



The City of Salem School Board 2010 Legislative Priorities and Positions

The 2010 session of the General Assembly will consider numerous issues of profound importance to the Commonwealth's public school students and to the school employees who deliver the promise of a high quality public education. The 2010 Legislative Priorities are enumerated below and indicate those issues that are of particular concern to the City of Salem School Board in the coming year.

All of the legislative positions adopted by the Board will be communicated to Salem's legislators before the Assembly convenes. The Board also urges legislators and state officials to contact the Board or the Superintendent regarding legislation that might have implications for public education.

2010 Legislative Priorities

1. The Salem City School Board supports full funding for K-12 public education in order to maintain quality and to better prepare Virginia's students for higher education and global economic competition.
2. The Salem City School Board opposes any change in re-benchmarking methodology or any change in SOQ Standards as a means of balancing the budget in times of revenue shortfalls. The Salem City School Board is specifically opposed to setting caps on support personnel until the recommendations of the Board of Education for a study of this issue is completed.
3. The Salem City School Board requests that any necessary budget reductions be temporary and be accompanied by a comparable reduction in requirements and increased flexibility for local school boards to meet the needs of children in their respective communities.
4. The Salem City School Board supports suspending the timelines for the implementation of the additional SOQ requirements until such time as adequate funding of the requirements is provided by the state.
5. The Salem City School Board opposes all unfunded mandates in NCLB and supports return of accountability to state and local authorities for ESEA.

Standing Legislative Positions

In addition, the Board and the Superintendent of Schools will monitor the proceedings of the 2010 General Assembly and make known to its representatives the Board's positions on other issues that may arise. A chart is provided that indicates standing issues that are of particular concern to the City of Salem School Board and the Board's official position on each issue.

<u>Budget and Financial Issues</u>	<u>Board's Position</u>
Fully funding the re-benchmarking of the Standards of Quality (SOQ) so that the standards are, "realistic in relation to the Commonwealth's current education needs and practices" (Code of Virginia – 22.1-253.13.1)	Support
Changes in the Standards of Quality (SOQ) Funding Formula (such as arbitrary staffing caps) which would reduce any funds to local school divisions.	Oppose
Funding annual raises using the linear weighted average and real inflation figures derived from annual reports from the school divisions.	Support
Reducing funds to Risk Reduction Programs that are essential to assisting at-risk and disadvantaged students achieve the high standards necessary to earn a diploma.	Oppose
Increased funding for at-risk programs in order to reduce the dropout rate, increase graduation rates, and lessen the burden on local governments to incur the costs of such programs.	Support
Reinstate full funding for the Western Virginia Public Education Consortium to support and promote collaboration and the sharing of best practices in the school divisions of Alleghany, Bath, Bland, Botetourt, Craig, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Henry, Montgomery, Patrick, Pulaski, Roanoke, and Wythe and the cities of Covington, Martinsville, Radford, Roanoke, and Salem.	Support
Increase state reimbursement for school lunches to .10 per student lunch and .05 per student breakfast	Support
Continued use of the Literary Fund for purposes other than school construction.	Oppose
Supplanting state or local support for public education through use of federal monies	Oppose

Reinstate funding of the School Construction Program,	Support
Maintain and consider increasing state funds for technology and expanding the definition of eligible equipment to include LCD projectors, smart boards, or similar technology which has been widely adopted since VPSA funding was put in place	Support
State funding for existing pre-school handicapped programs	Support
Increased funding for alternative education costs	Support
Expenditure of public funds on private schools through tuition tax credits or tuition vouchers	Oppose
Fiscal autonomy for elected school boards	Oppose
Changes to the authority of local governments to set and collect local real estate taxes	Oppose

Employment Issues

Expansion of grievance procedures for Licensed and Continuing Contract Employees to Employees with an Annual Notice of Employment.	Oppose
Continuing the requirement for teaching experience in order to obtain licensure as a school leader whether by traditional or alternative licensure	Support
Amendment of the grievance procedure to provide for the decision of the grievance panel to be final and binding	Oppose
Establishment of negotiation rights for school employees	Oppose
Establishment of term contracts for professional staff	Monitor
Requirements for written contracts for at-will employees (non-teachers)	Oppose

School Board Governance Issues

Control of the school board calendar as prerogative of local school board (repeal of the requirement to open school after Labor Day)	Support
Increased court intervention for students and penalties for parents in proven cases of truancy.	Support

Maintaining the authority of local school boards granted in Article VIII, Section 7 of the Constitution to regulate firearms on school property and at school events, including school board meetings **Support**

Continuation of local initiatives to raise graduation requirements **Support**

Parental choice of schools either within or across school divisions **Oppose**

Maintaining the Virginia High School League as a voluntary association to regulate high school competition **Support**

Maintaining the Virginia charter school law in its present form whereby local school boards retain authority and control over such schools **Support**

State Leadership on Federal Issues

The Salem City School Division supports the Elementary and Secondary Education Act's general goal of having all children learn to high standards but is deeply concerned about the major expansion of federal authority over state and local educational programs as well as the significant burden on local funds to comply with the many provisions and reporting requirements.

A return of accountability to state and local authorities for ESEA, since Virginia has already demonstrated meaningful success with high standards and assessment **Support**

Permit local school districts to implement formative and adaptive assessments that provide instant feedback to students, teachers, administrators and parents to guide individual instructional decisions, and include the local measures in the accountability system. **Support**

Add real, valid, reliable and standards-based measures that accurately measure each student's actual starting point and growth over time. The value-added model in the discussion draft improves the once-a-year snapshot tests, but is too weak to provide the data necessary on each individual student to bring all students to proficiency **Support**

Add both a clear promise to fully fund Title I of ESEA and Part B of IDEA and a clear path to full funding for Title I and IDEA. **Support**

Settle the conflict between IDEA and Title 1 of ESEA in favor of individualized instruction and assessment required by IDEA in the following ways:

Support

- Eliminate arbitrary caps (1% and 2%) on student assessment and add developmentally appropriate measures and assessments called for in a student's IEP; and
- Include the IDEA mandate for services to high school graduation or age 21 (up to 26 in some states) in the calculation of graduation rates.

Permit states to determine appropriate measures and assessments for English language learners based on state approved tests and the professional judgment of teachers and administrators.

Support

Eliminate all plans, reports, audits, and staffing measures that research does not show improved achievement for children.

Support

Count in AYP a student's passing score on all test retakes.

Support

Add a requirement for complete and immediate transparency for all state and federal plans, requests, guidance, policy letters and responses to state requests to eliminate "sweetheart deals" with some states.

Support

Clarify the high school graduation rate calculation to include:

Support

- special education students up to age 21 based on their transition plan developed as part of their IEP at age 16;
- Students in alternative high schools who graduate from high school, even though it may take them longer;
- Students who achieve a high school diploma through an adult education class of GED; and
- Students who have serious health problems or other issues that remove them from school for extended periods.