

# DRAFT:

## BOARD OF EDUCATION COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: 2005-2010

*Board of Education Seeking Public Comments*

*Close of Comment Period: September 6, 2005*

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**BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: 2005-2010**  
***Executive Summary***

As required by § 22.1-253.13:6, Code of Virginia, the Board of Education's *Comprehensive Plan: 2005-2010* contains the following information:

- Statements of the Board of Education's vision and mission, which provide the framework for leadership, advocacy, and oversight for the public education system in Virginia. The statements are forward-looking and acknowledge the myriad programs and services of Virginia's public schools as well as the increasingly diverse needs of students.
- An assessment of the extent to which the objectives for public education are being met, which shows that for the past six years in which the current accreditation requirements have been in place, Virginia's public schools have steadily improved. However, the results also show that full accreditation is a goal yet to be achieved by some schools. Moreover, there remains a persistent and troubling achievement gap among groups of students, and many need costly, intensive instructional support to succeed in school.
- Projections showing that Virginia's public school enrollment of 1.2 million students will grow by about 43,000, or four percent, between 2005 and 2008.
- Demographic trends showing clearly that diverse population groups (i.e., limited English proficient and economically disadvantaged families) are increasingly making up a larger proportion of the overall population and that Virginia is experiencing shortages of teachers in certain subject areas. These trends pose serious challenges for public education.
- The objectives for public education, which are as follows:
  - Objective 1: The Board of Education will improve the quality standards for all public schools in Virginia.
  - Objective 2: The Board of Education will provide leadership to help schools and school divisions close the achievement gap and increase the academic success of all students.
  - Objective 3: The Board of Education will work to ensure meaningful, on-going professional development for professional educational personnel.
  - Objective 4: The Board of Education will support accountability for all schools, with a focus on assisting chronically low-performing schools and school divisions.
  - Objective 5: The Board of Education will work cooperatively with partners to help ensure that young children are ready for school.
  - Objective 6: The Board of Education will assist teachers to improve the reading skills of all students, kindergarten through grade 12.
  - Objective 7: The Board of Education will continue efforts to enhance the training, recruitment, and retention of highly qualified teachers, educational support personnel, and administrators, with a focus on the needs of "hard to staff" schools.
  - Objective 8: The Board of Education will provide leadership for implementing the provisions of state and federal laws and regulations smoothly and with minimal disruption to local divisions.

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# BOARD OF EDUCATION COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: 2005-2010

## Introduction

The Board of Education's *Comprehensive Plan 2005-2010* covers the six-year time period of 2005 through 2010 and updates the objectives set forth in the Board's previous plan, which was entitled *Six-Year Plan: 2003-2008*. Building upon the previous plan, the two-year update reflected in this document provides the framework for resources and policy development to continue Virginia's forward momentum in student achievement.

## Statutory requirement for revising the Comprehensive Plan

### **§ 22.1-253.13:6. Standard 6. Planning and public involvement.**

A. The Board of Education shall adopt a statewide comprehensive, unified, long-range plan based on data collection, analysis, and evaluation. Such plan shall be developed with statewide participation. The Board shall review the plan biennially and adopt any necessary revisions. The Board shall post the plan on the Department of Education's website if practicable, and, in any case, shall make a hard copy of such plan available for public inspection and copying.

This plan shall include the objectives of public education in Virginia, including strategies for improving student achievement then maintaining high levels of student achievement; an assessment of the extent to which these objectives are being achieved; a forecast of enrollment changes; and an assessment of the needs of public education in the Commonwealth. In the annual report required by § 22.1-18, the Board shall include an analysis of the extent to which these Standards of Quality have been achieved and the objectives of the statewide comprehensive plan have been met. The Board shall also develop, consistent with, or as a part of, its comprehensive plan, a detailed comprehensive, long-range plan to integrate educational technology into the Standards of Learning and the curricula of the public schools in Virginia, including career and technical education programs. The Board shall review and approve the comprehensive plan for educational technology and may require the revision of such plan as it deems necessary...

The Board of Education's *Comprehensive Plan: 2005-2010* contains data on enrollment projections and other important demographic trends, a description of the Board of Education's objectives for public education in Virginia, a brief description of strategies used for improving student achievement and maintaining high levels of student achievement, and an assessment of the extent to which the Board's objectives are being achieved. Also, highlights of the strategies employed to meet the Board's objectives are described.

As noted in the above, the Code requires that the Board of Education include in its comprehensive plan an assessment of the needs of public education and a plan to integrate educational technology into the Standards of Learning and the curricula, including career and technical education programs. Pursuant to that requirement, the Board of Education has adopted three additional documents: (1) the Board of Education's annual report on the condition and needs of the public schools; (2) the *Six-Year Plan for Technology*; and (3) the state plan for career and technical education. When viewed with the

comprehensive plan contained herein, the documents provide a comprehensive view of the Board's priorities, the condition and needs upon which the priorities are based, and the future direction and needs of our system of public education. The Board of Education's annual report on the condition and needs of the public schools may be viewed at [http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/VA\\_Board/home.shtml](http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/VA_Board/home.shtml) and the *Six-Year Plan for Technology* may be viewed at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Technology/OET/resources.shtml#etp>. Information about Virginia's career and technical programs may be viewed at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/CTE/>.

Of particular note, the Board of Education's priorities and performance targets for Virginia's public schools are embedded throughout the provisions of the Standards of Quality, the Standards of Accreditation, and the Standards of Learning. These and other key policy and regulatory documents of the Board of Education may be viewed on the Department of Education's Web site: [www.doe.virginia.gov](http://www.doe.virginia.gov). The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* also contains performance expectations for the state and for the school divisions and the individual schools within the divisions.

### **Board of Education vision statement: 2005-2010**

The vision of the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, in cooperation with local school boards and other partners, is to create an excellent statewide system of public education that equips all students with the knowledge and skills to excel in postsecondary education and careers and to become capable, responsible, and self-reliant citizens.

### **Board of Education mission statement: 2005-2010**

The mission of the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, in cooperation with local school divisions, is to provide leadership, assistance, and oversight for Virginia's public schools in order to improve the achievement of all students by advocating for proven strategies to address the individual and diverse learning needs of students, establishing high standards for learning, measuring student performance, providing accountability to the public, and increasing opportunities for lifelong learning.

### **Assessment of progress in achieving objectives**

In Virginia, academic standards are in place, and educators are implementing them. Virginia has a valid and reliable assessment system to gauge student progress, and accountability goals are set for English, mathematics, science, and history and social science. More than eight out of ten public schools in Virginia are now fully accredited, based on, among other key indicators, the performance of students on Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments. This shows remarkable improvement since 1998, when only two percent of our public schools were fully accredited.

In the elementary school arena for 2005, the number of elementary schools achieving the commonwealth's highest school-quality rating increased, even though the targets for achievement in reading, history, and science were higher than in previous years. In short, for the past six years in which the current accreditation requirements have been in place, Virginia's public schools have steadily improved.

In the secondary schools, more than 94 percent of the high school seniors who made up the class of 2004 graduated on schedule. This is an important milestone because members of the class of 2004 were the first students required to pass Standards of Learning tests to earn a diploma. Even with the tougher achievement requirements, the percentage of seniors who earned a diploma in 2004 is only two-tenths of a percentage point less than the previous five-years average of 94.5 percent. In 2003, 95.2 percent of the students in the senior class earned a diploma. In 2002, 94.3 percent of seniors earned a diploma—the same percentage as 2004, when the new graduation requirements took effect. Additional information regarding the assessment of the extent to which the Board’s objectives are being met is contained in Appendix A.

