



Commonwealth Listening Tour

Elevating the Voices of
Virginians to Strengthen Public
Education

Appendices

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Table of Contents

Region 1: Central Virginia..... 1

Mathematics Instruction	1
Literacy Instruction	1
School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)	1
Assessment	2
Wraparound Services	2
Other Topics	3

Region 2: Tidewater 4

Mathematics Instruction	4
Literacy Instruction	4
School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)	4
Assessment	4
Wraparound Services	4
Other Topics	5

Region 3: Northern Neck 6

Mathematics Instruction	6
Literacy Instruction	6
School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)	6
Assessment	7
Wraparound Services	7
Other Topics	8

Region 4: Northern Virginia 9

Mathematics Instruction	9
Literacy Instruction	9
School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)	10
Assessment	10
Wraparound Services	10
Other Topics	11

Region 5: Valley 12

Mathematics Instruction	12
Literacy Instruction	12
School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)	12
Assessment	13
Wraparound Services	13
Other Topics	13

Region 6: Western Virginia 15

Mathematics Instruction	15
Literacy Instruction	15
School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)	16
Assessment	16
Wraparound Services	17
Other Topics	17

Region 7: Southwest 18

Mathematics Instruction	18
-------------------------------	----

Literacy Instruction	18
School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)	19
Assessment	19
Wraparound Services	20
Other Topics	20

Region 8: Southside 22

Mathematics Instruction	22
Literacy Instruction	22
School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)	22
Assessment	23
Wraparound Services	23
Other Topics	24

Other Educator, Leader, and Parent Meetings, Virtual Sessions, and Survey Results 25

Mathematics Instruction	25
Literacy Instruction	26
School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)	26
Assessment	27
Wraparound Services	28
Other Topics	29

Region 1: Central Virginia

Mathematics Instruction

Teachers, building administrators, and division leaders across Region 1 described mathematics instruction as strengthened by collaborative planning structures, strong teacher–student relationships, and instructional teams that work deliberately to break down the state’s changing standards into manageable components. Teachers reported that these collaborative environments help maintain academic rigor even as the statewide landscape continues to evolve. School leaders noted that divisions with smaller class sizes can provide more individualized support, enabling educators to engage students in conceptual mathematics and tailored interventions that reinforce number fluency and problem-solving. Parents echoed these observations, with many explaining that their children’s confidence in mathematics has grown when teachers connect content to real-world tasks or embed numeracy skills within career and technical education pathways.

Regional comments also reflected the value placed on upper-level mathematics opportunities. High school teachers and counselors pointed to dual-enrollment opportunities and career-aligned coursework as essential opportunities for students to enter high-skill trades, higher education, or the military. Community partners described these pathways as critical for advancing academic excellence. At the same time, division leaders described the need for greater stability in statewide policy, noting that frequent changes to standards and assessments make it difficult to sustain improvement in instruction.

Literacy Instruction

Across Region 1, teachers, literacy coaches, principals, and families expressed strong support for the Virginia Literacy Act (VLA), reflecting early signs of progress in student readiness and foundational literacy skills. Elementary teachers reported that structured literacy instructional practices, coupled with evidence-based phonics routines, are leading to measurable improvements for students who previously struggled to read. Some educators described strong gains among multilingual learners and students with disabilities, explaining that explicit, systematic instruction has helped students move toward grade-level expectations at a faster pace than in previous years. Division leaders reinforced these observations, noting that the VLA has provided teachers with training, high-quality instructional materials, and clearly defined expectations that strengthen Tier 1 instruction.

Parents also described increasing engagement among young readers, particularly when teachers use authentic texts and real-time progress monitoring to tailor support. Region 1 expressed their view that specialized supports for English Learners and students with disabilities contribute meaningfully to literacy improvement.

Teachers in some divisions also referenced the positive role of literacy coaches and collaborative planning periods that help refine instructional delivery.

These successes were accompanied by a wide range of concerns. Teachers described the pace of statewide implementation as overwhelming, especially when new literacy tools, assessments, and standards are introduced simultaneously. Some explained that required programs are not equally effective for all student groups and that limited staffing, particularly among reading specialists and trained interventionists, creates operational strain. Several teachers noted that material delays from the state hindered early implementation. Families and educators further emphasized the need for improved alignment between literacy practices and special education frameworks, as well as more intentional support for gifted students, multilingual learners, and older readers who require structured intervention beyond third grade.

School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)

Division superintendents, principals, teachers, and parents in Region 1 offered detailed reflections on the new School Performance and Support Framework. Many reported appreciating the intention of the system, which attempts to provide a clearer picture of performance across student groups and align state and federal accountability requirements. Some school leaders found value in having data that, when clearly communicated, helps identify where targeted supports are most needed.

However, the dominant narrative across Region 1 centered on confusion, frustration, and concern about the system’s design and rollout. School leaders and division administrators expressed unease with the lack of transparency surrounding SPSF calculations and with the delayed release of key data. Teachers and principals commented that the system often evaluates school performance using variables beyond the control of educators, especially chronic absenteeism and the rigid weighting of proficiency relative to growth.

Families conveyed difficulty interpreting the ratings “On Track” or “Off Track,” which they felt suggested trajectories rather than actual performance levels.

Participants across Region 1 emphasized the importance of policy stability, explaining that when accountability expectations shift mid-year or year-to-year, teachers cannot effectively align instruction, and divisions cannot accurately evaluate progress.

Region 1 comments also highlighted the need for modernized data systems that produce timely, classroom-level information rather than high-level reports that do little to inform daily instruction.

Many Region 1 educators recommended refining the SPSF so that student growth receives greater weighting, especially for multilingual learners and students with disabilities. Teachers and principals advocated for assessment options that better reflect incremental progress among students transitioning from alternate assessments.

Assessment

Region 1 educators, school leaders, and families described the assessment landscape as one of the most significant challenges that schools currently face. Teachers explained that testing volume—especially in early grades—consumes substantial instructional time and creates stress for students. Elementary teachers cited the duration and frequency of mandated assessments, including screeners and benchmarks, which can eliminate weeks of authentic instruction. Secondary teachers expressed concern about the unpredictability of computer-adaptive testing, describing how adaptive items can exceed grade-level content and create undue anxiety.

Special education teachers emphasized the absence of appropriate transitional assessments for students moving from the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program to general SOL testing, explaining that the “all-or-nothing” nature of current assessments obscures student growth. Parents of multilingual learners reported that English-only testing presents an inaccurate measure of content mastery and advocated for more culturally and linguistically responsive assessment options.

Amid these concerns, Region 1 educators described innovative local practices that support student success. Notably, several divisions have implemented “grad labs,” which provide structured environments for English Learners and students with disabilities to demonstrate mastery through performance-based projects rather than traditional standardized testing.

Wraparound Services

Teachers, counselors, principals, and parents across Region 1 noted that academic progress is inseparable from students’ access to basic needs, social supports, and community partnerships. Families described the positive impact of mental health services, on-site immunization clinics, and readily available language translation support. Principals noted that strong relationships among staff, families, and community partners help ensure that students receive timely support with housing insecurity, food access, and behavioral needs.

At the same time, Region 1 educators expressed deep concern about rising behavioral and mental health needs without sufficient staffing to support them. Teachers described frequent disruptions from students experiencing trauma or dysregulation and explained that shortages among paraprofessionals, counselors, and specialized support staff make it difficult to sustain safe and inclusive learning environments. Parents also raised concerns about bullying and uneven access to wraparound supports across schools. Division leaders stressed that schools increasingly shoulder the responsibilities of broader social service systems, a reality underscored by the region’s call for expanded childcare options, fully funded nutrition programs, and dedicated mental health professionals.

Other Topics

Teachers, division administrators, and community members highlighted additional strengths across Region 1, including strong school leadership, collaborative school cultures, and robust pathways that prepare students for college, careers, and military service. Parents described deep appreciation for teachers who go beyond expectations to build relationships and provide tailored academic support. Several educators emphasized how small class sizes and a cohesive culture enable consistent communication between staff and families, ultimately benefiting student outcomes.

Regional comments also pointed to persistent challenges. Teachers reported substantial burnout linked to rising expectations, administrative workload, and rapid policy shifts. Division leaders underscored the need for competitive salaries and streamlined licensure pathways to recruit and retain high-quality educators—particularly in high-need fields like mathematics and special education. Parents and teachers expressed concern about aging school facilities and the need for capital investments to modernize learning environments. Additionally, families noted transportation challenges, especially for afterschool activities and wraparound programs, which limit access for students whose families cannot provide reliable transportation.

Region 2: Tidewater

Mathematics Instruction

Teachers across Region 2 continued to emphasize that math progress depends on small group instruction, strong intervention systems, modern materials, and adequate planning time. Division leaders reiterated that math achievement improves most when teachers can focus on concept development rather than covering an overloaded list of standards. Parents described difficulty supporting math at home when instruction relied too heavily on digital platforms. Secondary teachers reported that students often lacked prerequisite skills, making it challenging to teach advanced coursework.

Region 2 consistently underscored the need for a more coherent statewide approach to mathematics—mirroring the clarity provided to literacy through the Virginia Literacy Act—with calls for stronger math supports, materials, and targeted intervention time.

Literacy Instruction

Division leaders, reading specialists, and elementary teachers highlighted meaningful literacy gains tied to structured phonics, consistent reading teams, and well-supported intervention blocks. Parents expressed trust in teachers who communicated clearly about reading goals and progress. At the same time, teachers described significant demands related to documentation, pacing, and implementation, especially for students with disabilities or those entering upper grades without foundational decoding skills. Special education teachers emphasized the need for more trained personnel and materials adapted to diverse literacy needs.

