



Newport News School Board 2022 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 in partnership with the state legislature.

The Newport News School Board applauds the 2021 General Assembly's budget action that restored most of the reduced and unallotted funding from the 2020 budget, and targeted new dollars towards:

- Teacher salary increases
- School counselors
- Licensed mental health and behavioral specialists
- Preschool support
- One-time programs to address COVID-related needs

The school board also appreciates legislation that protected school divisions from enrollment loss experienced during the pandemic.

Priorities in the 2022 Newport News School Board legislative program address the biennial rebenchmarking of educational costs, enrollment loss protection, Standards of Quality recommendations, increased technology expenses resulting from the pandemic, the shortage of teachers and related pay issues, and the urgent need for school construction/renovation support.

PRIORITY POSITIONS

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. Costs are projected forward for changes in enrollment, salaries, support costs, inflation, and other factors – costs can increase or decrease depending on the direction of each data update. It is estimated that full rebenchmarking will require an additional investment of \$331 million in the state's two-year budget.

It is important to note that rebenchmarking is simply a technical update to reflect the cost of K-12 education – not an increase in the funding formula. In that sense, rebenchmarking merely maintains the status quo.

2) ENROLLMENT LOSS HOLD HARMLESS

The Newport News School Board appreciates work by the 2021 General Assembly to authorize an enrollment loss hold harmless provision for the 2021-22 school year. With many school divisions still experiencing lower-than-usual enrollment, the School Board encourages the state to continue that provision for another year.

As COVID-19 swept across Virginia and schools closed temporarily, some families elected to home-school their children or send them to private schools for the duration of the pandemic or longer. This has resulted in lower-than-expected student enrollment in both FY21 and FY22. Unfortunately, school divisions are restrained in their ability to reduce costs to accommodate a reduction in ADM funding. For example, if a school division with 20 schools loses 200 students, those students are likely to be spread out among 13 grade levels, with each level losing 15 students on average. Spreading that loss over 20 schools would mean that, on average, each school would lose 0.75 students per grade level. Obviously, that would not allow a reduction in teaching staff, support staff, or associated overhead.

3) SCHOOL FACILITY 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 today and in the future. The School Board appreciates legislation from the 2020 session that established the Commission on School Construction and Modernization. Among other things, the commission is charged with assessing the state's school facilities, determining school construction and modernization funding needs, and identifying relevant funding mechanisms.

In addressing the urgent need for school infrastructure support, the General Assembly is encouraged to consider the following:

- The 2018 report by the General Assembly Subcommittee on School Facility Modernization says it will cost \$3 billion to \$4 billion (in 2018 dollars) to modernize the state's schools. With many localities unable to provide adequate school construction funding, school divisions struggling to maintain facilities have been forced to divert money that could be used for student instruction to repairing aging roofs, windows, HVAC systems and more.
- In the past, Virginia supported school construction and modernization through the School Construction Grant Program, which until 2010 providing NNPS annually with approximately \$1.3 million.
- With the average NNPS school more than 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.

The Newport News School Board urges the General Assembly to:

- Commit additional state funds to directly support school division facility needs, such as was done through the former School Construction Grant Fund

- Permit any school board to finance capital projects with any funds appropriated to it by the local governing body that are unexpended by the school board in any year
- Amend the Code of Virginia to allow all localities the option of increasing local sales taxes specifically for the purpose of school construction and major renovation. Currently only Halifax and Mecklenburg Counties have this authority. This legislation would amend § [58.1-605.1](#) of the Code of Virginia to include all cities and counties among those localities authorized to impose an additional local sales and use tax up to one percent, as determined by the governing body, if initiated by a resolution of the local governing body and approved by voters. Revenue from the tax would be used solely for capital projects for new construction or major renovation of schools.

4) TEACHER RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND SALARIES

The Newport News School Board appreciates the 2021 General Assembly's action to provide the state portion of a 5 percent salary increase for instructional and support positions covered by the Standards of Quality

Unfortunately, inflation is lessening buying power at approximately the same rate as the raise, and Virginia teacher pay still ranks below that in most other states. Additionally, a severe teacher shortage has left students in classrooms across the state without highly qualified teachers.

Clearly, Virginia needs to continue efforts to raise teacher salaries, alleviate the teacher shortage, and reduce the high rate of turnover in the profession.