The gratifying student achievement and progress seen so far should not obscure the challenges that remain. The Board of Education’s school improvement efforts have been in place long enough that we can see not only results, but also the most persistent needs and problems. During the past several years, Virginians have seen continuous improvement in student academic performance and in school accreditation results. However, the test results also show that there remains a persistent and troubling achievement gap among groups of students, and many need costly, intensive instructional support to succeed in school.

Major challenges are ahead for Virginia’s public schools as teachers and other educators address the varied and complex learning needs of their students. Full accreditation is a goal not yet achieved by all of Virginia’s schools, and educators seek better and proven strategies and instructional methods to help students improve their academic performance. All teachers need solid professional development to learn new skills and sharpen their current ones, and maintaining a highly qualified teaching force is critical to the goals of our public schools.

### **Enrollment projections for Virginia’s schools**

The period covered by the comprehensive plan will be a time of great demographic change for Virginia as a whole, and especially for Virginia’s public education system. The 2000 U.S. Census data show that Virginia was the 16th fastest growing state, with a population increase from 6.2 to 7.1 million in the 1990s. During that time period, over two-thirds of Virginia’s population growth came from minority residents.

Almost 1.2 million students were enrolled in Virginia’s public schools for the 2004-2005 school year (Fall membership count). Since 1994, total enrollment has increased by more than 123,000 students, a 12 percent growth rate during the ten-year period. According to the latest statistics provided by the Virginia Department of Education (see table below), enrollment will continue to increase during the next several years. Between 2004 and 2008, enrollment is projected to grow by about 43,000 students, or four percent, to a statewide total of 1,214,013 students.

**Statewide Fall Membership Projections  
FY 2004 (Actual) - FY 2008 (Projected)**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Fall Membership</b>
2004: Actual	1,170,797
2005: Actual	1,180,735
2006: Projected	1,192,570
2007: Projected	1,203,065
2008: Projected	1,214,013

**Important demographic trends for Virginia’s schools**

The growth in enrollment of students in kindergarten through twelfth grade poses steep challenges for schools. Especially difficult challenges include training and retaining teachers, principals, and instructional support staff; helping children who have widely varying learning needs such as students who do not speak English or who have disabilities that affect learning; and addressing the time-consuming and complex requirements of the state and federal laws and regulations governing public school programs. This requires more funding at all levels. These and other challenges become more acute for the public schools in light of Virginia’s changing demographics, which show clearly that diverse population groups (i.e., limited English proficient and economically disadvantaged) are increasingly making up a larger proportion of the overall population.

Demographic information is important because it indicates the needs of schools and students now and in the near future—a future for which Virginia’s schools and students must be prepared. Important demographic trends include the following:

Growth in the enrollment of limited English proficient students:

A major trend seen in the demographic data is that Virginia’s schools can expect to experience continued growth in the enrollment of the limited English proficient population. According to the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Policy at the University of Virginia, more than 30 percent of Virginia’s population increase between 1990 and 2000 was due to growth in the foreign-born population, up from only 16 percent a decade earlier. Most of that growth occurred in Northern Virginia, where 70 percent of the state’s foreign-born population lived in 2000.

In Virginia, the English as a Second Language (ESL) population has doubled in just the past five years, and this trend is expected to continue. Virginia’s ESL students are at all stages of learning English and have varying educational backgrounds in their first languages. While the broad objectives of the English Standards of Learning (and all other content area SOLs) will ultimately be the same for all students, those learning English as a second language often need extra time, support and exposure to English. In an effort to meet the needs of these students, school divisions have instituted a variety of programs to provide instruction in English as a second language.

With more immigrants having arrived in the United States during the 1990s than any other single decade, the number of public school students in need of additional language instruction has increased dramatically in recent years. The foreign-born, many of whom do not speak English, now account for over 18 percent of the total population in the Northern Virginia metro area, historically the most diverse region in the state. Fairfax County alone contains over 237,000 foreign-born persons. In Fairfax County, Arlington, Alexandria, and Fairfax City, one person in five was born outside the U.S. In Prince William, Loudoun, Falls Church, Manassas, and Manassas City, one in 10 is foreign-born. Outside of Northern Virginia, foreign-born residents are far less numerous, but pockets of sizable concentrations dot many areas of the state. Not all growth occurred in metro areas: Harrisonburg, Galax, and Winchester developed large Hispanic populations in the last decade. In the past 10 years, Harrisonburg's foreign-born population grew by almost 3,000, Winchester's foreign-born population tripled, and Galax grew from 46 foreign-born residents to almost 600, representing almost a tenth of its total population.

Diversity of economic and educational opportunity factors:

For the 2004-2005 school year, slightly more than one-third (33.5 percent) of the students in Virginia's public schools were eligible for free and reduced-price lunch. The percent varies widely across the school divisions, from a high of more than 72 percent to a low of 5 percent. Census data show that poverty remains stubbornly concentrated in cities, inner suburbs, and rural areas. Further, according to the 2000 census, there are 700,000 adults in Virginia without high school credentials who can benefit from adult education.

Teacher preparation and teacher shortages:

The predicted teacher supply for Virginia shows that the teaching force is expected to shrink by four percent between the years 2000 and 2015; however, the student enrollment in the public schools is expected to grow by four percent during that same time period. Thus, the supply of teachers is going down, while the student population is going up. The number of minority teachers in Virginia continues to decline. Nationally, the number of minority teachers will decrease from 13 percent in 1994 to five percent in 2005. Virginia's teaching force follows this same trend.

Acute teacher shortages in Virginia are seen in the areas of special education, science, (Earth science, space science, and chemistry) and mathematics. In 2004-2005, Earth Science is the area of most severe shortage. To further compound the problem, thirteen percent of Virginia's special education teachers are not fully licensed, with some areas as high as 62 percent.

## **Board of Education Objectives for 2005-2010**

The Board of Education's objectives are constantly evolving. The objectives are revised every two years; therefore, they must be viewed as a continuous process of assessment and evaluation, all of which lead to adjustments as needed. Perhaps most importantly, the Board of Education's objectives, as well as the strategies and activities to implement the objectives, are tied closely to the requirements state and federal statutes and regulations and on the availability and appropriation of funding for public education.

## **Objective 1: The Board of Education will improve the quality standards for all public schools in Virginia.**

### Rationale:

The Board of Education's constitutional responsibility is "to determine and prescribe" the Standards of Quality (SOQ) for Virginia's school divisions. During 2003, the Board conducted a comprehensive review of the SOQ. The prescribed amendments were presented to the 2004 session of the General Assembly, and many of the amendments were adopted and funded by the legislature. To follow that success, the 2005 session of the General Assembly adopted and funded many of the remaining recommendations that had been prescribed by the Board.

The Board of Education is continuing to revise and update the SOQ to ensure that the standards are adequate and appropriate for today's schools and students; therefore, in 2005, the Board is considering additional amendments to the SOQ. That process is on-going. In the future, the Board of Education will review and revise the Standards of Quality at periodic intervals to reaffirm the commonwealth's commitment to high education standards. The Board will work closely with the General Assembly and other partners in this regard.