These concerns naturally connect to the region’s broader desire for more coherent statewide support structures. Region 2 repeatedly calls for additional staff, clearer instructional expectations, and more training for teachers new to the profession.

School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)

Families, teachers, and school board members in Region 2 described serious frustration with the interpretability of SPSF results. Parents of military-connected families struggled to understand why divisions demonstrating strong student growth might still receive “off track” labels. Teachers reported that unclear terminology and shifting expectations eroded confidence in statewide accountability, while administrators described difficulties explaining the metrics to families and staff. Division leaders also noted that the system’s weighting of chronic absenteeism did not always account for external factors such as family mobility, housing instability, or medical needs.

Assessment

Teachers across Region 2 expressed deep concern about instructional time lost to layered assessments, redundant tests, and pressures to teach narrowly to the SOL assessments. Students described assessment experiences as anxiety-inducing, disconnected from content mastery, and often unrelated to the skills needed for future careers. Parents expressed repeated concern that assessment systems do not always capture growth and can restrict teachers’ ability to differentiate instruction.

Region 2 participants repeatedly endorsed alternatives such as projects, demonstrations, and interdisciplinary coursework.

Wraparound Services

Teachers, school counselors, and school leaders across Region 2 identified student mental health as one of the most urgent needs. They described high levels of anxiety, trauma-related behaviors, and classroom disruption. Parents reported insufficient communication when bullying or behavioral incidents occurred and inconsistencies in the implementation of behavior-intervention plans. Transportation difficulties, aging facilities, inconsistent nutrition quality, and insufficient access to counselors and behavior specialists also emerged as region-wide concerns.

Region 2's unique population of military-connected students presented additional challenges around family mobility, access to consistent early-childhood services, and the need for clear communication when families transition between divisions.

Other Topics

Region 2 teachers and school leaders highlighted the critical role of strong building leadership, noting that schools with stable principals who were visible, supportive, and instructional-minded saw fewer discipline issues and stronger academic culture. Teachers reported that turnover, insufficient preparation of early-career educators, and inconsistent mentoring contributed to burnout and diminished family confidence. Parents emphasized that communication, transparency, and partnership strongly shaped their trust in the school system.

Region 2 parents, teachers, and school board members consistently stated that principal quality is central to academic excellence, teacher retention, and parental trust. Several educators and parents described how teacher credentialing requirements can limit course availability.

Region 3: Northern Neck

Mathematics Instruction

Elementary teachers, secondary teachers, school leaders, and students described mathematics as an area of notable instructional strength when schools can provide targeted, small group instruction and hands-on learning experiences. High school students specifically praised mathematics pathways that support advanced coursework, dual enrollment, and career aligned preparation, describing their mathematics programs as “outstanding” and highly relevant to future aspirations in fields such as engineering, analytics, and the military. Teachers echoed these strengths, noting that students with disabilities in some divisions demonstrate strong math performance where robust multi-tiered system of supports and individualized learning supports are in place. Division leaders observed that dedicated math specialists and rigorous curriculum teams have strengthened instructional coherence across schools, allowing teachers to align classroom practice with state expectations. In multiple conversations, teachers emphasized the value of reducing reliance on technology, describing improved student engagement and conceptual understanding when math instruction incorporates paper-and-pencil work and collaborative problem solving rather than extended screen-based tasks.

Literacy Instruction

Across Region 3, teachers, parents, school leaders, and students acknowledged substantial strengths in literacy instruction stemming from the implementation of evidence-based reading practices and the Virginia Literacy Act. Teachers described foundational skill instruction as clearer and more consistent, supported by reading specialists, interventionists, and high-quality instructional materials. Parents in several divisions noted increased communication about their children’s literacy progress and appreciated school-based family engagement events that helped them better understand early reading expectations. School leaders identified the presence of literacy coaches and structured intervention blocks as key contributors to improved instructional fidelity.

At the same time, concerns emerged from nearly every group. Teachers reported that the volume of required literacy assessments in early grades is developmentally inappropriate, leaving insufficient time for instruction and creating student fatigue. Parents described a disconnect between their children’s reading performance at home and the results of diagnostic literacy screeners, noting that repeated testing does not always capture observable skills. Special education teachers expressed concern that students with disabilities often receive multiple overlapping plans—IEPs, reading plans, EL plans—without adequate coordination. Teachers and parents also raised concerns about reduced opportunities for authentic reading, writing, and choice-based literacy experiences due to the heavy emphasis on assessment and pacing requirements. Students, particularly at the secondary level, expressed desire for more engaging texts and more varied writing feedback, sharing that large class sizes and intensive test preparation sometimes diminish the joy of reading.

School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)

Division leaders, parents, educators, and community partners offered a wide range of perspectives on how statewide accountability systems are shaping instructional practices in Region 3. School leaders described genuine successes where the separation of mastery and growth measures provides a more complete picture of student progress, especially in high-poverty and rural divisions where students may enter school significantly behind grade level. Community members referenced public enthusiasm around high-performing schools, noting that recognition such as Blue Ribbon status enhances community pride and can influence family decisions. Teachers appreciated that dual enrollment and advanced coursework options are recognized within the accountability system.

However, concerns were far more widespread. Teachers and principals explained that frequent late-year changes to accountability indicators, cut scores, or assessment requirements create instability and make it difficult to plan instruction or allocate resources. Parents and educators repeatedly referenced the “moving target” nature of the system and voiced frustration with accountability measures tied to factors outside the school’s control, particularly chronic absenteeism. In smaller schools, single-student performance outcomes can disproportionately shift overall designations, leaving staff feeling

discouraged rather than supported. Many parents were unfamiliar with the SPSF altogether, describing a lack of accessible communication about how their school is evaluated. Special education teachers and division leaders emphasized that accountability systems do not consistently reflect the instructional realities or progress of students with disabilities, especially when growth measures carry less weight than proficiency thresholds.

Stakeholders offered alternatives embedded within their comments. Division leaders urged the state to increase the weight of growth and maintain separation between state and federal identification systems so that local progress is recognized. Parents asked for clearer, more user-friendly explanations of performance indicators to support greater transparency and parental involvement. Educators encouraged accountability models that prioritize actionable, timely feedback rather than compliance-driven reporting, allowing schools to focus on instructional improvement rather than managing procedural burdens.

Assessment

Teachers, parents, students, and school leaders described meaningful strengths in Region 3's assessment practices when assessments are used formatively to guide instruction and support student growth. Students noted that project-based assessments and research experiences deepen their understanding and allow them to demonstrate learning in authentic ways. Teachers praised opportunities to reteach and reassess in certain courses, explaining that benchmark assessments paired with teacher feedback help students understand mistakes and strengthen conceptual mastery. Parents appreciated classrooms where teachers communicate assessment results clearly and provide timely, actionable guidance for improvement.

Despite these strengths, Region 3 stakeholders expressed significant concerns regarding assessment volume, developmental appropriateness, and alignment. Teachers in early elementary grades reported that young children spend weeks completing mandatory screeners and diagnostics, reducing time for direct instruction and hand-on learning. Parents echoed these concerns, describing stress and confusion as children face assessments that feel disconnected from their observed abilities. Secondary students associated state assessments with pressure rather than learning, explaining that SOL tests sometimes feel "tricky" or overly focused on narrow responses rather than demonstrating genuine understanding. Teachers emphasized that over-testing erodes instructional time, contributes to burnout, and disproportionately affects students with disabilities.

Stakeholders proposed several alternatives within their comments. Teachers recommended streamlining assessments to reduce redundancy and prioritize tools that provide immediate insights. Parents urged the state to simplify testing expectations by eliminating duplicative growth assessments or adjusting pacing so instruction, not testing, drives classroom practice. Students expressed support for project-based demonstrations of learning and clearer connections between assessments and real-world skills. Division leaders encouraged pilot programs exploring shorter, skills-focused subtests, ensuring that assessments maintain rigor while reducing cognitive overload.

Wraparound Services

Region 3 participants consistently linked wraparound services to student learning and well-being. Students spoke candidly about hunger, long commutes, and limited opportunities for socialization, explaining that these factors often shaped their ability to focus while in class. Many praised universal meal programs and school-based food pantries but noted that weekend hunger remained a significant challenge. Students also described water fountains that were broken or provided unclean water, outdated cafeteria spaces, and insufficient time for lunch as barriers to a positive school experience.

Teachers and counselors described a sharp rise in student mental health needs, especially among elementary students exhibiting trauma-related behaviors. Counselors explained that they were overwhelmed by crisis-driven responsibilities, leaving little time for academic or career planning. Teachers emphasized that frequent disruptions created unsafe learning environments and contributed to widespread burnout. Parents echoed these concerns, calling attention to bullying, inconsistent discipline, and the need for transparent communication.

School leaders described challenges in accessing external mental health providers, particularly in rural communities where services are limited or rely on parental follow-through. Community partners, including faith-based organizations, nonprofits,

and volunteer groups, reported expanding responsibilities in meeting basic needs, providing clothing, hygiene items, weekend meals, and mentorship. Division leaders noted that transportation remains a significant barrier to attendance, extracurricular participation, and consistent access to services.

The Region 3 summary in the statewide report highlights the need for additional wraparound supports and fully funded nutrition programs. The raw data underscore this need, demonstrating that students cannot fully engage academically without stable access to food, mental health support, and safe school environments.

Other Topics

Region 3 participants raised additional issues that illustrate the interconnected nature of instructional quality, operational effectiveness, and public trust. Division leaders and school board members emphasized the need for a structural realignment of state funding formulas, noting that the Local Composite Index and unfunded mandates placed disproportionate strain on small rural divisions. Teachers described shortages of classroom supplies, insufficient planning time, and inadequate compensation for support staff, all of which contributed to burnout and turnover.

