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Virginia Schools Earn High Marks from Education Week ***Commonwealth Ranks Fourth in Nation in Annual Quality Counts Report***

The nation's leading education journal today ranked Virginia as fourth in the nation in overall educational quality and performance. [Education Week's Quality Counts 2012 report](#) awarded the commonwealth a letter grade of B, up from a B- in 2011, when the commonwealth also ranked fourth.

Education Week described Virginia as "a perennial strong finisher" in the report. Only Maryland with a B+ earned a higher overall letter grade from Quality Counts, although Massachusetts and New York also received B's.

"Quality Counts validates what we already know: Virginia has outstanding public schools and a bipartisan track record of effective policies and reforms," Governor Robert F. McDonnell said. "But this report also confirms that there is room for improvement and further reforms and innovations to expand opportunity."

This year's Quality Counts grades were based on the performance of states in six broad areas: the role of education in promoting success at various stages of life; K-12 student achievement; rigor and quality of academic standards, assessments and accountability systems; teacher preparation, licensure and evaluation; school finance; and alignment of state policies related to school, college and workforce readiness.

Virginia's highest category grade was an A for the commonwealth's Standards of Learning standards, assessment and accountability program. The lowest category grade was a C for K-12 achievement, up from a C- in 2011. Grades for achievement were based largely on the performance of students on national tests and progress toward closing achievement gaps.

"The work of the Board of Education over the last few years in increasing the rigor of the Standards of Learning and promoting college-and-career readiness aligns well with the findings of Quality Counts," Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said. "I have no doubt that as our schools implement these new standards and policies, the commonwealth will add to its national reputation for excellence and innovation."

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