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

Southwest Virginia First Stop on Listening Tour *Board of Education's Braunlich in Bristol August 25-26*

Virginia Board of Education President Christian N. Braunlich will travel to Bristol next week to hear from citizens about important issues facing the commonwealth's public schools including changes in the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment system. The public forum is the first event of an eight-stop listening tour of the commonwealth and is scheduled for Monday, August 25, at 6 p.m. at the Bristol School Board Office. Braunlich will give a brief presentation on the role of the Board of Education and its goals. Attendees will then have an opportunity to ask questions and make comments. The event is scheduled to conclude by 8 p.m.

The tour is designed to give parents, teachers, local school board members, administrators and other interested citizens an opportunity to express their views on public education, particularly on proposed [Guidelines for Alternative Assessments](#) the state board is required to implement in response to legislation approved by the 2014 General Assembly.

"The General Assembly eliminated several SOL tests and directed the Board of Education to develop guidelines to help school divisions develop local assessments to ensure that the content is still taught," Braunlich said. "Before voting on the guidelines in September, the board wants to listen to the views of students, parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, school board members and other interested citizens on how divisions might balance flexibility and accountability in subjects and grades where there are no longer SOL exams."

On Monday afternoon, Bristol Superintendent Rex Gearheart will host elementary and middle school teachers at Washington Lee Elementary School in a discussion of the new guidelines with Braunlich. On Tuesday, August 26, Gearheart will lead Braunlich on a tour of Virginia Middle School.

Braunlich plans other visits in the coming months including to Bedford County Public Schools on September 8. Details of future stops will be available on the [Virginia Department of Education website](#) as they are scheduled.

Article VIII of the Constitution of Virginia vests the Board of Education with primary responsibility for setting policies for the commonwealth's public schools, subject only to the authority of the General Assembly. This includes establishing curriculum and accountability standards for schools and licensure requirements for teachers, principals and other educators. The board reports annually to the governor and General Assembly on the conditions and needs of schools.

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