

Salem City Schools



2018 Legislative Priorities

Adopted: November 14, 2017

Vision: The Salem City School Division envisions an exciting future for Salem’s children. Achieving this vision will require purposeful elimination of some traditional barriers prescribed by outdated laws and regulations that have failed to keep pace with innovation in Salem City Schools. The purpose of this document is to advocate for necessary legislative and regulatory changes to provide those who serve children the opportunity to innovate on their behalf.

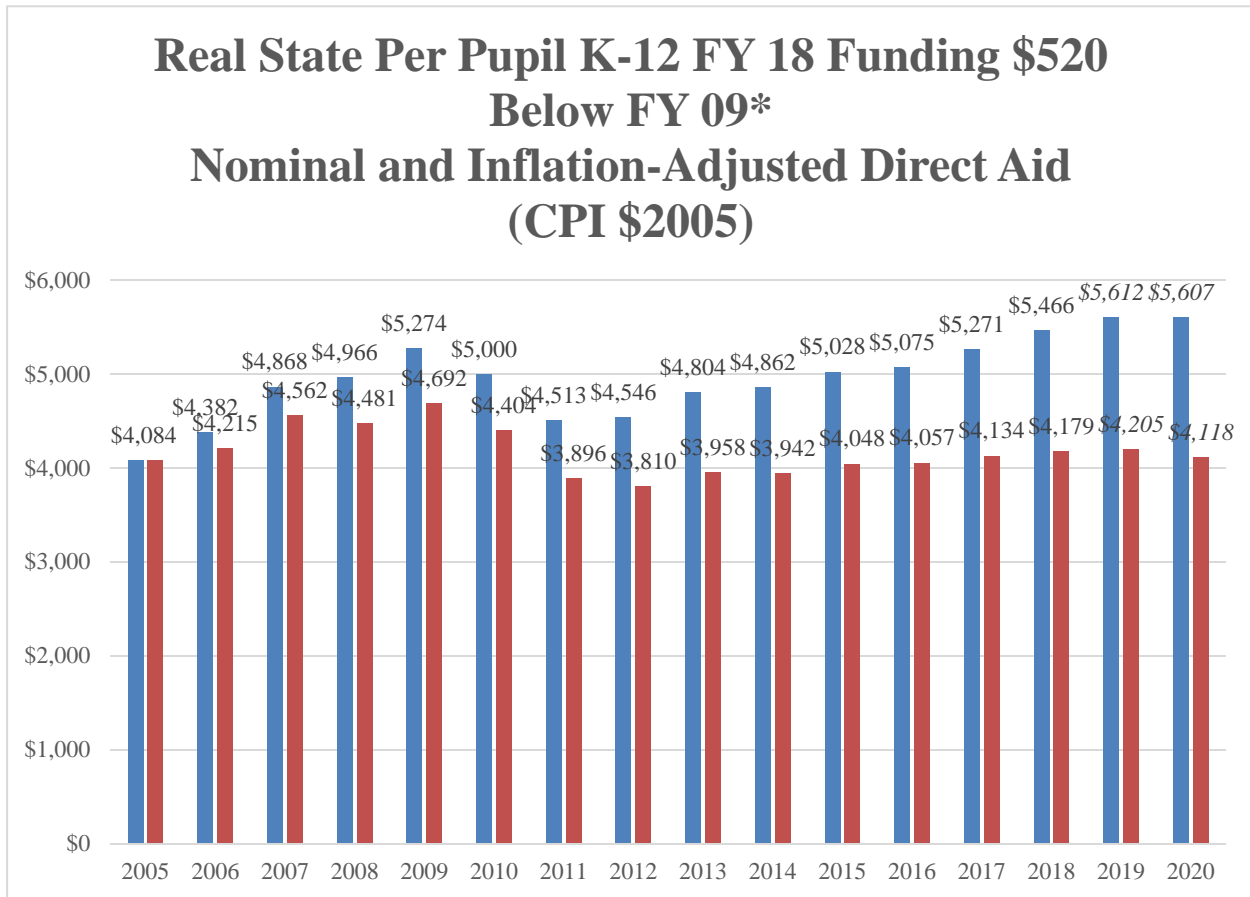
Legislative Priorities: The 2018 session of the General Assembly will consider numerous issues of profound importance to the Commonwealth’s public school students and to the school employees who deliver the promise of a high quality public education. Positions adopted by the Salem City School Board will be communicated to Salem’s legislators before the Assembly convenes. Legislators are urged to contact the Board or the Superintendent regarding legislation with implications for Salem’s children.