Students, parents, and educators expressed widespread concern about “digital saturation,” explaining that excessive screen use diminished attention, limited hands-on learning, and contributed to reliance on AI tools that disconnected students from critical thinking. At the same time, overly restrictive internet filters hindered legitimate research, leaving students unable to access necessary resources. Parents emphasized the importance of a “return to analog learning” that supported fine motor skills, deep reading, and authentic engagement. Division leaders and school board members stressed the need for clear statewide guidance on AI use to ensure responsible and equitable implementation.

Students also described the transformative impact of dual enrollment, CTE programs, leadership courses, and work-based learning opportunities. Teachers and leaders underscored the importance of these pathways for students who may not pursue traditional college routes, explaining that hands-on experiences increased confidence, engagement, and career awareness. Parents highlighted the critical role of communication, emphasizing that clear information from principals and teachers was essential to affirming parental rights and strengthening school-family partnerships.

Region 4: Northern Virginia

Mathematics Instruction

Across Region 4, educators at multiple grade levels, parents, students, and division leaders described a mathematics landscape characterized by both strong instructional pockets and significant structural challenges directly affecting academic excellence. Several elementary and secondary teachers reported deep commitment to developing number sense and tracking weekly student data to ensure students are prepared for long-term success, noting that their “classrooms are learning laboratories,” supported by administrators who help remove obstacles to high-quality math instruction. Superintendents expressed pride in strong academies, STEM opportunities, and CTE-aligned math pathways, all of which help students apply mathematical reasoning to real-world contexts.

At the same time, teachers, parents, and division leaders pointed to core operational concerns. Elementary teachers observed that math instruction in early grades is being compromised by excessive screen-based programs, diminishing hands-on learning and conceptual understanding; they noted that apps “do not have the same vocabulary as assessments” and that students’ number sense is suffering from premature reliance on digital tools. Parents echoed these concerns, describing classrooms where young learners rely heavily on tablets and expressing worry that this undermines mathematical skills.

Teachers and division leaders further emphasized the misalignment between math standards, pacing, and developmental readiness, raising concerns about frequent curriculum changes and accelerated coursework introduced before students master foundational skills. Several parents objected to the elimination of teacher-recommended advanced math pathways, noting that families now must navigate opaque processes to secure acceleration opportunities for students who would benefit, thereby limiting equitable access for all families and reducing trust in the system’s responsiveness to meet the needs of all students.

Literacy Instruction

Region 4 participants described notable gains following statewide shifts toward research-based literacy practices. Parents, teachers, and division leaders praised the science-of-reading-aligned programs introduced in recent years, emphasizing that explicit phonics and structured literacy have produced measurable improvements in decoding for early readers and multilingual learners when implemented consistently. One parent described the new literacy program as “more research-based and phonics-based,” highlighting marked improvement for her child compared with prior curricula. Superintendents and teachers affirmed that statewide literacy reforms have been positive.

However, nearly every stakeholder group expressed operational concerns. Teachers reported significant implementation strain: frequent curriculum changes, insufficient training, unclear guidance about developmental appropriateness, and literacy materials not adequately scaffolded for English learners or students with disabilities. Parents raised sharp concerns about excessive screen time during literacy instruction, noting that children spend multiple days a week on iPads instead of receiving direct instruction, which they believe undermines comprehension, writing development, and sustained attention. Several parents described that a lack of access to copyrighted literacy curricula used in school made it difficult to know what or how children are being taught.

Teachers, school leaders, and parents also noted that literacy expectations are often misaligned with developmental readiness, particularly in early grades where instructional time is consumed by scripted lessons, assessments, and pacing pressures. Many educators fear that excessive testing erodes the joy of reading, particularly when students are not yet fluent and are evaluated primarily through standardized measures.

School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)

Region 4 participants, including division leaders, teachers, parents, and school board members, offered candid assessments of the SPSF's early implementation. Some superintendents acknowledged that elements of the new statewide accountability framework—such as recognition of apprenticeships, internships, and college/career readiness—represent steps forward, helping ensure a more comprehensive picture of postsecondary preparedness.

Despite these successes, concerns were widespread. Teachers and parents found SPSF information confusing, opaque, or “not helpful,” with parents reporting that even district webinars did not clarify key implications for their children or schools. Division leaders stated that changing business rules, retroactive application of new metrics, and delayed data releases hinder both planning and trust. Several superintendents reported being unable to determine how results were calculated, noting that their staff “could not figure out what formulas were used,” which they argued undermines accountability rather than strengthening it.

Concerns were especially acute for English learners, with teachers, parents, and superintendents calling the three-semester rule for accountability “harmful,” “unfair,” and “meant to disenfranchise” students who require far more time to acquire academic English. Stakeholders also noted that school ratings fail to account for growth and so do not adequately reflect school quality, which contradicts some parents' perceptions of their schools. Many stakeholder groups suggested modifications such as weighting growth more heavily; incorporating observation-based measures; allowing native-language assessments; and simplifying indicators to improve transparency.

Assessment

Feedback about assessment systems was remarkably consistent across teachers, students, parents, and division leaders. Many articulated strong support for assessments that provide actionable information—such as course-embedded tasks, formative checks, and performance assessments that “help instruction” and better reflect students' real-world skills. Students said they appreciated timely feedback and the ability to understand their performance relative to peers, though they also noted that single tests should not define school quality or their long-term prospects.

Yet the predominant sentiment was concern about over-assessment. Teachers described losing extensive instructional time to SOLs, interim assessments, growth tests, screeners, and practice exams. One educator noted that third graders take more than forty assessments in a year—exceeding the number of instructional weeks—and that such testing “is counterproductive to learning.” Parents echoed these concerns, finding excessive testing developmentally inappropriate and confusing, and urging a return to paper-based evaluations that better reflect authentic learning.

Division leaders argued that underfunded test banks, misaligned cut scores, and high-stakes consequences distort instructional priorities. Teachers across Region 4 stated that assessment pressure reduces creativity, diminishes student motivation, and accelerates burnout.

Wraparound Services

Region 4 families, educators, and leaders described pervasive needs related to mental health, basic security, and conditions for learning—all essential for supporting academic excellence and respecting parental expectations for safe, supportive schools. Superintendents and educators praised programs such as the Family and Community Engagement center, newcomer supports, and universal meals that have improved family engagement, assimilation, and food security, with newcomers reporting that schools are “very responsive” when staff and interpreters are accessible.

However, parents, teachers, counselors, and division leaders cited severe shortages in mental health personnel, long waitlists for services, and classroom disruptions linked to unmet behavioral and emotional needs. Elementary and secondary teachers described evacuations due to acute behaviors and expressed that classroom learning is frequently hindered by insufficient staffing, high student-teacher ratios, and ineffective behavior support structures. Parents raised concerns about bullying,

unsafe or unsanitary bathroom conditions, overstimulating cafeterias, and the lack of consistent transportation that forces children—particularly those with disabilities—to spend long hours in transit.

Families repeatedly emphasized the need for clearer communication channels, noting that navigating central offices is difficult and that parents with limited English often cannot access needed services or understand school expectations.

Other Topics

Region 4 participants raised numerous additional themes relevant to advancing excellence, accountability, and parental partnership. Teachers, parents, and division leaders consistently cited teacher retention challenges driven by workload, class size, inadequate planning time, and insufficient compensation. Many educators expressed a desire to “bring back the joy” in teaching, noting that initiative fatigue, mandated programs, and administrative burdens diminish instructional quality and morale.

Parents raised strong concerns about excessive screen time, reduced use of textbooks, and insufficient transparency about curricula—issues directly tied to affirming parental authority and ensuring developmentally appropriate instructional practices. Students requested more recess, healthier food, improved transportation, and safer spaces, highlighting the importance of school climate and wellness to academic success.

Across groups, stakeholders expressed a desire for stable policy direction, predictable implementation timelines, and authentic collaboration with VDOE.

Region 5: Valley

Mathematics Instruction

Across Region 5, educators, parents, and division leaders described strong commitments to foundational mathematics instruction, early interventions, and community-supported learning environments. Elementary teachers reported that structured small-group instruction, mathematics coaches, and the use of high-quality instructional materials have begun to strengthen Tier 1 teaching. Educators noted particular success where vertical alignment across grade spans ensures coherence, especially when paired with data-informed interventions that allow students to catch up through targeted support. Parents affirmed that the emphasis on strong academic foundations is visible in daily instruction, particularly in divisions where teachers are deeply connected to students and maintain open communication with families.

Division leaders emphasized that partnerships with community colleges, business sectors, and the Governor's Schools have expanded applied mathematics opportunities, building pathways where students see relevance through dual enrollment, internships, and CTE experiences. Students themselves highlighted that strong STEM programs and passionate teachers make mathematics engaging and meaningful. Several school leaders pointed to innovative scheduling—such as dedicated intervention blocks—that allow mathematics specialists to reinforce core learning.

Literacy Instruction

Parents across Region 5 consistently reported strong early literacy supports, praising reading specialists, special education teams, and the structured foundational approach required under the Virginia Literacy Act. Families of emerging readers and multilingual learners pointed to open communication around Individualized Education Programs and transitions, describing literacy teams as highly responsive, supportive, and respectful of parental decision-making. Elementary teachers emphasized that the Lexia Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS®) training and high-quality materials have strengthened reading instruction, and several school leaders attributed recent improvements in school performance to adopting new reading curricula and multidisciplinary teaching approaches.

