

The Foundation of K-12 Public Policy in Virginia: The Standards of Quality

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Constitutional Authority

“The General Assembly shall provide for a system of free public elementary and secondary schools for all children of school age throughout the Commonwealth and shall seek to ensure that an educational program of high quality is established and continually maintained.”

Article VIII, § 1, Constitution of Virginia

Constitutional Authority

“Standards of quality for the several school divisions shall be determined and prescribed from time to time by the Board of Education, subject to revision only by the General Assembly.”

Article VIII, § 2, Constitution of Virginia

Statutory Authority

“To ensure the integrity of the standards of quality, the Board of Education shall, in even-numbered years, exercise its constitutional authority to determine and prescribe the standards, subject to revision only by the General Assembly, by reviewing the standards and either (i) proposing amendments to the standards or (ii) making a determination that no changes are necessary...”

§ 22.1-18.01, Code of Virginia

§§ 22.1-253.13:1 through 22.1-253.13:10, Code of Virginia

1. Instructional programs supporting the Standards of Learning;
2. Instructional, administrative, and support personnel;
3. Accreditation, other standards, and assessments;
4. Student achievement and graduation requirements;
5. Quality of classroom instruction and educational leadership;
6. Planning and public involvement;
7. School board policies;
8. Compliance;
9. Virginia Index of Performance incentive program; and
10. Standards of Learning Innovation Committee.

Standard One: Instructional Programs

- Requires the Board of Education to establish educational objectives in all subjects, known as the Standards of Learning (SOL);
- Requires local school boards to implement a program of instruction that meets or exceeds the requirements of the Board of Education;
- Sets out the areas of instruction that must be emphasized by local school divisions, including reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, geography, government, economics, foreign languages, health and physical education, fine arts, and practical arts;

Standard One: Instructional Programs

- Sets out the programs that must be implemented by local school divisions, including special education, career and technical education, gifted education, and programs for students with limited English proficiency;
- Requires local school boards to adopt a curriculum aligned to the Standards of Learning;
- Requires local school boards to develop and implement programs of prevention, intervention, or remediation for students who are educationally at risk;

Standard One: Instructional Programs

- Requires school divisions to provide reading intervention services to students in kindergarten through grade three who demonstrate deficiencies on the SOL reading test or other reading diagnostic tests approved by the department;
- Requires school divisions to provide algebra readiness intervention services to students in grades six through nine at risk of failing the Algebra I SOL test; and
- Requires local school boards to collect and analyze data, and use the results to evaluate and make decisions about instructional programs.

Standard Two: Staffing

- Requires local school boards to employ licensed instructional personnel qualified in relevant subject areas;
- Sets divisionwide ratios of students to teachers for elementary, middle and high school;
- Sets schoolwide ratios of students to teachers for middle schools and high schools;
- Requires local school boards to provide support services;

Standard Two: Staffing

- Sets minimum staffing requirements for principals, assistant principals, librarians, school counselors, and clerical personnel;
- Requires staffing ratios of 21:1 in middle and high schools to provide teachers with one planning period per day or the equivalent, unencumbered by any teaching or supervisory duties;
- Provides for instructional positions for prevention, intervention, and remediation services;
- Includes 17 instructional positions / 1,000 students identified as “limited English proficient;”

Standard Two: Staffing

- Requires five positions / 1,000 students in grades K-5 to serve as elementary resource teachers in art, music, and physical education;
- Requires two positions / 1,000 students in grades K-12, one to provide technology support, and one to serve as an instructional technology resource teacher; and
- Allows school divisions flexibility in deploying the required positions.

