



Newport News School Board 2018 Legislative Program

The Newport News School Board annually publishes a legislative program containing policy and funding positions. This program represents the School Board's recommendations for improving public education and the partnership between local and state government.

PRIORITY POSITIONS

The Newport News School Board appreciates the General Assembly's action in 2017 that provided additional funding for K-12 education. The increase helped mitigate huge reductions in K-12 state funding from previous years and needs to be continued in the coming session.

Even with the increase, state per-pupil funding is more than \$500 below that of 2009 when adjusted for inflation. And although the state approved additional funding for teacher pay, revenue shortfalls meant that the state support would not be provided, leaving local school divisions to find the funding or eliminate announced increases.

Today, Newport News Public Schools operates with less state funding than in 2008, not accounting for inflation. And while the school division has worked diligently to create greater efficiencies that limit the negative effects of budget reductions on students, lower funding comes at a price, including deferred school maintenance, delays in technology updates, lagging teacher salaries and the reduction of approximately 500 full-time positions in the past decade.

For the 2018 General Assembly, which is a budget session, the Newport News School Board calls on legislators to address the significant gaps in public education funding by supporting the following:

1) **Rebenchmarking**

The Newport News School Board supports full funding for "rebenchmarking," the biennial revision of K-12 cost that updates state spending on public education to meet the Standards of Quality required of public schools. It is estimated that full rebenchmarking will require an additional investment of \$491.8 million in the state's two-year budget.

2) **Teacher Salary Increase**

The Newport News School Board encourages the state to provide a substantial state-supported pay raise for teachers. In the past 10 years, the state has funded the state share of a teacher salary increase just three times. The results are disturbing:

- a. Teacher salaries in Virginia are estimated by the Virginia Education Association to be \$7,901 below the national average.
- b. A 2015 study by the Rutgers Graduate School of Education reported that the average 25-year-old teacher in Virginia made only 69 percent of the salary of a non-teacher in the same labor market who is of similar education, hours worked and age. For long-time teachers the news is worse: the average 45-year-old teacher in Virginia made just 60 percent of the salary of a non-teacher comparing the same factors.

In 2017, the Virginia General Assembly approved -- with a unanimous vote in the Senate and a 98-0 vote in the House -- HB 2332, which states: "It is a goal of the Commonwealth that its public school teachers be compensated at a rate that is competitive in order to attract and keep highly qualified teachers. As used in this section, "competitive" means, at a minimum, at or above the national average teacher salary." The School Board urges legislators to provide funding in 2018 to support their legislation.

3) **Teacher Recruitment and Retention**

The Newport News School Board strongly supports state action to continue and expand strategies for alleviating the teacher shortage and reduce the high rates of turnover in the profession.

- National enrollment in teacher preparation programs has dropped from a high of 725,000 in 2010 to 465,000 in 2014 according to a report by the U.S. Department of Education.
- The rate of attrition among teachers (those leaving the profession entirely) has increased from 6.4 percent in 1998-99 to 9 percent in 2008-2009. Other studies estimate that between 40 and 50 percent of those who enter the teaching profession leave within five years. (Virginia Department of Education's 2017 report, *The Shortage of Qualified Teachers in the Commonwealth of Virginia*)

The School Board encourages the General Assembly to support the following initiatives espoused in recommendations from the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

- Permit education-based majors in teaching through the development of a four-year undergraduate major in teaching. (VASS)
- Provide increased flexibility in teacher licensure for individuals with core content knowledge of the subject they will teach. (VASS)
- Provide an extension of a teacher's provisional license time period from three years to five years based upon the superintendent's recommendation. (VASS)
- Expand programs that focus on retaining teachers in the classroom, such as funding support for induction, coaching/mentoring, and increased professional development. (VDOE)
- Pay fees for teacher candidates to take assessments required for a teaching license in Virginia, such as Praxis tests and the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment. (VDOE)

4) **Capital Improvement Funding**

The Newport News School Board encourages the General Assembly to find ways to assist local school divisions maintain, update and replace last century's facilities so that they can meet the educational needs of students in the 21st century.

A study by Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) study shows that, since 2009, Virginia school divisions reduced non-instructional spending, particularly related to facilities, by more than instructional spending. In Newport News, the loss of state support for renovation and construction is having a severe impact. As state funding was eliminated, the city also reduced its CIP support. The result is that many urgently needed projects are going undone.

With the average NNPS school 50 years old, renovation and replacement are essential for maintaining a good environment for students and staff. The elimination of state funds for construction and renovation means that school divisions must use funds that once went for student instruction to make essential repairs.

CONTINUING POSITIONS

1) **Transfer of Authority from Locally Elected to State-Appointed Boards**

The Newport News School Board opposes the following legislation that would remove decision-making authority from local communities and move it to unelected boards in Richmond:

- Legislation that would establish the “Board of the Virginia Virtual School.” This bill would give an unelected board appointed by the state full operational control of what would become the Virginia Virtual School, which could enroll students from any locality in the state and compel those localities to turn over state funding to support the school.
- A Constitution Amendment on charter schools that would permit an unelected board in Richmond to determine the establishment and operation of charter schools within school divisions in Virginia. Additionally, the Newport News School Board requests that all public schools be provided with the same flexibility in meeting state requirements that are provided to charter schools

2) **Funding for Extended Learning Programs**

The Newport News School Board supports additional funding for school divisions to implement extended year/day programming as a way to accelerate learning and use summer months as an opportunity to ensure that students begin each new school year ready to learn without need for remediation or review

3) **“Federal Deduct” provision**

The School Board urges the General Assembly to eliminate the “Federal Deduct” provision, which deducts a percentage of federal revenues from the state’s Basic Aid funding calculation. State funds should not be reduced because a school division receives funds earmarked to implement federal mandates.

4) **Funding for Classroom Technology**

The Newport News School Board seeks legislation to increase state funding to support classroom technology, hardware, software, and staffing, to enable school divisions to meet requirements found in the Virginia Standards of Learning and prepare students for success in a highly technological world.

5) **Vouchers and Tuition Credits**

The Newport News School Board opposes legislation that provides for the use of vouchers or tuition credits for non-public school students, for a state-mandated program of choice that supersedes the local school board’s authority to establish K-12 school zones, or allows for re-segregation of schools. Current state policies and regulations provide sufficient choice opportunities for local school divisions. Examples of choice opportunities which Newport News Public Schools currently provides includes specialized courses and programs, magnet schools, attendance at vocational centers, home instruction, and adult and alternative programs.

6) **Binding Arbitration**

The Newport News School Board opposes legislation that would amend the Constitution of Virginia by limiting the authority of local school boards to make decisions affecting personnel matters.

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To learn more about **Newport News Public Schools** visit

www.nnschools.org