Despite these strengths, educators and parents raised ongoing concerns. Many teachers reported that scripted programs and overly rigid pacing guides restrict professional judgment and inhibit meeting students at their developmental levels. Middle school reading specialists asserted that students who enter secondary grades with significant reading gaps require more flexibility, explicit vocabulary instruction, and time for small-group intervention than current schedules allow. Parents expressed concern that newer literacy assessments may not account for uneven developmental growth, generating anxiety and inappropriate labels which can impact the trajectory of a student's schedule and courses available to them in the future. Division leaders noted that the pace of statewide literacy implementation has created burdens for small divisions that struggle to receive training in a timely manner.

School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)

Region 5 participants acknowledged several successes associated with the SPSF. School leaders described how the framework necessitated clearer roles and responsibilities within Professional Learning Communities (PLC) structures and strengthened collaboration across Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 instruction. Division leaders reported that the emphasis on data analysis has promoted a more coherent approach to interventions, allowing staff to identify needs earlier in the year. Parents cited examples of elementary schools recognized for high performance and attributed those outcomes to new reading curricula and consistent multidisciplinary instruction.

However, significant concerns were raised by school leaders, teachers, and parents regarding clarity, communication, and implementation timelines. Principals described confusion over ratings, especially when third-grade growth measures were unavailable, leaving them unable to demonstrate student progress. Division leaders expressed concerns that subcategory-based downgrades can be demoralizing to schools that otherwise perform well, and many requested reconsiderations of the minimum group sizes for SPSF calculations to reduce disproportionate impacts on small cohorts. Teachers and families

reported that accountability changes aligned poorly with training windows, creating operational strain. Parents also questioned whether rating systems accurately reflect overall school quality or inadvertently penalize schools with diverse learners. Suggested alternatives included more transparent communication, slower implementation timelines, and accountability models that better incorporate growth, multidisciplinary performance assessments, and local context.

Assessment

Educators, parents, and students described several assessment-related strengths. Teachers noted that tools such as the Measures of Academic Progress and other growth measures provide actionable data throughout the year, helping them tailor instruction. Several reading specialists reported that one-on-one assessments like the Virginia Language and Literacy Screening System (VALLS) for oral reading fluency reveal student abilities more accurately than long computerized tests. Parents appreciated expedited retakes with targeted intervention, stating that these supports helped students recover quickly and maintain confidence. School leaders observed that balanced assessment practices improve both instructional planning and parental understanding of student progress.

At the same time, Region 5 participants identified substantial obstacles. Teachers across grade spans emphasized over-testing and misalignment of assessments with instructional models. They reported that lengthy computer-based tests diminish student stamina and yield results that often contradict daily performance. Many educators argued that annual statewide testing in every grade produces burnout and pulls instructional time away from core learning. Division leaders recommended alternating-year testing for reading and math to reduce fatigue while preserving accountability. Parents voiced concern that some assessments label students prematurely or do not account for social-emotional development. Students described feeling overwhelmed when instruction shifts toward test preparation rather than deep learning. Suggestions included reducing redundant assessments, increasing flexibility for alternative demonstrations of proficiency, and improving transparency around state cut scores.

Wraparound Services

Region 5 participants emphasized that student success depends on robust wraparound supports. Parents described strong behavioral health teams, multidisciplinary threat assessment processes, and coordinated care among counselors, school resource officers, and mental health specialists. Teachers echoed that divisions with well-structured multi-tiered system of supports offer clearer services to students with behavioral and emotional needs, which contributes directly to school readiness and family confidence. School leaders cite partnerships with community organizations, after-school programs, and local agencies as essential for meeting basic needs such as nutrition, transportation, and housing stability. Students affirmed that mentorship programs, positive school climate initiatives, and consistent adult relationships improve their engagement.

Obstacles remain substantial. Parents repeatedly reported persistent bullying, inconsistent enforcement of behavior expectations, and concerns about religious and cultural inclusion. Long bus rides, limited bus drivers, and outdated transportation systems were cited as barriers to attendance and safety. Teachers described burnout caused by serving simultaneously as educators, behavioral interventionists, and mental health supports without adequate staffing or training. Community members raised concerns about access to affordable early childhood programs, food insecurity, and inequities in building conditions. Many participants emphasized that unmet basic needs—sleep, nutrition, safety, emotional stability—directly impede academic learning.

Other Topics

Region 5 participants raised additional strengths and remaining obstacles across instructional, operational, and cultural dimensions. Parents and educators praised divisions that maintain strong community partnerships, provide choice-filled CTE and dual enrollment pathways, and cultivate a shared sense of belonging. Students described positive experiences in STEM programs, arts initiatives, leadership development courses, and mentoring opportunities. Division leaders noted the value of innovative scheduling, teacher pipeline partnerships, and collaborations with higher education institutions.

Challenges included teacher retention pressures, facility inequities, staffing shortages, and extensive administrative burdens. Teachers repeatedly cited compensation, workload, class size, and lack of planning time as major deterrents to staying in the profession. Parents expressed concern about school closures, inequitable district zoning, and perceived political tensions that distract from instruction. Some families reported negative experiences in special education processes, citing opaque communication or insufficient services. Others raised concerns about technology overuse, diminished handwriting and attention skills, and the need for more developmentally appropriate practices in early grades.

Across all groups, Region 5 participants asserted that academic excellence, fair accountability, and strong parental partnership are inseparable. They emphasized that schools thrive when teachers are supported, families are respected, and instructional and operational systems are aligned to student needs.

Region 6: Western Virginia

Mathematics Instruction

Across Region 6, participants described mathematics instruction as an area of both clear progress and persistent structural barriers. Elementary teachers emphasized the effectiveness of small-group instruction and hands-on learning, noting that “students always do best when teachers can dive deep into rich instruction.” Teachers also stressed that meaningful mathematics learning requires time and staffing levels that allow them to address the widening range of skill levels within classrooms. Several educators described entering classrooms where students were “three or more years apart” in math readiness, making differentiation increasingly complex without additional support.

School leaders acknowledged the benefit of high-quality instructional materials but warned that pacing guides often push instruction too quickly. One educator remarked that standards feel “an inch deep and a mile wide,” limiting opportunities for deep conceptual understanding. Division leaders reinforced this challenge, raising the concern that accelerated pathways in middle school—particularly state-mandated auto-acceleration requirements—conflict with existing division models. As one superintendent put it, the current structure “underestimates what our children can do, but also what they need developmentally.” Divisions want acceleration options but not one-size-fits-all solutions.

Several high-school students described how “choosing what math you take in sixth grade has huge impacts on your future,” sometimes locking students into pacing before they understand the implications. Many urged for greater transparency, flexibility, and access to physical math materials rather than digital platforms, saying that excessive screen time reduces focus.

Despite these challenges, participants highlighted strong connections between mathematics and career pathways. CTE instructors emphasized that students thrive when they see math linked to real applications, such as engineering, agriculture, HVAC training, and medical simulation labs.

Literacy Instruction

Region 6 participants affirmed that literacy instruction is moving in a positive direction. Teachers, school leaders, and parents credited the Virginia Literacy Act for “driving tangible reading gains,” particularly in early grades where structured phonics and decodable texts have created more consistent foundations across classrooms. School leaders observed that students who were previously considered high-risk in reading are improving and that alignment across grade levels has strengthened instructional coherence.

Teachers, however, described significant implementation challenges. Many elementary educators reported that students enter upper elementary grades with reading levels spanning from “primer to sixth grade” within a single classroom. This disparity makes it difficult to provide targeted instruction, particularly when time for planning is consumed by administrative tasks and meetings. One teacher explained that effective literacy instruction requires “more than just the Virginia Language and Literacy Screening System (VALLS),” adding that smaller class sizes, more paraprofessionals, and expanded access to reading specialists are essential.

Some parents raised concerns about excessive reliance on digital reading tools, with several expressing a desire to “get kids back into books” and reduce screen time. Teachers agreed, noting that digital materials can fragment students’ attention and make comprehension more difficult.

Older students described strong literacy instruction when teachers provided extensive feedback, saying that courses where teachers “break things down point by point” help them grow as readers and writers. Others described how project-based assessments in courses like AP Human Geography or mass communication deepen both literacy and critical thinking skills.

Across all groups, there was strong support for maintaining high expectations but also recognition that literacy growth must be measured with nuance. Many participants argued that holding students and schools accountable for reading proficiency without acknowledging growth, trauma, or language acquisition risks misrepresenting true learning.

School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)

Region 6 participants were candid in their assessment of the current accountability system. Division leaders acknowledged that the framework has potential to provide “a framework for success,” but they expressed concern that the system was implemented too quickly, with unclear rules and limited opportunities for meaningful division feedback. Many superintendents described the “off-track” label as deeply flawed, arguing that it misrepresents schools making substantial progress and damages credibility within communities. One superintendent noted that the label is “incorrect” and “repugnant” because high-performing elementary schools are disproportionately penalized due to structural factors outside their control.

Teachers expressed similar frustrations, especially surrounding the weighting of English learner scores, chronic absenteeism, and single-day proficiency rates. Several teachers described feeling that their entire school’s trajectory “rides on one test,” creating stress that undermines morale and retention. Parents echoed concerns that the labels are confusing and do not align with what they observe in classrooms.

School leaders also raised concerns that the SPSF does not adequately reflect the needs of “middle-tier” learners—students who do not qualify for special education or gifted services but still require targeted support. They argued that the accountability system should better capture these students’ progress and encourage divisions to invest in interventions that serve the full academic spectrum.

Participants offered several suggestions, including modeling system changes before statewide rollout, adjusting growth measures to reflect student progress, revising terminology to reduce confusion, and improving communication so divisions have adequate time to adjust practices.

Assessment

Assessment emerged as one of the most consistent themes across Region 6. Students, parents, and educators alike described assessment overload as a major barrier to high-quality teaching and learning. One student shared that “standardized testing needs to be revised,” noting that tests often measure recall rather than application. Teachers reported that students are “tested to death,” with multiple benchmarks, practice tests, and state assessments reducing instructional time and narrowing curriculum.

