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**Contact:** Charles B. Pyle, Director of Communications, (804) 371-2420  
Julie C. Grimes, Communications Manager, (804) 225-2775

## **State Superintendent Patricia I. Wright Announces Retirement**

Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright today announced her retirement as Virginia's top public school administrator, effective May 1, 2014.

Wright was appointed state superintendent by Governor Tim Kaine in 2008, and was reappointed by Governor Bob McDonnell in 2010. She also served as acting superintendent of public instruction under Governor Mark Warner in 2005 and early 2006. During her tenure, Wright oversaw a major revision of the commonwealth's Standards of Learning (SOL) to emphasize college and career readiness, the introduction of more challenging and innovative SOL tests in all subjects, and the expanded use of technology in instruction and assessment.

"It has been a great honor to serve as state superintendent and collaborate with so many outstanding educators across the commonwealth to develop and implement policies that support higher levels of student learning and achievement," Wright said. "I am profoundly grateful for the support and trust over the years of governors, legislators and Board of Education members — both Democrats and Republicans — who believed in doing the right thing for students, even when the choices were difficult."

"Pat Wright has been an exceptional public servant," said former Board of Education President David M. Foster of Arlington County, a McDonnell appointee whose term expired in January. "Her work over the course of nearly 30 years with the state education department left a mark on literally millions of Virginia students, whom she challenged to reach higher and strive for excellence."

Virginia public schools are widely acknowledged as among the best in the nation. Virginia students outperform almost all of their peers on national reading, mathematics and science tests and on the SAT and ACT college-admissions assessments. The commonwealth now ranks third in the nation in the percentage of public high school graduates who qualify for college credit on Advanced Placement examinations. Student achievement on all of these national measures improved during Wright's six years as superintendent of public instruction.

"One of the most critical decisions during the last six years was in 2010 when the Board of Education accepted my recommendation not to adopt the Common Core State Standards, as all but a handful of states had already done," Wright said. "Looking back, I remain convinced that this was the right decision for our students, teachers and schools. Virginia schools are now in their third year of implementing college- and career-ready standards and assessments and we are already seeing progress as more and more students and schools meet these higher expectations for learning and achievement in all content areas."

Eleanor B. Saslaw of Fairfax County, a Warner appointee who was reappointed by Kaine and served as board president from 2010 until 2012, said Wright's guidance was critical as the Board of Education took steps to increase the rigor of the SOL program to promote college and career readiness for students and tighten accountability standards for schools.

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“Pat was adamant that we put the long-term interests of students first,” said Saslaw. “This included raising standards so students would be better prepared for college and the work force and holding high schools accountable for graduation and dropout rates. It was a pleasure to work with her.”

Mark E. Emblidge of Richmond, a Warner and Kaine appointee who served as president of the Board of Education from 2006 until 2010, praised Wright for her commitment to holding all schools accountable for student learning and closing achievement gaps between white and minority students.

“As a former school board chairman of an urban school division, I can speak firsthand of the importance of having a state superintendent who does not accept excuses and who believes that all schools should be held to high standards, regardless of the family income or race of the students,” Emblidge said.

Prior to her appointment as the commonwealth's chief school officer, Wright served as chief deputy superintendent, acting superintendent, deputy superintendent, assistant superintendent for instruction, director of secondary instruction, associate director of secondary instruction and state mathematics specialist.

In these roles, Wright developed and led initiatives to promote effective instruction and higher student achievement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). These efforts included the Algebra Readiness Initiative, Governor's STEM Academies, incentives for recruitment and retention of STEM teachers, the Middle School Mathematics Corps, a mathematics specialist endorsement and the Virginia Index of Performance to recognize and reward high-performing schools.

During the mid and late 1990s, Wright was a member of the team of Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) educators and administrators who, working with the Board of Education, governors and state legislators, increased the rigor and specificity of the commonwealth's K-12 academic standards and created a statewide assessment and accountability program.

“In taking my leave, I do want to thank my co-workers at the department — both past and present — for the dedication they have shown to public education and improving the lives of young people,” Wright said. “Their efforts, along with those of countless teachers, principals and other educators, have made Virginia's public school system the national model of excellence and innovation it is today.”

“I also extend my best wishes to Governor Terry McAuliffe, Secretary of Education Anne Holton and my successor as they work with the Board of Education, the General Assembly and educators in every school division to further improve outcomes for students,” Wright said.

Wright is a native of Brunswick County and a product of Virginia's public school system. She received her doctorate in mathematics education from the University of Virginia, a master's degree in mathematics education from Virginia Commonwealth University and a bachelor's degree in mathematics from James Madison University.

Wright's retirement caps a 39-year career in public education. Before coming to VDOE in 1985, Wright taught mathematics for 10 years at the secondary and middle school levels in Sussex County and Chesterfield County public schools.

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