The Standards of Accreditation were last revised in 2000. Those regulations included provisions that served as a transition to the current more rigorous requirements for school accountability and student achievement. Those transitional provisions are now obsolete or outdated. Furthermore, Virginia's accountability system has matured, and it is time to undertake a comprehensive review of the accrediting standards, especially in the areas of consequences for those schools that fail to meet the accountability requirements, and incentives for schools that are achieving success.

### Strategies/Activities to meet Objective 1:

- Review and revise the Standards of Quality: 2005, 2007, and 2009.
- Review and revise the Standards of Accreditation.

## **Objective 2: The Board of Education will provide leadership to help schools and school divisions close the achievement gap and increase the academic success of all students.**

### Rationale:

The Board of Education's priority for providing challenging academic standards is intended to be student-centered, results-oriented, and supportive of local flexibility. This priority also provides the foundation of what the members of the Board of Education want to achieve: a successful and accountable system of public education for all of Virginia's citizens. This supports the Board's firm belief that students will rise to the challenge of high standards if they are given the support they need by teachers who have the resources and training needed to get the job done.

The "achievement gap" refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. The term is used to describe the troubling performance gaps between many African-American and Hispanic students, at the lower end of the performance scale, and their Caucasian,

non-Hispanic peers, as well as the similar academic disparity between students from low-income and more affluent families and localities. The disparity also shows up in the performance and graduation rates for the students with disabilities compared to their non-disabled peers. The achievement gap has become a focal point of Virginia's education improvement efforts.

In Virginia, African-American and Hispanic students have made great strides in narrowing the achievement gap that separates them from their Caucasian peers. According to the Education Trust, Virginia has one of the nation's smallest achievement gaps between Caucasian and Hispanics. In 2003, Virginia's eighth-grade Hispanic students had the highest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) writing scores for Hispanic students in any state. But while Caucasian and Asian students' performance on our assessments is distributed evenly across the spectrum, from low to high, the performance of African-American and Hispanic children falls disproportionately at the lower end of the scale, and fewer of these students are meeting the standard on achievement tests. The disparity in performance among the groups widens as the students progress through elementary to secondary schools.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act also takes aim at the achievement gap. It requires states to disaggregate student achievement data by subgroups of students so that performance gains for all children can be tracked. The law also contains a host of accountability measures that penalize schools that are unable to show achievement gains by all subgroups of students: students with disabilities; limited English proficient students; economically disadvantaged students; and major racial/ethnic groups. The hope is that these strict accountability measures will spur across-the-board gains in achievement.

Successful strategies to close the achievement gap must be emphasized in schools across the state. Teachers and administrators need to know how to use test results and other data to understand their students' skills gaps. To do this, professional training on how to link data to instructional strategies is critical in order for teachers to understand how to use data and test results to make changes in their instructional programs.

Another aspect of closing the achievement gap and raising the academic performance of all students is that college attendance and receipt of a bachelor's degree increase employment opportunities and income potential. While exact numbers are not available, approximately 50 percent of Virginia's high school graduates enroll in a four-year college right after graduation. Approximately 23 percent enroll in a two-year college program, and an additional 12 percent enroll in a proprietary school, training program, or the military. Certainly, the Board of Education's role is to help ensure that all students are well prepared academically, regardless of their post-high school plans and aspirations. In a world of turbulent changes, every kind of occupation has seen a dramatic increase in education requirements. Jobs that require educated workers are growing the fastest. Many, if not most, high-paying jobs and careers in the near future will require higher levels of education or training than in the past. This has a direct impact on industry certification programs and opportunities in our public schools.

### Strategies/Activities to meet Objective 2:

- Review and revise the Standards of Learning:
  - Computer/Technology: 2005
  - Fine Arts: 2006
  - Foreign Language: 2007
  - Health, Physical Education, and Driver Education: 2008
  - History and Social Sciences: 2008
  - Mathematics: 2009
  - English: 2009
  - Science: 2010
- Support professional development and technical assistance for instructional staff, especially in low-performing schools.
- Support a focus on civics and financial literacy to ensure the preparation of all students to be productive citizens.
- Review and revise the *Virginia Plan for the Gifted*.
- Support programs and initiatives to expand opportunities for students to earn a high school diploma.
- Establish policies regarding the new numeracy and literacy assessments for students with disabilities pursuing the modified standard diploma.
- Establish policies regarding the revised Virginia Alternate Assessment Program.
- Establish modified achievement standards for students with disabilities who can make significant progress but may not reach grade-level achievement standards within the same time frame as other students.

### **Objective 3: The Board of Education will work to ensure meaningful, on-going professional development for professional educational personnel.**

#### Rationale:

Effective professional development is seen as increasingly vital to school success and satisfaction for professional educational personnel. With schools today facing an array of complex challenges—from working with an increasingly diverse population of students, to integrating new technology in the classroom, to meeting the requirements of NCLB—education leaders have stressed the need for teachers to be able to build on their instructional knowledge

Clearly, teachers, administrators, and educational support staff in struggling schools need additional assistance to turn their schools around. Some assistance is provided already through initiatives of the Governor, General Assembly, and the Department of Education. NCLB provides additional funding for professional development for classroom teachers. Yet improving learning opportunities for all children will require more than individual talents or school-by-school efforts. It will demand systemwide approaches that touch every child in every school in every school division across the state.

For high-caliber professional development programs to take root, actions of the Board of Education must place emphasis on the importance of strong leadership on the part of the school principal and educational support personnel. The Board must stress the need for innovative and coordinated management of funding and teachers' time and advocate for greater financial and administrative support, both at the state and local levels.

Strategies/Activities to meet Objective 3:

- Support professional development and technical assistance for professional educational personnel, working with professional education associations and teacher educators.
- Promote the identification of industry certifications opportunities for all teachers who lack such credentials.
- Support, in conjunction with local divisions, professional development strategies that the local schools will use to help ensure the development of highly qualified professional educational personnel and paraprofessionals.

**Objective 4: The Board of Education will support accountability for all schools, with a focus on assisting chronically low-performing schools and school divisions.**

Rationale:

A priority of the Board of Education will be to support highly effective school accountability and improvement at the local school and at the division level as well. In 2002, a national study group on low-performing schools, formed by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), arrived at four powerful points of consensus—points with which the Virginia Board of Education concurs as it focuses its attention on Virginia's chronically low-performing schools and school divisions.

The Board of Education concurs that:

1. No school fails because its students cannot succeed. Given appropriate support and an environment that is infused with expectations of academic excellence, students at risk of failure can and do succeed everyday.
2. Achievement gaps among groups of students are not acceptable. States can no longer ask if all schools can achieve high standards; the only appropriate question, especially in light of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation, is how to close the existing gaps quickly and effectively.
3. It is also not acceptable that children with great needs —those in poverty, of color, or with disabilities —are often attending the lowest-performing schools and do not have access to the academic resources that foster achievement.
4. The central goal of all education policies and programs needs to be school improvement for greater student achievement.

The Virginia Board of Education has resolved to focus much of its efforts on turning around low-performing schools and on implementing policies and programs that foster high-performing schools. To that end, the Board will focus its attention on five critical elements common to high-performing schools, defined as follows by the NASBE study group:

**Element 1. Improving Low-Performing Schools Requires Effective School Leadership:**

Effective schools research of the last twenty years, combined with research that examines the critical components necessary to turn around low-performing schools, makes clear the importance of good leadership. Numerous studies arrive at similar conclusions about the importance of school leadership in fostering a school culture and implementing school programs geared toward high student achievement.