At the same time, there was strong enthusiasm for performance-based assessments. Teachers described project-based courses where students demonstrate learning through portfolios, debates, or technical demonstrations. Students echoed this preference, saying that such approaches allow them to “apply learning in unique ways” and demonstrate growth more authentically. Parents and community members also supported performance-based approaches, noting that they align better with workforce expectations and promote problem-solving and communication skills.

Many participants expressed concern that current math assessments rely too heavily on reading comprehension, making it difficult to disentangle content knowledge from decoding ability. Others pointed to technological burdens associated with computer-based testing, especially for younger students with limited typing skills.

Across groups, the message was clear: assessment must support learning, not overshadow it. Region 6 participants encouraged a statewide shift toward balanced systems that measure growth, reduce redundancy, and create opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery in multiple ways.

Wraparound Services

Region 6 participants emphasized that academic excellence cannot be achieved without strong wraparound supports. Teachers and school leaders described escalating behavioral challenges, with some reporting the need to “evacuate classrooms” when students become aggressive. Behavior concerns were frequently linked to unmet mental health needs, trauma, hunger, and chronic stress. Parents echoed these concerns, especially around bullying and inconsistent consequences. Several described situations where safety concerns were minimized, urging divisions to “take parent and student concerns seriously.”

Nutrition and transportation were also central themes. Educators highlighted that many students face food insecurity, with one teacher sharing that students “ask for food all the time.” Parents strongly supported universal free meals and reported transportation challenges, including irregular bus schedules and combined routes that place younger and older students together with limited supervision.

Participants described technology overuse as both an academic and behavioral strain. Parents and educators identified excessive screen time, vaping, and cell phone use as major distractions. Many requested clearer and more consistent enforcement of cell phone policies, with several praising recent statewide movements toward phone-free classrooms.

School leaders pointed to infrastructure needs, aging facilities, and insufficient staffing as ongoing barriers to supporting students. Several suggested creating regional healthcare consortia to reduce costs for school staff, emphasizing that teacher well-being affects school climate and student support.

Other Topics

Region 6 participants raised a range of additional issues tied to educational quality and family engagement. Teachers consistently emphasized the need for higher salaries, more planning time, and reduced administrative burdens. One teacher described the workload as “simply not sustainable,” citing excessive meetings, data reporting, and coverage for absent colleagues. School board members emphasized that improved compensation is essential to retention, noting that divisions lose valuable teachers to surrounding regions with better pay.

Parents expressed strong desires for greater transparency and communication, particularly around curriculum materials and expectations for student behavior. Many felt that their concerns were dismissed or that they received insufficient information to support their children. Families also noted that excessive testing, large class sizes, and inconsistent discipline policies undermine confidence in schools.

Students described benefiting from strong extracurricular programs, work-based learning experiences, and supportive teachers who “prepare students for life.” However, they also raised concerns about variable grading practices, limited access to advanced courses in smaller divisions, and inconsistent enforcement of behavioral norms.

Division leaders emphasized the importance of regional collaboration, particularly in CTE, alternative education, and staff recruitment. They highlighted the success of local mass communication, medical training, and engineering programs as models that could be scaled across the Commonwealth.

Region 7: Southwest

Mathematics Instruction

Across Region 7, teachers, division leaders, parents, and students described mathematics instruction as an area with notable operational strengths as well as clear opportunities for improvement. Elementary teachers and division leaders emphasized that existing math supports, particularly math intervention structures modeled after literacy approaches, are beginning to help students who require targeted remediation, although these supports remain inconsistent across schools. Division leaders noted that some schools have math specialists who rotate across buildings, providing modeling and coaching that parallel the more robust support structure established through the Virginia Literacy Act. However, these leaders also reported seeing “many more reading specialists in other schools” than math specialists, underscoring the need for greater statewide attention to math-specific infrastructure.

Teachers in multiple divisions highlighted the value of math manipulatives and hands-on experiences, which division leaders reinforced by noting that “math manipulatives are key” for deepening conceptual understanding.

Parents and community members also emphasized that students engage more when mathematical concepts are connected to practical, real-world applications, with one community member stressing that students “need to understand how math can be practical... in real-life situations,” especially through work-based learning. Students themselves echoed this view by describing how teachers who are “invested in the content” make rigorous subjects like calculus engaging by relating abstract ideas to real-world applications. Parents noted that teachers remain approachable and supportive when students struggle, with after-school tutoring and teacher availability serving as a consistent strength.

At the same time, Region 7 educators widely expressed that the breadth of mathematics content—combined with increased test-based pressure—limits opportunities for deeper learning. Division leaders reported concerns that teachers “feel that they are not covering anything well” because “there is so much to cover.” Middle school teachers stated that the existing math SOL assessments are developmentally misaligned, a concern reinforced by administrators who cited the stamina required for long testing sessions as a barrier to meaningful instruction.

Literacy Instruction

Region 7 reported significant strengths in literacy instruction, driven largely by the implementation of the science of reading and the Virginia Literacy Act. Teachers, parents, and school board members consistently described early literacy practices as a major success, citing explicit literacy instruction, LETRS training, strong reading specialists, and structured early interventions. English teachers praised the “implementation of the science of reading,” noting that students are increasingly reading on grade level, and division leaders emphasized that reading intervention programs—particularly pull-out small-group supports—are helping close learning gaps for struggling readers. Parents echoed this praise, describing how their children benefit academically from structured literacy instruction and the support provided by reading specialists and interventionists.

Elementary teachers highlighted that structured foundational skills instruction is yielding measurable gains, while school board members specifically pointed to data showing that “more students are reading on track” after VLA implementation. At the school operations level, educators emphasized that universal breakfast and lunch programs indirectly strengthen literacy by improving students’ readiness to learn.

Students themselves described that teachers who are passionate and maintain orderly classrooms help them stay engaged in reading-intensive subjects.

However, Region 7 participants also raised substantial concerns. Middle school teachers reported that while elementary literacy supports are strong, VLA implementation was rushed and lacked the level of training and resources provided at the elementary level. Special education teachers described a growing number of students entering school with limited language exposure, requiring intensified early literacy interventions and additional instructional staff. Teachers also expressed concern

about overreliance on digital literacy programs, reporting that some computer-based tools are easily manipulated by students and do not consistently support true reading development.

Parents raised concerns that excessive focus on test-aligned reading assignments often reduces opportunities for creative thinking, rich discussion, and deep comprehension. Several parents described high school literacy assignments as “surface-level,” lacking the rigor necessary to prepare students for postsecondary success. Additionally, students noted that classes emphasizing constant notetaking over interactive learning diminish motivation to read and engage.

School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)

Region 7 educators, parents, school leaders, and division officials identified several successes associated with statewide systems such as the SPSF and related assessment processes. Division leaders emphasized that common pacing, benchmark assessments, and cross-division collaboration meetings have created more consistent instructional expectations and allowed administrators to compare progress and identify shared needs.

Some educators praised the SPSF for its more holistic approach compared with previous models, acknowledging that it attempts to include multiple indicators beyond test scores. Teachers also noted that accountability expectations help ensure a baseline of quality and prevent students from being “passed along” without mastering essential skills. Staff described positive experiences when student attendance, wraparound support, and academic indicators are considered together to diagnose school needs. Parents stated that school quality profiles and growth data help them understand student performance when communicated clearly.

Despite these reported benefits, Region 7 voiced extensive concerns about the SPSF’s complexity, communication challenges, and perceived misalignment with on-the-ground realities. Division leaders explained that the system is “unnecessarily complex,” making it difficult for principals or division staff to replicate or understand their own results due to multiple data sources and variable configurations.

School board members and parents expressed discomfort with labels such as “off track,” stating that such language harms community perception and does not sufficiently account for socioeconomic context.

Teachers emphasized that test-driven components of the SPSF undermine instructional quality by pressuring educators to teach narrowly to the test, especially in grades with high-stakes SOL assessments. Several teachers described how the absence of timely growth tables hampers instructional planning and denies educators insights into student progress.

Parents describe statewide tests as indicators that often fail to reflect students’ true learning experiences, especially among students with disabilities or those who experience anxiety under testing conditions.

Suggested alternatives included simplifying SPSF indicators, weighting student growth more heavily, restoring developmental appropriateness in early testing, and providing clarity that SPSF metrics will remain stable for the full year. Educators also called for more transparent guidance, improved communication from VDOE, and clearer explanations for parents.

Assessment

Region 7 participants identified strengths related to assessment when used to guide learning rather than define it. Teachers and division leaders spoke positively about common benchmark assessments and formative tools that help diagnose student gaps, target interventions, and inform pacing decisions.

Parents reported that class-level feedback and teacher communication about student performance are far more meaningful than end-of-year state test results, helping them understand their child’s learning in real time.

Students emphasized that quizzes, projects, and hands-on learning tasks help them learn deeply, especially when teachers integrate real-world applications.

However, the region also voiced significant obstacles related to standardized assessment practices. Teachers expressed that the SOL system creates unmanageable pressure, drives shallow instruction, and limits opportunities for creativity and deeper learning. One teacher described how students “are not truly learning—they are memorizing” due to excessive time spent on test preparation. Middle school teachers and administrators reiterated that current assessments are developmentally inappropriate, particularly in the length and stamina demanded of young students. Special educators emphasized that applying uniform testing expectations to students with significant disabilities fails to reflect true growth and undermines the goal of equitable access.

Parents widely agreed that SOL tests do not accurately reflect student learning or readiness, often arriving too late in the year to support improvement. Several parents and teachers suggested returning to portfolios, performance-based assessments, or beginning-of-year assessments that reflect what students retained from the prior school year and reduce end-of-year pressure.

