendations:

- a. Calculate salary and other cost assumptions using the division average, rather than the linear weighted average.
- b. Adjust SOQ formula to include all division central office positions, remove cap on non-personal cost assumptions and account for facilities staff cost.
- c. Change the local composite index to be calculated using a three-year average of the most recently available data, rather than a single year of data every other year.
- d. Consolidate the At-Risk Add On under the SOQs

VASS recommends the following additional funding actions:

- a. Due to the implementation of HQWBL (High Quality Work Based Learning) as part of the state's new Performance and Support Framework and the new 3E framework, added state funding is needed for career and technical education programs. This includes direct funding to CTE regional centers modeled after the existing funding formula used for regional Governor Schools.
- b. VASS feels that direct lottery and casino profits, in whole or in part, should be used to fund school construction and maintenance as part of basic aid in the State budget.
- c. VASS asks that funding be provided to all superintendent regions to provide recovery high schools to assist students with substance abuse issues.
- d. State funds should be provided to cover the full costs of any required training of school staff.

2. TEACHER SHORTAGE: The lack of teachers and need for greater teacher diversity in the classroom have reached a critical stage.

a. Teacher salaries should be above the national average and be provided in line with equivalent professionals outside the field of education.

b. Continued work is needed to make teacher licensure requirements immediately more flexible on a statewide basis to enhance the teacher pipeline and address the teacher shortage issue. The locally awarded license has been a great tool in addressing teacher shortage, VASS now asks that this license be made renewable based upon the superintendent's recommendation. This would give these teachers more time to achieve full teacher licensure. In addition to address continuing shortages in such areas as school counselor and mathematics, consideration should be made to giving added flexibility to make it easier for teachers to add these and other endorsements.

c. Provide state funding to assist local school divisions to attract and retain teachers (such as student loan forgiveness, provide day care and housing assistance)

d. Funding provided for SOQ positions by function, instead of by title/licensure. This is critical for school divisions to hire the staff necessary to address current needs.

3. ASSESSMENT:

a. VASS supports the use of SOL tests as the key tools in the mastery and growth components of the accountability system.

b. Create an alternate assessment for students receiving special education services who do not receive a modified curriculum but who require additional support to access and demonstrate comprehension of grade level content standards. This assessment would complement, not replace, the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP), which is available to only a limited number of students who receive a modified curriculum due to their significant cognitive disabilities.

c. The option for local growth assessments should be extended

d. VASS has great concern regarding certain sections of HB 1957 and requests greater flexibility in its implementation:

- SOL assessments should be able to be administered earlier than two weeks before the end of school
- Successful expedited retakes should count toward the school's accountability score
- Removal of the SOL score counting as 10% of a student's final grade requirement

4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACCREDITATION: VASS supports the State Board's efforts to separate school accountability and accreditation.

In doing so, VASS feels that the following are important:

a. In addressing issues with the Virginia Performance and Support Framework

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important:

- Replace the proposed "Off Track" summative category with "Needs Support."
- Provide funding to VDOE's Office of School Quality that allows them to offer a plan of systematic supports for schools who receive a designation as "Off Track" or "Needs Intensive Support."

b. Allow the IB diploma to be counted as an Advanced diploma with no added coursework required.

5. STUDENT/SCHOOL SAFETY:

a. VASS supports full state funding and greater flexibility in providing added school safety measures based on the needs of the individual school.

b. Provide increased support for mental health services in schools.

6. DUAL ENROLLMENT AND THE VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM: Dual enrollment has become an integral and critical part of education at the secondary level.

a. School divisions need greater flexibility in assigning staff to teach dual enrollment courses at the local high school.

b. Given that the General Assembly has established the College and Career Ready Virginia Program (HB1087/SB 627) to provide dual enrollment at no cost to students, dedicated funding from the state to the community college system is needed to allow those colleges to provide dual enrollment at no cost to the student or school divisions. Also, provide tuition assistance to students and school division for courses beyond the Passport and UCGS programs.