Standard Three: Accreditation

- Requires the Board to establish Standards of Accreditation;
- Requires full accreditation of all schools within a school division;
- Requires local school boards to review the accreditation status of all schools annually in public session;
- Establishes an academic review process and sets the requirements for corrective action plans for any schools that have been rated Accredited with Warning;

Standard Three: Accreditation

- Provides for a division level academic review and sets requirements for corrective action plans for school divisions that have undergone an academic review;
- Requires the Board to prescribe Standards of Learning assessments for English, mathematics, science, and history and social science;
- Limits Standards of Learning assessments in grades 3-8 to reading and mathematics (grades 3-8), science (grades 5 and 8), writing (grade 8), and Virginia Studies and Civics and Economics (as determined by the local school board);

Standard Three: Accreditation

- Requires local school boards to certify that it has provided instruction and administered an alternative assessment, consistent with Board guidelines, to students in grades 3-8 in those subject areas in which a Standards of Learning assessment will no longer be administered;
- Provides for the Board to prescribe requirements for the School Performance Report Card; and
- Authorizes the Board to pursue all civil remedies for breaches in test security and unauthorized alteration of test materials or test results.

Standard Four: Student Achievement

- Specifies that the Board of Education establishes graduation requirements, setting the units of credit to be earned and prescribing the assessments to be passed;
- Requires reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities to meet the requirements to be awarded a diploma;
- Provides for the establishment of Standard, Advanced Studies, and Special Diplomas, as well as Certificates of Program Completion;

Standard Four: Student Achievement

- Provides for the award of verified credits for passing scores on industry certifications, state licensure examinations, and national occupational competency assessments approved by the Board; and
- Requires local school divisions to report annually to the Board on the number of industry certifications and state licensure examinations passed, and to post these numbers on the School Performance Report Card.

Standard Five: Educational Leadership

- Sets requirements for teacher, principal, and superintendent evaluations, with student academic progress as a significant component;
- Prescribes professional development requirements for local school board members and superintendents;
- Requires local school boards to provide a program of high quality professional development to instructional personnel in instructional content;
- Requires all instructional personnel to participate in such programs;

Standard Five: Educational Leadership

- Requires the inclusion of high-quality professional development programs in schools' and school divisions' comprehensive plans; and
- Requires each local school board to review its professional development program annually.

Standard Six: Planning & Public Involvement

- Sets standards for statewide and divisionwide comprehensive, unified, long-range plans;
- Requires that the comprehensive plans be developed with staff and community involvement;
- Requires the Board of Education and local school boards to report to the public the extent to which the objectives of the plan have been met;
- Requires each school to prepare its own comprehensive plan;

Standard Six: Planning & Public Involvement

- Requires that the plans be based on data collection, analysis, and evaluation;
- Requires the plans to include strategies for improving student achievement;
- Requires that local school divisions' plans are consistent with all other divisionwide plans required by law and regulations; and
- Requires the local school divisions' plans include provisions for parent and family involvement.

Standard Seven: School Board Policies

- Requires each school board to maintain and follow an up-to-date policy manual that is made available to the public;
- Prescribes the components of the policy manual and requires that it be developed giving consideration to the views of teachers, parents, and other concerned citizens; and
- Requires local school boards to provide notice annually of the availability of the policy manual, and to ensure that copies are available for review.

Standard Eight: Compliance

- Requires local school boards to provide, as a minimum, the programs and services, set forth in the SOQ, with state and local funds as apportioned by the General Assembly;
- Requires each local school board to report its compliance with the SOQ to the Board annually;
- Requires the Board to identify, in its report to the Governor and General Assembly, any school divisions that failed to meet the SOQ; and
- Authorizes the Board to enforce compliance with the SOQ.

Standard Nine: VIP Incentive Program

- Provides for schools and school divisions to be recognized and rewarded for being fully accredited and for making significant progress in achieving advanced proficiency levels in English, mathematics, science, and history and social science;
- Encourages school divisions to promote student achievement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and
- Permits a school that maintains a passing rate on Virginia assessment program tests of 95 percent or above in each of the four core academic areas for two consecutive years to receive a waiver from annual accreditation.