Wraparound Services

Region 7 described wraparound services—including mental health supports, basic needs assistance, family engagement, transportation, and school climate efforts—as both essential strengths and areas of acute need. Many participants praised longstanding community partnerships, including Communities in Schools (CIS), 21st Century afterschool programs, food pantries, and backpack programs providing meals for weekends. Teachers and school leaders emphasized that CIS “takes a lot of burden off teachers” by addressing students’ food insecurity, clothing, and basic needs.

Parents praised universal breakfast and lunch as a “gamechanger,” with staff noting that students are more regulated and ready to learn when their nutritional needs are met. Students repeatedly described the value of CTE programs, extracurricular activities, the Healthcare Excellence Academy Lab School programs, and after-school opportunities that support mental health, belonging, and academic engagement.

School leaders emphasized that community schools and parent engagement events have strengthened relationships and increased families’ trust in schools.

However, Region 7 also reported severe gaps in mental health support. Teachers and administrators described an “extreme” rise in student mental-health needs, exacerbated by the loss of therapeutic day treatment services and shortages of counselors and behavioral support staff. Many described dealing with unprecedented behavioral challenges and noted that without adequate staffing, instructional time is frequently disrupted. Parents echoed concerns about bullying, trauma, and the need for emotional-intelligence education beginning in elementary school.

Transportation challenges, including bus driver shortages, strict routing guidelines, and long travel distances in rural areas—frequently hinder attendance and access to extracurricular programs. Parents emphasized that weather-related barriers in mountainous terrain exacerbate the issue.

Other Topics

Region 7 participants raised additional themes related to staffing, teacher retention, discipline, class size, and school culture. Teachers and school leaders described severe staffing shortages, burnout driven by excessive duties, insufficient planning time, and inadequate pay. Several educators reported working 60–80 hours per week and taking on multiple extra roles while still struggling financially. Division leaders reinforced that retaining high-quality teachers is increasingly difficult without competitive compensation, consistent support, and manageable workloads.

Parents and teachers also identified discipline and accountability as major concerns. Many expressed that inconsistent consequences for disruptive behavior undermine classroom learning, reduce teacher morale, and erode parental confidence. Several educators called for district-level support for alternative education placements and more behavioral specialists.

Participants also noted broad inequities in school facilities, technology implementation, and access to advanced coursework between rural and suburban divisions. Teachers described outdated buildings, limited instructional resources, and insufficient access to staffing positions such as reading or math specialists.

Region 8: Southside

Mathematics Instruction

Across Region 8, elementary teachers, division leaders, and parents described strong commitment to mathematics instruction supported by small-community relationships that allow teachers to individualize learning. Elementary teachers highlighted that recent shifts in the mathematics Standards of Learning (SOL) toward building number sense in kindergarten have been beneficial, noting clear developmental gains when early instruction focuses on foundational numeracy rather than acceleration alone.

Students affirmed that teachers regularly adjust classroom conditions based on feedback and provide multiple pathways to engage with math-related coursework, including applied learning through CTE programs such as welding and automotive technology, which reinforce mathematical concepts through real-world practice.

Division leaders reported that high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) and sample plans have strengthened math instruction, with teacher buy-in increasing as they observe student growth. However, both teachers and division leaders stressed operational challenges, including the need for more interventionists in the early grades and more timely release of state-developed math resources to ensure alignment with new standards.

Teachers also expressed concern about spending disproportionate time on assessment rather than instruction, reducing opportunities for deeper math exploration.

Literacy Instruction

Educators across the region consistently emphasized the importance of early literacy foundations. Elementary teachers praised the Orton-Gillingham (OG) and Virginia Literacy Act (VLA) training provided by the state, describing the OG weeklong training as “the best [professional development] ever offered by VDOE” and essential for all early-grade teachers.

Teachers shared that these structured literacy practices are beginning to improve student outcomes when implemented with fidelity. Division leaders noted that HQIM and sample plans have been helpful in building literacy coherence across grade levels.

At the same time, Region 8 educators voiced serious concerns about inconsistent access to resources needed to deliver VLA-aligned instruction. Teachers described delays in receiving materials—sometimes months into the school year—as well as insufficient intervention staffing, with some schools operating with only one reading specialist who is frequently pulled for other duties.

Secondary teachers pointed to literacy gaps persisting into middle and high school, explaining that students who cannot yet read proficiently struggle with content-heavy courses and with the reading load embedded in SOL tests. Parents likewise expressed frustration that their children’s literacy progress is not accurately reflected in statewide testing, and some requested expanded tutoring and clearer communication about reading goals. Students’ feedback reinforced these themes: many said they prefer paper-based reading and feel overwhelmed by screen-based formats, while others expressed appreciation for teachers who adapt classrooms to accommodate individual learning needs.

School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)

Teachers, parents, school board members, and division leaders across Region 8 voiced significant concern regarding the SPSF. Teachers reported that while the framework “looks good on paper,” it is confusing in practice and burdens schools with unclear expectations. Parents described the accountability structure as overwhelming and questioned whether schools are being penalized for factors beyond their control, particularly chronic absenteeism.

Division leaders expressed worry that SPSF metrics distort public understanding of school performance, especially in small rural divisions where a handful of absences or opt-outs can disproportionately affect ratings. Several noted that the framework “inflates how well a school is doing” or forces schools to “chase points,” diverting attention from authentic student learning.

Division leaders stressed that alignment with federal accountability is essential but argued the current jargon and processes are difficult to communicate to families. Some proposed returning to simpler growth measures, allowing schools to identify progress earlier in the year rather than midyear after SPSF performance designations have already been applied. Special education teachers cautioned that the absence of an alternative assessment between the SOL and the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program leaves some students inappropriately placed in assessments misaligned to their needs.

Despite concerns, educators acknowledged that the framework’s emphasis on individual student growth and recognition of expanded CTE participation helps highlight meaningful outcomes aligned with students’ career goals.

Assessment

Students, teachers, and families across Region 8 described both benefits and burdens of current assessment practices. Students stated that regular quizzes and projects help them understand their progress, and some appreciated MAP growth assessments for showing learning over time. However, they reported high anxiety surrounding SOL, citing a stigma that begins in middle school and intensifies in high school. Students overwhelmingly requested clearer explanations for the purpose behind assessments, options for paper-based testing, and more individualized approaches that reflect different learning levels.

Teachers echoed these concerns, reporting that SOL preparation consumes instructional time and that assessment windows disrupt daily learning for weeks at a time. Many teachers advocated for reducing the volume of assessments and reevaluating testing in early grades, emphasizing that early childhood learning is relational, exploratory, and developmentally misaligned with high-stakes testing.

Division leaders also cited logistical challenges, including large testing windows, the heavy emphasis on retakes, and the disproportionate impact of test-based accountability on small divisions.

Some educators and parents suggested replacing SOL with regionally developed performance-based assessments to provide a more accurate picture of student learning. Others recommended weighting growth more heavily than proficiency to fairly evaluate student progress.

Wraparound Services

Region 8 participants consistently highlighted the essential role of wraparound services in supporting student well-being and academic success. Students described the need for increased food portions, better nutritional quality, and more consistent access to meals throughout the day. Many noted hunger as a barrier to learning, particularly when lunch is scheduled early or when portions match those served to much younger students. Parents and students emphasized the importance of increasing pay for cafeteria workers, bus drivers, and janitorial staff to stabilize critical school operations.

Teachers and parents noted rising needs for mental health services, including more school counselors, behavior specialists, and trauma-informed supports. Several educators described the challenge of being expected to serve as both teacher and mental health provider without necessary training.

Division leaders highlighted shortages of bus drivers, aging facilities, and the need for improved safety measures, such as later school start times, better lighting, and more reliable transportation networks.

Students stressed the importance of inclusive, welcoming environments and consistent enforcement of behavioral expectations to ensure safety and belonging. Many expressed appreciation for supportive teachers and tightknit community relationships, which make them feel known and cared for.

Other Topics

Beyond the core categories, Region 8 participants identified several themes critical to long-term improvement. Teachers and parents described the urgent need for competitive salaries, reliable benefits, and reduced administrative burdens to improve teacher recruitment and retention.

Students and educators championed CTE as a regional strength, noting the popularity and impact of welding, automotive, culinary, health sciences, and other programs that directly connect students to workforce pathways.

Division leaders emphasized the need for regional partnerships—including shared CTE programs, expanded dual enrollment, and coordinated workforce pipelines—to compensate for limited local resources and ensure equitable access for rural communities.

A recurring theme across all groups was the desire for clearer communication, reduced policy churn, and increased state transparency. Teachers expressed fatigue with frequent changes to standards, assessments, and mandates, urging the state to “slow down” and provide time for thoughtful implementation. Parents called for greater voice in decision making and more consistent updates regarding instructional expectations and student progress.

Other Educator, Leader, and Parent Meetings, Virtual Sessions, and Survey Results

Stakeholder Groups Represented: Arlington Parents • Business & Community Participants • Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Providers • Parents Virtual Session • Principals • Public School Leaders Network (PSLN) • Student Advisory Board • Teachers • VDOE Staff

Mathematics Instruction

Across the Commonwealth Listening Tour, participants from a variety of stakeholder groups affirmed that mathematics instruction is essential to forward student progress. Business and community participants emphasized that students engaged in advanced coursework demonstrate strong critical-thinking skills and that the Virginia All-In Tutoring initiative has generated measurable improvements in student math performance. Industry representatives further underscored the value of early exposure to technology-rich learning environments, urging greater incorporation of coding and related computational skills beginning in the elementary grades to reinforce mathematics and prepare students for emerging technical fields.