**Element 2. Schools and Students Need High-Quality Teachers:** Low-performing schools cannot be turned around without high-quality teachers. Studies that look at the impact of teachers on student learning have found that measures of teacher expertise accounted for more variation in student reading and mathematics achievement in kindergarten through grade 12 than students' socioeconomic status. Other studies have found that students who are assigned to ineffective teachers for several years in a row have significantly lower achievement and lower gains than students assigned to highly effective teachers.

**Element 3. Improving Low-Performing Schools Requires Teachers who Participate in High-Quality, Targeted Professional Development:** Professional development matters: teachers and educational staff with more professional growth opportunities are more effective than those with fewer opportunities. Particularly in low-performing schools, high-quality professional development is “the linchpin of teacher quality.”

**Element 4. Successful Schools Have a Good Curriculum and Instructional Supports:** Teachers need high-quality curriculum and instruction in order to impact student achievement. A study in North Carolina found, for example, that regardless of students' prior academic experiences, given a rigorous curriculum with challenging tasks and appropriate assessments in small settings, students learn. Another study points out the pernicious nature of under-performance: of non-proficient eighth graders, 85 percent will stay that way through high school. The 15 percent of under-performing students who do manage to break the mold have done so by being exposed to an intensive academic high school curriculum.

**Element 5. Improving Low-Performing Schools Requires Staff to Make Frequent and Appropriate Use of Data to Inform Continuous Improvement:** School improvement efforts can plateau early unless strategies for school improvement are based on data that illuminate root causes of low performance and help schools prioritize their needs. Schools that serve high proportions of at-risk students and that truly excel at improving teaching and learning do it by gathering and analyzing data often and basing decisions about school, classroom, and student interventions on diagnostic information.

The Board of Education uses all of the elements listed above to refine and improve its policies and programs to build capacity for improvement among all schools, especially low-performing schools. Moreover, the Board has new authority that modifies the current school compliance process within the SOQ to authorize the Board of Education to require an academic review of any school division that, through the school academic review process, fails to implement the SOQ. The new provisions also require the reviewed school division to submit for approval by the Board a corrective action plan setting

forth specific actions and a schedule designed to ensure that schools within its school division achieve full accreditation status. The Board adopted criteria and procedures for conducting division-level academic reviews and improved the procedures used in conducting school-level reviews.

One key element to school improvement is the fast, reliable collection of data for use by teachers and other professionals. To make sound, data-driven educational decisions on behalf of their students, schools and school divisions need access to student records and other educational data that provide a written picture of a student's academic performance.

Clearly, the academic review and the division-level review procedures that the Board of Education has put in place will help ensure that programs are maximally effective and resources are targeted to areas of greatest need. The Board will work to improve the review procedures and develop effective ways to help schools and divisions.

Strategies/Activities to meet Objective 4:

- Receive periodic reports of findings of academic review teams, review and adopt policies to address recommendations in team reports, and continue to refine the academic review and division level review procedures.
- Adopt strategies for closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing groups of students.
- Support efforts to establish a state-level education information management system (EIMS) that will enable the department to meet increasing state and federal reporting requirements and enable stakeholders at all levels of education to make informed educational decisions based on accurate and timely information.
- Promote technical assistance on research-based instructional interventions that help improve the academic achievement in schools that are low-performing and those that are identified as in need of improvement under the NCLB Act.
- Continue to review and approve instructional methods and/or models for implementation in low-performing schools.
- Address measures to be taken in schools whose accreditation is denied.
- Support programs that assist schools and students meet performance expectations.

**Objective 5: The Board of Education will work cooperatively with partners to help ensure that young children are ready for school.**

Rationale:

Research shows that from the time of birth to the first day of kindergarten, development proceeds at a pace exceeding that of any subsequent stage of life. Efforts to understand this process have revealed the many remarkable accomplishments of the pre-school years, as well as the serious problems that confront some young children and their families. Striking disparities in what children know and can do are evident well before they enter kindergarten.

These differences are strongly associated with social and economic circumstances, and they are predictive of subsequent academic performance. Addressing and remediating these disparities are critical tasks, both for the children whose life opportunities are at stake and for the state whose goals demand that children be prepared to begin school, achieve academic success, and ultimately achieve economic independence and engage constructively with others as adult citizens.

Leadership for and oversight of programs for pre-school-age children are predominately out of the purview and authority of the Board of Education. Nonetheless, the Board recognizes that getting pre-school age children ready to enter school is critically important to later success in school. The strong link between a child's early learning environment and later school success is clear; therefore the Board of Education will seek new and effective ways to work cooperatively with other agencies and organizations concerned with the development of children of pre-school age.

Strategies/Activities to meet Objective 5:

- Establish academic standards to support preparation for pre-school students to be ready to successfully enter into kindergarten.
- Continue to cooperate with other entities involved in developing and implementing *Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Standards for Literacy and Mathematics*.
- Support the Virginia Preschool Initiative.
- Support the Title I Preschool programs.
- Support the Early Childhood Special Education Program.
- Support the Even Start Family Literacy Program.
- Seek ways to cooperate with and encourage the Head Start programs.

**Objective 6: The Board of Education will assist teachers to improve the reading skills of all students, kindergarten through grade 12.**

Rationale:

Reading is essential to success in our society. The ability to read is highly valued and important for social and economic advancement. Most children learn to read well; however, failure to learn to read adequately for continued school success is much more likely among poor children, children of color, and nonnative speakers of English. Despite the many ways in which Virginia's schools have progressed and improved over the past few years, there is little reason for complacency.

The Board is keenly aware that developing reading skills in the early grades is not the total answer to academic success. The Board will focus attention not only on the basic reading skills taught in the early elementary grades, but on the reading ability of the middle and secondary years as well. Inevitably, this will require some students to learn new skills—and some teachers to learn new strategies for teaching their students the important skills of how to read

purposefully, select materials that are of interest, learn from those materials, figure out the meanings of unfamiliar words, integrate new information with information previously known, resolve conflicting content in different texts, differentiate fact from opinion, and recognize the perspective of the writer. These are all skills critical to reading comprehension.

Strategies/Activities for meeting Objective 6:

- Ensure the communications and literacy skills of teachers by implementing the requirement for the reading assessment for initial licensure for teachers in the early grades.
- Provide leadership for preschool to adult literacy initiatives, including programs that address the needs of speakers of languages other than English.
- Support teacher preparation programs and pre-service programs for teachers to improve their skills in teaching reading

**Objective 7: The Board of Education will continue efforts to enhance the training, recruitment, and retention of highly qualified teachers, educational support personnel, and administrators, with a focus on the needs of “hard to staff” schools.**

Rationale:

In Virginia and across the country, growing number of school divisions, foundations and national organizations are zeroing in on this key question: What can be done to help improve school leadership at all levels? A recent publication by the National Association of State Boards of Education summed up the need for leadership: “Effective schools research of the last twenty years, combined with research that examines the critical components necessary to turn around low-performing schools, makes clear the importance of good leadership.” The Board of Education can play an important role to coordinate and explore effective strategies for ensuring quality and results, chiefly through efforts in principal training and professional development.

