



The City of Salem School Board 2011 Legislative Priorities and Positions

The 2011 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 2011 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.

2011 State Legislative Priorities

- The Salem City School Board supports restoring state Basic Aid for K-12 public education in order to maintain quality and to better prepare Virginia's students for higher education and global economic competition.
- The Salem City School Board urges the General Assembly to provide a salary consideration for school division employees to recognize their sacrifice in helping endure the recession the past three years.
- The Salem City School Board opposes using the one-time federal jobs fund to supplant the state's responsibility for providing basic aid because it would result in a carry-forward reduction in state aid to school divisions of approximately \$250 million.
- The Salem City School Board supports providing all Salem schools the same flexibility in meeting state requirements that are provided to charter schools approved by local school boards.
- The Salem City School Board opposes all unfunded mandates in NCLB and supports return of accountability to state and local authorities for ESEA.
- The Salem City School Board opposes implementation of the 65% solution as defined by the U.S. Department of Education for the reasons outlined in the *Salem City Schools Position re: The "65% Rule"* document.

Salem City Schools Position re: The “65% Rule”

The 65% rule is not only a state intrusion on local governmental authority in general; it is “bad for Salem” because it would impede our efforts to be good stewards of resources.

How well-intentioned state policy can be detrimental to our locality:

In most years Salem Schools would far exceed the standard (70% for Instruction in FY 2010), but there are years when capital expenditures are substantially higher, which would result in higher expenditures overall and a lower percentage of the total as instruction even though instruction was maintained.

An example would have been during our last major building renovation in 2002-2003 at Andrew Lewis when \$15 million in capital expenditures would have dropped our instructional percentage temporarily during construction (63% in FY 03, 57% in FY 04, and 57% in FY 05) even though net spending on instruction actually increased during those same years. Changes in debt service would also adversely affect the calculation.

Here are some additional points of consideration:

- **65% is an arbitrary figure.** *There is no research that shows that 65% of operating expenses spent on the items in the federal definition has a positive impact on education.*
- **If any SOQ positions are excluded from the instructional formula, then we need to remove them as mandated positions for public schools.**
- **It is not up to the state to tell localities how to spend their money beyond the local match.**
- **The 65% “solution” does not take into account the differing needs of school divisions based on size and geography.** *An urban or suburban school division may be able to reduce per pupil transportation charges by using the same buses for more than one run. Large school divisions can spread the cost of providing instructional support to schools. Small school divisions like Salem have to complete every report that the larger divisions have to complete. With fewer pupils, the costs of providing support and fulfilling these mandates is higher on a per pupil basis.*
- **If intent of the 65% solution is to make sure money spent by school divisions has a direct impact on student learning, then school principals need to be included in the federal definition, because educational research shows that principals are critical to how much students learn.**
- **If the Virginia General Assembly and Board of Education require school administrators, guidance counselors, media specialists and school nurses in order to provide “quality education” as defined by the Virginia Standards of Quality, then these positions should be included in any definition of instructional support. The state formula for instruction as it currently stands accurately reflects what should be considered instruction.**

Standing Legislative Positions

In addition, the Board and the Superintendent of Schools will monitor the proceedings of the 2011 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.

Student Health and Wellbeing

Board's Position

The General Assembly adopt legislation declaring "spice" and synthetic cannabinoids to be illegal and to be a controlled substance under Title 18.2 of the Code of Virginia.

Support

Budget and Financial Issues

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 21 st Century Instructional Technology	Support
State funding for existing pre-school handicapped programs	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
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.

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.	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	Support

favor of individualized instruction and assessment required by IDEA in the following ways:

- 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.

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

Clarify the high school graduation rate calculation to include:

Support

- special education students up to age 21 based on their IEP transition plan;
- Students in alternative settings 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.