Educators across elementary, middle, and high school described strong student curiosity and engagement in mathematics when instruction included hands-on learning, inquiry-based tasks, and real-world applications. Elementary teachers noted that students performed well when provided with opportunities to connect mathematical concepts to daily life. Middle school teachers reported success with structured collaboration across classrooms, noting that shared planning and co-teaching arrangements strengthened differentiation and promoted instructional consistency. High school teachers highlighted examples of students achieving high scores on critical skills assessments even with alternating-day schedules, attributing this success to coherent curriculum materials and the strong relationships teachers built to motivate students through challenging problem-solving. Several teachers also reported that schools shifting away from heavy device usage and reintroducing paper-and-pencil tasks saw improved student focus, increased willingness to show work, and greater engagement in mathematical discourse.

Principals described mathematics instruction as an area of incremental progress, particularly where standardized approaches have brought coherence across classrooms. Several principals noted that greater standardization in mathematics instruction has improved pacing and clarity, and one principal specifically inquired whether a Virginia Mathematics Act might provide structural guidance similar to the Virginia Literacy Act. Middle and elementary principals highlighted early successes with small-group instruction models in divisions that have invested in coaching and push-in support. High school principals pointed to strong outcomes in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-aligned programs supported by state efforts, noting that these initiatives have cultivated student interest and achievement in advanced mathematics pathways. Elementary leaders identified a persistent staffing imbalance, noting that reading specialists are widely available while mathematics specialists are not—an inequity that must be addressed if the Commonwealth is to advance academic excellence across disciplines.

Arlington parents reported that the division's movement toward more evidence-based instructional approaches is beginning to show promise, particularly as it aligns mathematics practices with broader science-of-learning models already informing literacy work. Parents across divisions praised teachers for their dedication and persistence in supporting students who struggle in math, while also identifying operational strengths, including remediation opportunities and after-school tutoring that have helped students who fell behind during the pandemic. Student Advisory Board participants described mathematics learning as strongest when instructional environments allowed for individualized attention and extended engagement, noting that small class sizes enabled direct teacher interaction and immediate feedback, and that hands-on, problem-solving approaches promoted deeper conceptual understanding. Division leaders in the Public School Leaders Network (PSLN) highlighted targeted student supports—both academic and social-emotional—that have helped students re-engage with foundational math concepts following pandemic disruptions. VDOE staff noted that professional development efforts and the

provision of high-quality instructional materials, particularly through grants enabling smaller and rural divisions to adopt strong mathematics curricula, have created more coherent instructional expectations statewide.

Literacy Instruction

Teachers, principals, parents, business participants, and VDOE staff all identified the Virginia Literacy Act (VLA) and the associated Science of Reading professional learning as significant statewide strengths. Reading specialists across multiple divisions cited the return to phonics-based instruction as a major advance, reporting strong progress with structured literacy programs and high rates of student growth in foundational reading skills. Teachers noted that literacy interventions coordinated across classrooms improved consistency and reinforced core skills. Early childhood literacy supports—including curriculum quality reviews and expanded coaching—have strengthened foundational skills before students enter kindergarten.

Principals characterized the VLA as a successful statewide initiative that has clarified expectations for instruction, strengthened phonics-based approaches, and delivered meaningful professional development. Elementary principals praised the new emphasis on structured literacy, citing early evidence of stronger foundational skills among students. Parents who attended the virtual session in Fairfax, Arlington, and Richmond similarly described strong early intervention programs and highly effective reading support, with specialists well trained, and some parents reported that their children were now learning to read as a result of newly implemented, evidence-based curricula—a sharp contrast to experiences from prior years. VDOE staff observed that the new training tied to updated literacy legislation has brought coherence to reading instruction and prompted more consistent, evidence-based practices statewide. At the same time, divisions appreciate guidance accompanied by clear exemplars, aligned materials, and ongoing professional development.

Concerns about literacy instruction were equally prominent. Middle school principals emphasized the increasing number of students entering secondary grades with pronounced reading deficits, particularly those whose early elementary years coincided with the pandemic. Teachers in rural schools reported persistent struggles in bringing students to grade-level reading proficiency, citing insufficient materials, limited staffing, and the need for more targeted support for multilingual learners and students with disabilities. Reading specialists expressed frustration with scripted curricula that left limited time for independent reading or small-group instruction, which they viewed as essential for reinforcing fluency and comprehension. Many elementary teachers described excessive testing requirements in literacy as routinely displacing instructional time.

Parents who attended the virtual session raised urgent concerns about excessive reliance on digital tools rather than textbooks, printed books, or handwriting practice, with families in Fairfax, Chesterfield, and multiple rural divisions stating that the absence of textbooks made it difficult to support reading at home and contributed to widening gaps in foundational skills. Parents of students with disabilities expressed concern that adaptive curricula were not aligned with the science of reading and that teachers were insufficiently trained to support them, with some students being removed from core instruction for pull-out services and, as a result, missing phonics, vocabulary, or comprehension lessons. Arlington parents cautioned that technology use in reading instruction has not consistently supported student learning, referencing local data indicating that expanded device use may widen achievement gaps. Early childhood providers described a growing crisis at the entry point of the education pipeline, with educators enrolling children who cannot read and increasingly encountering four-year-olds who can barely speak, placing significant strain on instructional capacity and underscoring the urgent need to strengthen early language development.

School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF)

The School Performance and Support Framework (SPSF) generated substantial engagement across the Listening Tour. Division leaders in the PSLN acknowledged that elements of the framework—particularly mastery and growth measures—have helped them better understand school-level performance and student progress. They also recognized that Virginia's norm-referenced assessment structure and its emphasis on the three E's—enrollment, employment, and enlistment—reinforces a vision of multiple pathways to student success. VDOE staff identified the current SPSF as collecting more comprehensive data and being easier for divisions and the public to interpret than previous models, with improved communication helping to build

trust with divisions. Principals commended the availability of growth assessment data throughout the year, noting its usefulness for instructional planning, and some responded positively to proposed revisions to growth charts, praising the clarity and fairness demonstrated in early presentations.

Arlington parents acknowledged that the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments remain a valuable tool enabling families to understand student performance in specific subjects. Business community members frequently cited positive outcomes attributed to state-supported tutoring, statewide literacy initiatives, work-based learning structures, and partnerships between K-12 divisions and higher education. Student Advisory Board participants acknowledged that SOL assessments provide clear indicators of performance, and some referenced experiences in which teachers reviewed assessments afterward, helping students understand errors and improve.

Concerns about the SPSF, however, were broad, specific, and consistent across groups. Division leaders stated that the framework does not accurately reflect the success of schools serving diverse, high-need populations, particularly those with high percentages of English language learners. They emphasized that growth measures may not carry sufficient weight to capture the progress students make year to year, and that existing school labels contribute to misconceptions about school performance, especially in high-cost, high-need regions such as Northern Virginia. Leaders also questioned the enlistment indicator within the “3E” framework, cautioning that reliance on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery may not align with all students' interests or aspirations. Principals described confusion among parents regarding accreditation labels, emphasizing that unclear terminology undermines public trust and parental understanding, and voiced frustration with constantly shifting requirements that leave schools uncertain about which metrics will lead to final determinations. High school principals expressed deep concern about the delayed release of assessment data, noting that the delay prevents timely adjustments to instruction.

Teachers described the current SPSF as overly test-oriented, leading to instructional narrowing, excessive student stress, and lost instructional time as schools shift into prolonged test preparation. Many reported that frequent walkthroughs and data-collection requirements created a culture of micromanagement that undermined professional trust. Teachers working with English learners highlighted that accountability rules requiring standardized testing after only a few semesters unfairly penalized students who had not yet developed basic English proficiency and disproportionately harmed schools with high English learner populations. Parents who attended the virtual session across divisions described significant concerns about the clarity, consistency, and usefulness of school-level data, with families questioning why accreditation included metrics such as chronic absenteeism, which they felt were outside schools' direct control. VDOE staff voiced concern that the framework's weighting of subjects can create the impression of ranking instructional value and may unintentionally encourage schools to guide students toward pathways that benefit division-level accountability rather than individual student interests.

Across the sessions, participants offered constructive alternatives. Division leaders suggested revising the SPSF to increase the emphasis on student growth, reconsider school labels, and adjust rules for English learners. Teachers urged a shift toward growth-based accountability measures, expanded use of performance-based assessments, portfolios, and accountability models that adjust assessment windows or growth expectations to reflect realistic language acquisition timelines. Arlington parents recommended incorporating additional verified credit options in middle school and while reconsidering the number required for graduation. Business community members proposed more coherent and transparent systems for tracking students' career progress, expanded data sharing with higher education institutions, and more accessible statewide tools to monitor whether students remain on track after graduation. VDOE staff recommended stronger internal communication, so agency employees fully understand SPSF indicators before supporting divisions and encouraged examining effective components from other states to continue refining school quality profiles.

Assessment

Participants across the Listening Tour recognized strengths in Virginia's assessment system while also identifying significant obstacles that limit its effectiveness as a tool for advancing academic excellence. Teachers acknowledged the value of formative checks in mathematics, literacy quick checks, and division-level progress monitoring in pinpointing skill deficits and providing targeted remediation. VDOE staff emphasized that timely technical assistance and clear allowability guidance for

federal funds have helped divisions navigate assessment requirements more effectively, and that when assessment communication is predictable—such as through weekly VDOE updates—divisions can plan instruction more confidently. Principals appreciated ongoing formative growth assessments for providing teachers with better insight into student needs, supporting targeted interventions, and strengthening instructional decision-making. Business community members identified assessments tied to work-based learning, industry-recognized credentials, and dual enrollment as providing meaningful measures of student readiness for high-demand fields, and higher education partners expressed willingness to collaborate with the state to strengthen data systems linking K-12 assessment results to long-term student success.