Certainly, the school counselor can be a key support for on-going progress of the school and every effort must be taken to ensure that school counselors—like principals and other school leaders— have the resources to do their job effectively. Counselors take the frontline of responsibility in helping guide students into challenging coursework to ensure that they are prepared for the world beyond high school: college, technical training, military enlistment, or employment. The explosion of readily available information on careers, financial aid, and college courses of study has placed additional demands on school counselors.

However, the reality of day-to-day pressures at the school means that some school counselors spend a significant amount of time on non-counseling activities, such as testing, covering classes, and registrar activities. In 2004, the Board of Education adopted *Standards for School Counseling Programs in Virginia Public Schools*, which can provide a valuable guide to local school leaders when reviewing the duties of the guidance and counseling staff, especially when duties other than counseling responsibilities can impair their ability to serve students. Finding effective ways to help improve counselor effectiveness would benefit the entire school community.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) places major emphasis upon teacher quality as a factor in improving student achievement. The new requirement that there be a highly qualified teacher in every core academic classroom by 2005-2006 is an important backdrop for the Board of Education's priorities.

Helping the "hard-to-staff" schools is a critically important focus for the Board of Education. "Hard to staff" schools are defined as those that have great difficulty in finding and retaining qualified and effective teachers. These schools are high-poverty inner-city schools or rural schools that, as a consequence of their location in economically depressed or isolated districts, offer comparatively low salaries and lack the amenities with which other divisions attract and retain teachers. This makes it difficult not only for the schools to maintain stability, but also to develop a strong learning environment. In 2004, Virginia had 230 schools defined as "hard-to-staff" and these schools present unique challenges to the state as a whole.

Shortages in teachers, support staff, such as counselors, and administrators are particularly acute for hard-to-staff schools, many of which are located in rural or high poverty areas. Providing the best-qualified teachers and staff to the neediest students is a constant struggle for these schools, particularly those in rural areas and in then inner cities.

The Board of Education supports providing additional state funding for teacher salaries as an essential part of recruiting and retaining teachers of the highest quality. Virginia is in the process of implementing its plan to ensure that all teachers of core academic subjects meet the federal definition of highly qualified by the end of the 2005-2006 school year, and to get the highest quality teachers, salaries for teachers must be competitive with other comparable professions. Based on the 2002-2003 data (the last year data are available) Virginia ranked 21st in the nation in average teacher salaries, with Virginia's average classroom salary falling \$3,152 (6.9 percent) below the national average.

Getting teachers with content preparation in every classroom, continuing to improve the licensure of teachers and providing beginning teachers with mentors are essential to attract and retain high quality professionals in the state's teaching force.

#### Strategies/Activities to meet Objective 7:

- Support initiatives to increase the number of high quality teachers, especially for hard-to-staff schools, such as the mentoring programs in hard-to-staff schools, the Virginia Middle School Teacher Corps, and other incentive programs for qualified teachers.
- Support executive education opportunities, such as the Turnaround Specialist Program to assist established school administrators in providing skilled leadership in chronically low-performing schools.
- Support the implementation of recommendations for the preparation of school leaders outlined by the Commission to Review, Study and Reform Educational Leadership.
- Ensure that incentives for National Board Certification are aligned with efforts to help hard-to-staff schools including placing National Board Certified Teachers in such schools, encouraging teachers from these schools to pursue National Board Certification, and introducing a service component in state school improvement efforts into state supports for National Board teachers.

- Support full compliance with NCLB and IDEA requirements for highly qualified paraprofessionals, general, and special education teachers and for professional development of teachers.
- Promote increasing the pool of teachers entering the profession through the career switcher program to teach in general and critical shortage areas.
- Support strategies for recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers through the Teacher Quality Enhancement grant.
- Adopt revisions to regulations governing preparation and licensure requirements for school personnel.
- Support ways to attract and retain career and technical education teachers whose training and expertise meet the demands of students and employers in the commonwealth.

**Objective 8: The Board of Education will provide leadership for implementing the provisions of state and federal laws and regulations smoothly and with minimal disruption to local divisions.**

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001:

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has expanded the federal role in education and has become a focal point of education policy. Coming at a time of wide public concern about the state of education, the legislation sets in place requirements that reach into virtually every public school in America. At the core of NCLB are a number of measures designed to drive broad gains in student achievement and to hold states and schools more accountable for student progress.

The Board of Education has expressed overall support for the law's stringent accountability mandates as important levers improving performance for all children. The Board has worked diligently in its efforts to ensure that the state complies with all requirements of NCLB. Nonetheless, given its scope and detail, the No Child Left Behind Act has been the source of considerable controversy and debate in the education community. The Board of Education has been a part of the on-going debate and has applied for and subsequently pushed USED to approve certain waivers and amendments to its accountability workbook. Further requests are pending.

Reauthorized Carl D. Perkins Act:

Congress recently reauthorized one of the primary pieces of federal legislation governing career and technical, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act, which is the main source of federal grants for states' vocational and technical programs at both the secondary and post-secondary levels. Schools receiving Perkins funding are required to establish and meet local adjusted levels of performance; show continuous improvement in academic and technical achievement; conduct a performance evaluation every two years of the six-year plan; and establish separate secondary and postsecondary performance measures. The legislation also emphasizes academic content by aligning student academic achievement standards in Perkins with NCLB requirements.

Career and technical programs are academically focused, and Virginia has impressive programs for high school students, especially those intent on earning industry certifications, which provide students with a major boost toward advanced technical training or earning a degree at a community college or four-year

college. These programs are responding to the real needs of local businesses—in health care, information technology, the construction trades, and other occupations.

The Board of Education, which serves as the State Board for Career and Technical Education, has a key part to help ensure that career and technical educators are able to keep pace with industry needs and technological innovations, and gain critical skills in instructional practice.

The Career and Technical Education Program (CTE) has a comprehensive state plan that is approved by the US Department of Education (USED). The current CTE plan was approved in 2000 for a four-year period from July 1, 2000, to June 30, 2004. USED extended the approval, with revisions, in 2004. Pending additional information from USED, the CTE Plan will be revised and updated in 2005-2006.

Another important federal law related to career and technical education programs is the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). While not directly under the responsibility of the Board of Education, the WIA provides workforce training programs and may serve youth aged 14 to 21. WIA impacts certain provisions of the Perkins Act and adult education and literacy programs, which are, of course, of direct interest to the Board of Education. The state and local plans developed by the respective councils set up for that purpose guide the implementation of the WIA provisions.

Reauthorized *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA)*:

In December 2004, the IDEA was amended as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-446). In general terms, the IDEA asserts that children with disabilities will receive a free educational program that is appropriate to their needs and the program will be administered in an environment that is most helpful to the child's education.

The requirements of the federal legislation place significant responsibilities for monitoring and overall state planning on the Board of Education. Among other new requirements, the Board of Education must (1) ensure that teachers are adequately prepared and trained and have the content knowledge and skills to serve children with disabilities; (2) require that students with disabilities who take alternate assessments be included in the state's NCLB accountability system; (3) report, with the same frequency they report on assessments of non-disabled students, the number of children with disabilities participating in both regular and alternate assessments and the results of these assessments; (4) require extensive data collection, including requiring the disaggregating of suspension and expulsion data by race, along with the requirement that graduation rates of students with disabilities be cataloged along with dropout rates for students with disabilities student achievement; and (5) establish regulations consistent with the federal regulations.