To these ends, the School Board encourages the General Assembly to support the following recommendations from the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

- Expand programs that focus on retaining teachers in the classroom, such as funding support for induction, coaching/mentoring, and increased professional development (VDOE), and teacher residencies.
- 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)

It is important to note that the 2017 General Assembly voted for legislation that established a goal for Virginia teachers to be paid at or above the national average. That year, 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."

To reach this goal, the Newport News School Board encourages the state to once again approve a state-supported pay raise for teachers for the coming biennium and to establish a timeline for reaching the national average on teacher pay.

5) STANDARDS OF QUALITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Newport News School Board supports the Virginia Board of Education's "Prescriptions to Amend the Standards of Quality" approved at its meeting on October 20, 2021.

With an estimated cost of \$800 million over the biennium, the amendments will be presented to the 2022 General Assembly for consideration.

The amendments include important provisions for moving public education forward, with new or expanded support for equity issues, teacher development, school counselors and more. The full package of amendments includes:

- Enhanced At-Risk Add-On — Consolidates the current At-Risk Add-On as well as the state Prevention, Intervention and Remediation programs into a single, expanded fund that is distributed to divisions for instructional interventions based on their concentrations of students in poverty. (\$87.5 million)
- Teacher Leader and Mentor Programs — Establishes a new Teacher Leader program and expands the Teacher Mentor program. (\$229.9 million)
- Reading Specialists — Sets a minimum staffing ratio for reading specialists in grades K-5 determined by the number of students failing third-grade Standards of Learning reading assessments. (\$77.9 million)
- English Learner Teachers — Sets a scaled staffing ratio based on proficiency level of students and the instructional staff required to support these students. (\$30 million)
- Principal Mentorship — Establishes a statewide principal mentorship program. (\$2.4 million)
- Work-Based Learning Coordinators — Provides regional coordinators to support work-based learning and the implementation of the Profile of a Virginia Graduate. (\$2.4 million)
- Elementary School Principals — Requires a full-time principal for every elementary school, regardless of enrollment. (\$1.1 million)
- Assistant Principals — Sets a ratio of one full-time assistant principal for every 400 students. (\$154.3 million)
- Class Size Reduction and Experienced Teachers for K-3 — Moves the state K-3 class size reduction program from the Appropriation Act to the SOQ. (No state cost)

- Specialized Student Support Personnel — Establishes a ratio of four specialized student support personnel per 1,000 students for school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and other licensed health and behavioral positions. (\$102.5 million)
- School Counselors — Establishes a ratio of one school counselor per 250 students. (\$106.4 million)

6. TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT AND INTERNET ACCESS

The Newport News School Board seeks legislation to establish a permanent source of state funding to support classroom technology, hardware, software, and staffing. The pandemic, which forced schools to go virtual in 2020, has laid bare the disparities caused by the digital divide and reinforced the need to equip all students with appropriate technology and internet access. To help erase this divide, NNPS provided more than 22,000 laptops or hand-held devices and thousands of internet hotspots to students in the months following the school shutdown. Additionally, it is essential that technology support staff be funded at a higher level to provide the resulting higher level of maintenance and training needs.

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) DUAL-ENROLLMENT TUITION

The Newport News School Board supports the current practice of allowing local school boards and community colleges to collaborate in establishing tuition for dual enrollment courses. The school board opposes a mandatory tuition floor on dual enrollment courses.

In a dual enrollment program, students may take courses that meet requirements for high school graduation while simultaneously earning college credit from a community college.

3) 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.

4) SUPPORT STAFF FORMULA

The School Board opposes continued use of the artificial formula that reduces the state share of educational support staff. In 2009 the state reduced K-12 education funding by \$340 million by implementing a cap on support staff of one to every 4.03 instructional positions that are funded by the state. This formula fails to recognize that:

- Local school divisions employ approximately 25 percent more instructional staff than are funded by the state.
- Many support staff are responsible for state-mandated programs such as testing and reporting.

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.

STATE LEGISLATORS

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Delegate Marcia S. Price, (D) 95th District

Senator T. Monty Mason, (D) 1st Senate District

Delegate Michael P. Mullin, (D) 93rd District

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For more information about the NNPS Legislative Program,
please contact Patrick Finneran, director of corporate and government relations,
at patrick.finneran@nn.k12.va.us.

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

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