Student Advisory Board participants highlighted teacher-created benchmark quizzes with parallel structures to major assessments as particularly useful when teachers reviewed results thoroughly and provided opportunities for correction. Students also described hands-on, choice-based assessments—such as research projects—as more meaningful demonstrations of knowledge, appreciating the opportunity to connect content to personal interests, develop public-speaking skills, and build confidence. Arlington parents described the SOL system as an important accountability mechanism that provides meaningful information about student learning, while also raising concerns that relying on a single ninth-grade end-of-course assessment places excessive pressure on students and may distort instructional pacing. Parents who attended the virtual session identified strengths in divisions where teachers provided timely communication or used tools such as PowerSchool effectively to help families interpret results.

Obstacles to effective assessment were extensive and consistent. Teachers overwhelmingly described the overall volume of assessments as crowding out instruction, especially in upper elementary grades. They maintained that computer-adaptive test formats confused students and did not align with expectations in end-of-course assessments. Many noted that test reports were confusing, misaligned with SOL standards, and difficult for both teachers and parents to interpret. Principals serving students with disabilities and English learners expressed concern that existing assessment structures do not adequately account for diverse needs. At the same time, high school leaders highlighted the significant stress students face from the volume of end-of-course assessments required for graduation, with some questioning whether Virginia should remain one of the few states requiring such extensive testing. Elementary principals argued that current assessments are misaligned with developmental readiness, particularly for younger students with limited experience with computer-based testing. Parents who attended the virtual session described concerns that online assessments prevented them from seeing their children's work, that excessive testing in early grades reduced instructional time and increased student anxiety, and that technology-based assessments created barriers for students with accessibility needs.

VDOE staff frequently cited concerns about the volume of data and the difficulty divisions face in interpreting results amid high staff turnover, noting that parents find test reports unintuitive and that mid-year changes to cut scores create confusion. Arlington parents questioned how rapidly evolving technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), will influence future assessment validity. Early childhood providers described tensions between assessment requirements and developmental readiness, particularly for infants and toddlers. They warned that uncoordinated systems lead to duplicative or misaligned assessments, placing unnecessary burdens on educators and families. Proposed alternatives offered across sessions included portfolio-based assessments, more developmentally appropriate alternatives for young students, earlier writing assessments, models that recognize significant individual growth, expanded parent-friendly reporting tools, earlier communication regarding assessment changes, and enhanced professional development tailored to varying levels of division expertise.

Wraparound Services

Wraparound services—encompassing mental health, basic needs, nutrition, transportation, bullying prevention, and inclusive school climates—emerged as a priority across all stakeholder groups. Teachers across grade levels described both strengths and gaps in wraparound supports, with many elementary teachers reporting strong school communities, morning meetings, and structured routines that supported students' social-emotional well-being. Middle school teachers observed success with cell-phone-free policies that improved relationships between students and adults, and teachers in virtual academies appreciated the sense of belonging cultivated through school-wide clubs and online communities. VDOE staff noted that early

childhood programs supported through the Virginia Quality Birth to Five (VQB5) system help students enter kindergarten prepared, reducing later needs for intervention. VDOE staff also emphasized that Virginia remains a national leader in farm-to-school efforts and in providing meals outside the school day—a meaningful contribution to child wellbeing.

Business community participants described positive impacts from school-healthcare partnerships that provide developmental screenings, parent education, and mental health services during the school day. Higher education representatives shared strong outcomes from partnerships that embed mental health providers or graduate students in schools, noting that students are more likely to receive services when they are accessible on campus. Principals in urban and suburban areas described expanded social-emotional supports as improving students' sense of belonging, which, in turn, strengthened academic engagement in both mathematics and literacy. Parents who attended the virtual session praised school counselors in divisions such as Albemarle and Arlington for creating safe spaces and offering accessible mental health supports, valued free breakfast and lunch programs for their significant benefits to nutrition and learning, and credited inclusive practices, Special Olympics programming, and mentorship programs with fostering belonging and reducing isolation for vulnerable students. Student Advisory Board participants described positive experiences tied to reliable transportation and welcoming school environments. They noted that extended lunch periods, allowing for both eating and socialization, would meaningfully reduce student stress.

Early childhood educators and leaders emphasized that recent VDOE guidance and policy leadership have been responsive and supportive, particularly in areas such as curriculum quality improvements, clarity of expectations, and expanded coaching structures. Many programs noted that VDOE's efforts have strengthened instructional coherence and early learning quality statewide, contributing to improved readiness as children enter kindergarten.

Concerns about wraparound services were equally extensive. Principals universally described mental health and basic-needs challenges as among the most significant barriers to student success, with leaders in rural divisions expressing particular concern about limited local providers, transportation barriers, and delayed services. Business participants noted insufficient mental health staffing, teacher burnout, and the strain on school counselors, who are often tasked with more administrative duties than student support. VDOE staff expressed concerns that divisions need clearer guidance and more direct support when navigating wraparound services, including mental health; bullying prevention; basic needs, which include food and laundry services; and transportation. They further emphasized that communication sent home is often not parent-friendly, limiting families' ability to exercise their rights and understand available supports.

Parents who attended the virtual session cited numerous obstacles, including bullying and harassment across multiple regions, with parents describing inconsistent reporting, misclassification of bullying as peer conflict, and significant mental health impacts on affected students. Some parents stated that LGBTQ+ students felt unsafe due to policy shifts or limitations on affinity groups. Families reported long bus rides for students with disabilities, cafeteria food of insufficient quality or quantity, and limited access to mental health staff with manageable caseloads. Early childhood providers described a rapidly intensifying need for wraparound services, with directors and teachers reporting children with increasing levels of developmental, behavioral, and linguistic needs—including one interventionist serving 700 children—as an illustration of system strain. They emphasized that they do not exclude children even when needs exceed available resources, but that maintaining this commitment comes at a high cost to staff capacity and program sustainability. Teachers stressed that unmet basic needs—including food security, transportation consistency, and appropriate supports for students with disabilities—continued to affect learning outcomes.

Other Topics

Beyond the core instructional and accountability domains, participants in the targeted stakeholder groups raised additional strengths and concerns. Participants in the business community highlighted the success of partnerships with military installations, NASA, community colleges, and local nonprofits, noting that these collaborations provide powerful, real-world experiences that strengthen academic engagement. Multiple business representatives championed the scaling of academy models, dual enrollment pathways, and internship programs that culminate in apprenticeships or job placements, and pointed to the promise of innovative scheduling models, interdisciplinary courses, and competency-based approaches that

reflect modern workforce needs. VDOE staff praised the agency's growing culture of collaboration—both internally and with divisions—and emphasized that the field deeply values VDOE's regional presence and responsiveness, pointing to strong partnerships across agencies, expanding Grow Your Own programs, and robust resources such as Canvas hubs as examples of effective statewide coordination.

Student Advisory Board participants described positive experiences with innovative scheduling models, such as four 90-minute periods and attendance-based exam exemptions, which they reported improved engagement and attendance. They highlighted specialty centers and cohort-based programs as highly effective in building community and promoting academic excellence. They praised career-connected learning experiences, including internships, job shadowing, and career and technical education (CTE) opportunities—though they noted that limited staffing and program availability sometimes constrained access. Students also expressed frustration when dual-enrollment courses were deemphasized through changes in grading policies, reducing the perceived value of advanced academic pathways.

Principals pointed to strong grow-your-own teacher pipelines, partnerships with local colleges, and mentoring structures within divisions as stabilizing forces that help schools maintain continuity and strengthen instructional leadership. However, principals expressed ongoing concern about teacher and administrator turnover, limited state support for principal mentorship, and the significant strain created by rapid policy shifts. Many emphasized the need for a coordinated, multi-year statewide plan that minimizes initiative fatigue and provides consistent expectations across administrations and urged improved communication from the VDOE, noting that principals often receive critical information after superintendents or teachers, which complicates their work and confuses parents. Arlington parents identified concerns about the structure of the instructional calendar, noting that fewer than one-quarter of the school year is spent in full five-day weeks, and argued that frequent disruptions weaken instructional continuity.

Division leaders in the PSLN highlighted the need for stronger pipelines for high-quality teachers and school leaders, noting persistent shortages in critical areas, including special education, bilingual education, and specialized support roles, and identified targeted incentives and expanded grow-your-own initiatives as promising strategies to strengthen recruitment and retention. They stressed that sustaining excellence in Northern Virginia requires competitive compensation and a statewide understanding of the region's unique cost-of-competing challenges. Business participants similarly described obstacles, including outdated funding formulas, duplicative processes for approving educator preparation programs, and shortages in the educator pipeline, with higher education representatives recommending expanding tuition assistance and loan-forgiveness programs to attract more candidates into teaching.

Early childhood care and education providers consistently identified workforce stability as the defining challenge for their programs, emphasizing burnout, wage disparities, and the inability to compete with public school compensation and benefits. Turnover rates are approximately 5 percent in public schools compared to 30 percent in child care. Many reported losing educators not to competing centers but to other sectors entirely. Providers also described the burden of regulatory complexity, including repeated background checks when educators move between sites, differing requirements across subsidy programs, and the inability to use substitutes due to background-check portability limitations. Teachers expressed concern about persistent staffing shortages, rising burnout, and limited preparation for provisional teachers. They emphasized that sustainable change requires meaningful investment in teacher development, protected planning time, and a renewed focus on restoring joy, curiosity, and purpose to the classroom. These perspectives collectively underscore the shared commitment across all stakeholder groups to advancing academic excellence, strengthening accountability, and ensuring that parental rights and community voices remain central to Virginia's public education system.



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