Consolidation of the Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind:

The Board of Education must act on state legislation to consolidate into a single campus the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind at Staunton and the Virginia School for the Deaf, Blind and Multi-disabled at Hampton. As a result of declining enrollment, increased maintenance costs, and other issues impacting the efficiency of each school, the consolidation of the two state schools for the deaf and the blind has been studied repeatedly since 1979. In 2003, a consolidation task force, convened at the

direction of the General Assembly, recommended that a new school be built at a location to be determined by the Board of Education. As a result of the task force's recommendations, a subsequent feasibility study, directed by the General Assembly, was conducted in 2004. The feasibility study proposed the parameters for construction of a new school at a new site.

Subsequently, the 2005 General Assembly adopted language through the budget bill (Chapter 951, 2005 Acts of the Assembly) directing that the two schools be consolidated into one school, and the Board of Education issued a Request for Proposals for that purpose. The Board of Education, assisted by the Department of General Services, is considering among other options, Public-Private Education Act (PPEA) proposals to plan and design the consolidation of the two schools into a single campus. The appropriation act language requires the Board to make the first decision regarding the method for proceeding with consolidation no later than July 31, 2005. The Department of Education must provide a report on this project to the Governor and the General Assembly no later than October 1, 2005.

#### Strategies/Activities for meeting Objective 8:

- Continue to monitor progress of schools, divisions, and the state in meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements.
- Receive annual report cards on progress of students in meeting state standards, graduation rates, elementary school attendance rates, names of schools needing improvement, professional qualifications of teachers, percentages of students not tested, and other information as required by NCLB.
- Support the administration of new SOL tests annually in English (reading/language arts) and in mathematics for grades 3 through 8.
- Support Virginia's participation in NAEP program in reading and math for 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- Support school divisions in conducting annual assessment in English language proficiency for all limited English proficient (LEP) students.
- Support programs of technical assistance for schools identified as in the first and second year of school improvement.
- Support procedures to disseminate via the Web site notices to parents and the public of any pending corrective actions, as required by NCLB.
- Support efforts to enlarge the pool of Supplemental Educational Services providers to provide remediation for low-performing students in Title I schools.
- Continue to assist school divisions in implementing charter schools and other public school choice options.
- Review and update the state plan for the Carl D. Perkins Act.
- Receive reports on the Workforce Investment Act programs, as necessary.
- Include industry certification requirements in the teacher licensure regulations.
- Revise *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia* to comply with new federal requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act as amended in 2004.
- Carry out provisions of the 2005 appropriation act regarding the consolidation of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind at Staunton and the Virginia School for the Deaf, Blind, and Multi-disabled at Hampton.

#### **Timelines: Strategies/Activities for Meeting Objectives**

## 2005-2010

**Objective 1: The Board of Education will improve the quality standards for all public schools in Virginia.**

Action	05	06	07	08	09	10
Review and revise the Standards of Quality	X		X		X	
Review and revise the Standards of Accreditation	X	X				

**Objective 2: The Board of Education will provide leadership to help schools and school divisions close the achievement gap and increase the academic success of all students.**

Action	05	06	07	08	09	10
Review and revise the Standards of Learning:						
Computer/Technology	X					
Fine Arts		X				
Foreign Language			X			
Health, Physical Education, and Driver Education				X		
History and Social Sciences				X		
Mathematics					X	
English					X	
Science						X
Support professional development and technical assistance for instructional staff, especially in low-performing schools.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support a focus on civics and financial literacy to ensure the preparation of all students to be productive citizens.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review and revise the <i>Virginia Plan for the Gifted</i> .	X	X				
Support programs and initiatives to expand opportunities that students have to earn a high school diploma.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Establish policies regarding the new numeracy and literacy assessments for students with disabilities pursuing the modified standard diploma.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Establish policies regarding the revised Virginia Alternate Assessment Program.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Establish modified achievement standards for students with disabilities who can make significant progress but may not reach grade-level achievement standards within the same time frame as other students.	X	X	X	X	X	X

**Objective 3: The Board of Education will work to ensure meaningful, on-going professional development for professional educational personnel.**

Action	05	06	07	08	09	10
Support professional development and technical assistance for professional educational personnel, working with professional education associations and teacher educators.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Promote the identification of industry certifications opportunities for all teachers who lack such credentials.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support, in conjunction with local divisions, professional development strategies that the local schools will use to help ensure the development of highly qualified professional educational personnel and paraprofessionals.	X	X	X	X	X	X

**Objective 4: The Board of Education will support accountability for all schools, with a focus on assisting chronically low-performing schools and school divisions.**

Action	05	06	07	08	09	10
Receive periodic reports of findings of academic review teams, review and adopt policies to address recommendations in team reports, and continue to refine the academic review and division level review procedures.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adopt strategies for closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing groups of students.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support efforts to establish a state-level education information management system (EIMS) that will enable the department to meet increasing state and federal reporting requirements and enable stakeholders at all levels of education to make informed educational decisions based on accurate and timely information.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Promote technical assistance on research-based instructional interventions that help improve the academic achievement in schools that are low-performing and those that are identified as in need of improvement under the NCLB Act.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Continue to review and approve instructional methods and/or models for implementation in low-performing schools.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Address measures to be taken in schools whose accreditation is denied.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support programs that assist schools and students meet performance expectations.	X	X	X	X	X	X

**Objective 5: The Board of Education will work cooperatively with partners to help ensure that young children are ready for school.**

Action	05	06	07	08	09	10
Establish academic standards to support preparation for pre-school students to be ready to successfully enter into kindergarten.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Continue to cooperate with other entities involved in developing and implementing <i>Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Standards for Literacy and Mathematics</i> .	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support the Virginia Preschool Initiative.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support the Title I Preschool programs.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support the Early Childhood Special Education Program.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support the Even Start Family Literacy Program.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Seek ways to cooperate with and encourage the Head Start programs.	X	X	X	X	X	X

**Objective 6: The Board of Education will assist teachers to improve the reading skills of all students, kindergarten through grade 12.**

Action	05	06	07	08	09	10
Ensure the communications and literacy skills of teachers by implementing the requirement for the reading assessment for initial licensure for teachers in the early grades.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provide leadership for preschool to adult literacy initiatives, including programs that address the needs of speakers of languages other than English.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support teacher preparation programs and pre-service programs for teachers to improve their skills in teaching reading.	X	X	X	X	X	X

**Objective 7: The Board of Education will continue efforts to enhance the training, recruitment, and retention of highly qualified teachers, educational support personnel, and administrators, with a focus on the needs of “hard to staff” schools.**

Action	05	06	07	08	09	10
Support initiatives to increase the number of high quality teachers, especially for hard-to-staff schools, such as the mentoring programs in hard-to-staff schools, the Virginia Middle School Teacher Corps, and other incentive programs for qualified teachers.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support executive education opportunities, such as the Turnaround Specialist Program to assist established school administrators in providing skilled leadership in chronically low-performing schools.	X	X	X	X	X	X