Standard Ten: SOL Innovation Committee

- Establishes the Standards of Learning Innovation Committee, under the direction of the Secretary of Education, to make recommendations to the Board on:
 1. Standards of Learning assessments;
 2. Authentic individual growth measures;
 3. Alignment between the Standards of Learning, the assessments, and the School Performance Report Card; and
 4. Ideas about innovative teaching in the classroom.

2012 Board of Education Recommendations

- Reaffirm prior staffing recommendations:

SOQ Staffing Recommendations	FY 2013	FY 2014
One reading specialist / 1,000 students in K-12	\$51.2 million	\$51.3 million
One mathematics specialist / 1,000 students in K-8	\$34.8 million	\$35.0 million
One data coordinator / 1,000 students in K-12	\$51.2 million	\$51.3 million
One full-time assistant principal / 400 students in K-12	\$70.3 million	\$70.6 million
One full-time principal in every elementary school	\$7.8 million	\$8.0 million
Speech-language pathologist caseload – 60 students	\$4.8 million	\$5.0 million
Include the state costs for blind and vision impaired students in the SOQ	\$4.4 million	\$5.0 million
Total	\$224.5 million	\$226.2 million

2012 Board of Education Recommendations

- Propose SOQ language to provide school divisions the flexibility to deploy required school counselors, librarians, and school-based clerical personnel to the schools with the greatest needs, so long as they employ a sufficient number of personnel divisionwide to meet the total number required in SOQ staffing requirements.
- Request the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to conduct a study of the SOQ.

2012 Board of Education Recommendations

- **Codify the provisions of the Early Intervention Reading Initiative and the Algebra Readiness program in the Standards of Quality and require all school divisions to provide these interventions with funding currently appropriated for these programs.**
- **Propose legislation to shift the review of the SOQ from even to odd-numbered years to be aligned more effectively with the legislative budget process.**

2013 General Assembly Actions

- **Governor's budget amendment – The General Assembly appropriated the state costs for blind and vision impaired students in the SOQ for FY 2014.**
- **HB 2066/SB 1172 – The General Assembly amended the SOQ to provide school divisions with the flexibility to deploy required school counselors, librarians, and school-based clerical personnel to the schools with the greatest needs, so long as they employ a sufficient number of personnel divisionwide to meet the total number required in SOQ staffing requirements.**

2013 General Assembly Actions

- **HB 2068/SB 1171 – The General Assembly codified the provisions of the Early Intervention Reading Initiative and the Algebra Readiness program in the Standards of Quality so that all school divisions are required to provide these interventions with funding currently appropriated for these programs.**
- **SJR 328 – JLARC will conduct a study of the efficiency and effectiveness of elementary and secondary school spending, to be completed by November 30, 2015.**

Outstanding Issues

- Results of the JLARC study – The interim findings and recommendations are due by November 30, 2014, and the final findings and recommendations are due by November 30, 2015.
- Legislation to shift the review of the SOQ from even to odd-numbered years to be aligned more effectively with the legislative budget process.

Outstanding Issues

- **Prior staffing recommendations:**

SOQ Staffing Recommendations	FY 2013	FY 2014
One reading specialist / 1,000 students in K-12	\$51.2 million	\$51.3 million
One mathematics specialist / 1,000 students in K-8	\$34.8 million	\$35.0 million
One data coordinator / 1,000 students in K-12	\$51.2 million	\$51.3 million
One full-time assistant principal / 400 students in K-12	\$70.3 million	\$70.6 million
One full-time principal in every elementary school	\$7.8 million	\$8.0 million
Speech-language pathologist caseload – 60 students	\$4.8 million	\$5.0 million
Total	\$220.1 million	\$221.2 million

Additional Issues for the Board's Consideration

- Provisions addressing narrowing the achievement gap under the Student Achievement Standard (Standard 4) and the Planning Standard (Standard 6); and
- Provisions addressing the other Board goals.