**Objective 7 (continued)**

Support the implementation of recommendations for the preparation of school leaders outlined by the Commission to Review, Study and Reform Educational Leadership.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ensure that incentives for National Board Certification are aligned with efforts to help hard-to-staff schools including placing National Board Certified Teachers in such schools, encouraging teachers from these schools to pursue National Board Certification, and introducing a service component in state school improvement efforts into state supports for National Board teachers.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support full compliance with NCLB and IDEA requirements for highly qualified paraprofessionals, general, and special education teachers and for professional development of teachers.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Promote increasing the pool of teachers entering the profession by supporting through the career switcher program to teach in general and critical shortage areas.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support strategies for recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers through the Teacher Quality Enhancement grant.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Adopt revisions to regulations governing preparation and licensure requirements for school personnel.	X					
Support ways to attract and retain career and technical education teachers whose training and expertise meet the demands of students and employers in the commonwealth.	X	X	X	X	X	X

**Objective 8: The Board of Education will provide leadership for implementing the provisions of state and federal laws and regulations smoothly and with minimal disruption to local divisions.**

Action	05	06	07	08	09	10
Continue to monitor progress of schools, divisions, and the state in meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Receive annual report cards on progress of students in meeting state standards, graduation rates, elementary school attendance rates, names of schools needing improvement, professional qualifications of teachers, percentages of students not tested, and other information as required by NCLB.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support the administration of new SOL tests annually in English (reading/language arts) and in mathematics for grades 3 through 8.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support Virginia's participation in NAEP program in reading and math for 4 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grades.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support school divisions in conducting annual assessment in English language proficiency for all limited English proficient (LEP) students.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support programs of technical assistance for schools identified as in the first and second year of school improvement.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support procedures and disseminate via Web site notice to parents and the public of any pending corrective actions.	X	X	X	X	X	X

**Objective 8 (continued)**

Support efforts to enlarge the pool of Supplemental Educational Services providers to provide remediation for low-performing students in Title I schools.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Continue to assist school divisions in implementing charter schools and other public school choice options.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review and update the state plan for the Carl D. Perkins Act.	X					
Receive reports on the Workforce Investment Act, as necessary.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Include industry certification requirements in the teacher licensure regulations.	X					
Revise <i>Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia</i> to comply with new federal requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act as amended in 2004.	X	X				
Carry out provisions of the 2005 appropriation act regarding the consolidation of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind at Staunton and the Virginia School for the Deaf, Blind, and Multi-disabled at Hampton.	X					

## Appendix A:

### **Actions and Accomplishments to Meet Board of Education Objectives: 2003-2005**

As required by the Code of Virginia, the following information provides a brief overview of the progress made in the past two years in meeting the Board of Education's objectives.

#### **Objective 1: The Board of Education will strengthen Virginia's public schools by providing challenging academic standards for all students.**

In 2003, the Board of Education adopted a series of changes to the Standards of Quality (SOQ) intended to improve educational standards in the Commonwealth. These changes were proposed by the Board as a result of its biennial review of the SOQ, as mandated by the *Code of Virginia*. The 2004 General Assembly enacted and funded four of the eight changes recommended by the Board. Additional policy changes recommended by the Board of Education were enacted and funded by the 2005 General Assembly.

Highlights of recent Board of Education actions include:

- Revised the Computer Technology Standards of Learning for Grades K through 12.
- Approved the list of K-5 Reading textbooks and Science textbooks and instructional materials recommended for state adoption.
- Approved the list of textbooks for 6-12 English and Literature, K-12 Mathematics, and Foreign Language.
- Supported initiatives to accelerate college-level opportunities for students through the Early College Scholars Program, which enables students in their junior or senior year to complete their high school diploma and concurrently earn a semester's worth of credits that can be used towards a college degree.
- Worked to expand Career and Technical Education opportunities for students through the Path to Industry Certification program, which provides high school seniors an opportunity to earn their high school diploma and complete technical preparation and industry certification by enrolling in tuition-free training at a Virginia community college immediately following graduation.
- Adopted the *Educational Technology Plan for Virginia 2003-09*.
- Supported efforts to establish a state-level education information management system (EIMS) that will enable the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to meet increasing state and federal reporting requirements and enable stakeholders at all levels of education to make informed educational decisions based on accurate and timely information.

#### **Objective 2: The Board of Education will enhance the academic program and the quality standards for public education in Virginia.**

The Board of Education's constitutional responsibility is "to determine and prescribe" the Standards of Quality (SOQ) for Virginia's school divisions. During 2003, the Board conducted a comprehensive review of the Standards of Quality. The prescribed amendments were presented to the 2004 session

of the General Assembly, and many of the amendments were adopted and funded by the legislature. To follow that success, the 2005 session of the General Assembly adopted and funded the remaining recommendations that had been prescribed by the Board of Education.

Schools are employing a variety of tactics to address individual student's learning needs. Tactics include reducing class sizes, expanding early childhood programs, improving the quality of teachers providing poor and minority students, and encouraging more minority students to take high-level courses.

Highlights of recent Board of Education actions include:

- Presented amended Standards of Quality at the 2004 and 2005 sessions of the General Assembly. Most of the amendments prescribed by the Board were adopted and funded by the legislature, including provisions for five elementary resource teachers per 1,000 students; one support technology position and one instructional technology position per 1,000 students, and a daily planning period for teachers at the middle and high school levels.
- Adopted criteria and procedures for conducting division-level academic reviews and improved the procedures used in conducting school-level reviews.
- Completed the revision or repeal process or in the process of revising a total of thirty (30) Board of Education regulations.
- Established a Board of Education committee to study and recommend actions to improve programs for English as a Second Language (ESL) students.
- Revised the criteria and established a standing committee of the Board of Education to review charter school applications, consistent with existing state law.
- Initiated setting the criteria and a process for approval of private educational management companies to provide services to Virginia schools.
- Approved the Stanford English Language Proficiency test and certain locally developed and/or selected instruments to measure the English language proficiency of Limited English Proficient students for 2003-2005.
- Approved the criteria and process for adopting instructional methods or models/programs that have been proven to be effective in assisting schools accredited with warning in English or mathematics.
- Received the recommendations from the joint committee to study feasibility of developing a curriculum for nutrition and exercise for K-12 students.

**Objective 3: The Board of Education will continue efforts to enhance the training, recruitment, and retention of highly qualified professional educational personnel.**

The Board of Education encouraged efforts to attract, train, and retain skilled and diverse teachers by reviewing and improving the traditional approved program route, the Career Switcher route, and through alternative routes into the teaching profession. A key program is the Teacher Quality Enhancement project, a multifaceted program described earlier in this document. The program, funded through a federal grant, will enable Virginia, despite current economic challenges, to enhance the teaching profession. These funds provide incentives for good teachers to stay in the profession, and to help recruit good, new teachers who will stay and teach in their own communities. The grant is a good start, but the Board of Education is challenged to implement additional creative public-private partnership opportunities to retain quality teachers, particularly in underserved rural and urban schools.

Highlights of recent Board of Education actions include:

- Adopted criteria for the alternate route program for highly qualified teachers.
- Adopted criteria for highly qualified special education teachers.
- Established the Special Committee of the Board of Education to Study and Make Recommendations Relative to Teacher Licensure Assessments.
- Adopted a recommendation of the Advisory Board for Teacher Education and Licensure to set a cut-score of 165 for the *School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA)* to be effective July 1, 2005, for principals and assistant principals.
- Supported the development of a regional cooperative for teacher licensing and the formation of a consortium of surrounding states to create the Meritorious New Teacher Candidate designation for graduates of approved teacher education programs to provide a symbol of excellence to be noted on the initial license of exceptionally well-prepared and high-performing new teachers.
- Established Proficiency Levels for the American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview and Writing Proficiency Test.
- Supported efforts to attract, train, and retain skilled and diverse teachers through the Teacher Quality Enhancement project. Highlights of this comprehensive program include:
  - ✓ Sponsoring the Great Virginia Teach-In in 2004 and again in 2005;
  - ✓ Supporting the Praxis I Tutorial Assistance Program for prospective teachers who have not achieved passing scores on Praxis I;
  - ✓ Supporting the Teacher Mentoring Pilot Program to encourage school divisions to adopt proven, research-based teacher mentoring and/or induction programs in accordance with their instructional needs and circumstances; and
  - ✓ Supporting Teachers of Promise, which provides prospective teachers with an exemplary professional development experience and mentors during their first year in the classroom.

**Objective 4: The Board of Education will support accountability and continuous improvement in all schools.**

During the past two years, what to do about chronically low-performing schools has become an important topic for the Board of Education, strongly influencing Virginia's school improvement efforts and accountability program. Clearly, the state cannot do all of the work when it comes to school improvement. Ultimately, it is at the school level where the ability and the will to improve need to take root. Even more fundamentally, it is at the school division level where the assistance and resources to get the job done must come. Where central leadership and resources are blocked or inconsistently provided, trouble ensues that can permeate many if not all of the schools in the entire division.

The Board of Education played a critical role in establishing a policy environment that facilitates, rather than hinders, the development of local will and ability. The Board placed its focus on creating the conditions under which schools can thrive. In those cases where schools still did not achieve what is expected of them, the Board of Education sought and received the authority and the responsibility to intervene. Even as the Board of Education worked to formulate helpful policies, the federal No Child Left Behind Act added a significant new dimension to the treatment of low-performing schools. Within its accountability framework, the law incorporates a number of sanctions that schools and school divisions and the state as a whole must administer to struggling schools that receive funding under the federal Title I program students.

Highlights of recent Board of Education actions include:

- Sought and received new authority that modifies the current school compliance process within the Standards of Quality to authorize the Board of Education to require an academic review of any school division that, through the school academic review process, fails to implement the SOQ. The new provisions also require the reviewed school division to submit for approval by the Board a corrective action plan setting forth specific actions and a schedule designed to ensure that schools within its school division achieve full accreditation status. Four local divisions have signed memoranda of understanding and are undergoing the division-level review.
- Established the Committee on Lowest-Performing School Divisions to study the needs and recommend ways to assist the lowest performing school systems in the state.
- Established or revised cut scores for the following tests:
  - ✓ History Standards of Learning tests based on the 2001 standards revision
  - ✓ Workkeys: Reading for Information, Workkeys: Applied Mathematics, and ACT: EXPLORE as substitute tests for the literacy and numeracy requirements of the Modified Standard Diploma
  - ✓ “Plain English” Standards of Learning Mathematics tests for grades 3, 5, and 8
  - ✓ Reading subtest of the Stanford English Language Proficiency Test when used as a substitute for the Standards of Learning grade 3 English test and the grade 5 and 8 Standards of Learning reading tests for students at the lowest level of language proficiency (levels 1 and 2) or in the first year of enrollment in a school in the United States.

**Objective 5: The Board of Education will assist teachers to improve the reading skills of all students, especially those at the early grades.**

A number of policies and initiatives are in place at the state and local levels aimed at improving literacy and reading achievement statewide. State-level reading policy is embodied in the Standards of Quality, the Standards of Accreditation, and the Standards of Learning. A variety of other initiatives aimed at improving reading skills, especially in the early grades, address funding, instructional materials, instructional technology, professional development, and technical assistance.

In April 2003, the Board of Education adopted a recommendation of the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure to require a reading instructional assessment for elementary preK-3 and preK-6 teachers and special education teachers, and reading specialists no later than

July 1, 2004. This test is now being administered to new licensure candidates. In June 2004, the Board of Education modified its policy to exempt from the required assessment teachers of early childhood special education, teachers of students with severe disabilities, and speech language pathologists. This assessment program is now up and running. The task now is for the Board to set the appropriate cut-scores for the assessments.

Virginia's pre-school initiative for at-risk children is an incentive-based program that has now been expanded to 100 percent of the eligible children. Previously, funding was available for only a portion of the eligible students. High-quality pre-school programs can accelerate intellectual and social development, especially among children who live in high-poverty communities. An example of the cooperative efforts in Virginia are seen with the 2004 update of *Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Standards for Literacy and Mathematics*, which describe specific indicators for pre-kindergarten children in the content areas of reading and mathematics. Oral expression, vocabulary, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, and early word recognition, print and book awareness, and written expression are emphasized in literacy, and number and number sense, computation, measurement, geometry, data collection and statistics, and patterns and relationship in mathematics. These standards provide early childhood educators with a set of indicators of success for entering kindergarten.

Highlights of recent Board of Education actions include:

- Established a reading assessment for elementary preK-3 and preK-6 teachers and special education teachers, and reading specialists. This test is now being administered to new licensure candidates. (In June 2004, the Board of Education modified its policy to exempt from the required assessment teachers of early childhood special education, teachers of students with severe disabilities, and speech language pathologists.)
- Established the Advisory Board on Adult Education and Literacy.
- Received the document developed by the Department of Education entitled *Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Guidelines for Literacy and Mathematics*. This document was in response to the 2004 Appropriation Act, which included language for the At-Risk Four-Year-Old Program (Virginia Preschool Initiative) requiring the Department of Education, in cooperation with the Council on Child Day Care and Early Childhood Programs, to establish academic standards that are in accordance with appropriate preparation for students to be ready to successfully enter into kindergarten.

**Objective 6: The Board of Education will provide leadership for implementing the provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) smoothly and with minimal disruption to local school divisions.**

Under NCLB, each state must implement a system of accountability for schools and divisions that is designed to ensure that all children perform at or above proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state assessments. The legislation requires the state to take many specific actions to meet the provisions of NCLB, including developing a timeline with annual targets by which this goal will be achieved no later than the 2013-2014 school year. Actions taken by the Board of Education in the last several years have anticipated much of what NCLB now requires. Therefore,

Virginia has a solid foundation upon which to craft strategies to meet the provisions of the law.

Highlights of recent Board of Education actions include:

- Developed and implemented an achievement recognition award for Title I schools for local school divisions that exceed adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements.
- Developed and administered annual science tests in grades 3, 5, and 8.
- Approved criteria for High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) for Virginia.
- Negotiated with the U.S. Department of Education (USED) regarding regulations limiting the number of students with disabilities whose proficient score on state assessments based on alternate achievement standards could be counted in calculating AYP. In Virginia, this is the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP). The limit set by USED is one percent of the students tested at the applicable grade levels. Under the provision that permits states to request an exception to this cap, the Board negotiated at 1.13 percent cap.
- Modified the process for calculating and reporting the AYP status of “small n schools,” which are those schools with 50 or fewer students enrolled in the tested grades or courses.
- Adopted the guidelines for sanctions/corrective actions for school divisions in improvement status, as required by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. While no school divisions in Virginia are in this situation, current guidance from the U.S. Education Department suggested that states also must address sanctions for school divisions not receiving Title I funds.
- Submitted to the US Education Department (USED) amendments and requests for additional flexibility in the form of specific waiver requests as allowed under the federal provision that permits states or localities to request, and the U.S. Secretary of Education to approve, waivers to requirements in NCLB statute or regulations.