2018 State Legislative Priorities

- **Local Control** – Teaching and learning are extremely complex processes. While public education is a national priority and a state responsibility, it is ultimately a local function. The Salem City School Board urges state and federal government leaders to create the conditions that facilitate innovation by supporting local School Board authority, while avoiding the temptation to micromanage a local function.
- **School Funding** – The Salem City School Board urges the General Assembly to adopt a state budget that fully funds its commitment to teacher compensation. The administration and the legislature both report providing much-needed increases to K-12 education, but a more complete and far less encouraging picture of the state of K-12 funding is revealed when controlled for inflation (see attached), where even proposed re-benchmarking for FY 2019 provides less per pupil than FY 2009.
- **Modernize the Assessment System** – The Salem City School Board maintains high standards and supports the establishment and assessment of the Virginia Standards of Learning. The Virginia Standards are reviewed and updated based on an established schedule, but the assessments used to assess student mastery are largely the same fixed-response standardized assessments established in the 1990’s. Just as medicine has advanced in the past 20 years, so has teaching and learning, yet schools are being asked to innovate and improve outcomes with antiquated tools. Virginia is urged to design a balanced assessment system that maintains select measures of student achievement, but also leverages measures of individual student growth to ensure that every individual student is making meaningful progress.

The pages that follow are offered as a potential resource for elected representatives when considering specific legislation the Board expects may be considered by the General Assembly.

K-12 Education Funding



* 2018-20 funding levels assume initial \$211m and \$233m rebenchmarking amounts only and 2.0% inflation each year.
Source: Fiscal Analytics Ltd.

Current Reality: The biennial state budget adopted by the 2016 General Assembly was celebrated in a bipartisan manner as an investment in K-12 education. Unfortunately, state revenue triggers automatically rolled back the state’s share of needed raises for teachers in FY 17, so honoring the commitment to provide modest pay increases fell almost entirely on localities, compounding the unsustainable trend in the wake of the Great Recession of shifting the state’s responsibility for K-12 funding to localities. For FY 18, there was an increase in local flexibility as more Lottery Funding was restored to its original purpose, but a more complete picture of the state of K-12 funding is revealed when controlled for inflation (see above), where even the currently proposed re-benchmarking for FY 2019 provides less per pupil than FY 2009.

Legislative Recommendation: The state budget should pay for its share of what it requires localities and school divisions to do. Specifically, the Salem City School Board urges the General Assembly remove positions directly related to instruction in the classroom from the “SOQ Support Staff Cap” that was implemented during The Great Recession. The current cap was calculated not by what is required to provide a quality educational program, but by what multiplier would balance the state budget. It not only shifted the state’s responsibility to localities, it has artificially depressed the re-benchmarking calculation. Just as the General Assembly established a goal of fully funding VRS, it should establish a plan to provide the state share of funding to move teacher pay to the national average and set July 1 as the start date for all future pay increases.

Salem City Schools



2018 Standing Legislative Positions

Proposed November 14, 2017

In addition to the annual list of Legislative Priorities, the Board and the Superintendent of Schools will monitor the proceedings of the 2017 General Assembly and make known to its representatives the Board's positions on other issues that may arise.

The following chart is provided to indicate standing issues of particular interest to the City of Salem School Board and the Board's official position on each issue. The Board makes every effort to communicate with elected representative and also urges legislators and state officials to contact the Board or the Superintendent regarding legislation that might have implications for public education.

Budget and Financial Issues

Fully funding the re-benchmarking of the Standards of Quality (SOQ) so that the standards are, "realistic in relation to the Commonwealth's current education needs and practices" (Code of Virginia – 22.1-253.13.1)	Support
Changes in the Standards of Quality (SOQ) Funding Formula (such as arbitrary staffing caps) which would reduce the state's responsibility to fund its mandates to local school divisions.	Oppose
Funding annual raises using the linear weighted average and real inflation figures derived from annual reports from the school divisions.	Support
Reducing funds to Risk Reduction Programs that are essential to assisting at-risk and disadvantaged students achieve the high standards necessary to earn a diploma.	Oppose
Reinstate full funding for the Western Virginia Public Education Consortium to support and promote collaboration and the sharing of best practices in the school divisions of Alleghany.	Support

Bath, Bland, Botetourt, Craig, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Henry, Montgomery, Patrick, Pulaski, Roanoke, and Wythe and the cities of Covington, Martinsville, Radford, Roanoke, and Salem.

Increase state reimbursement for school lunches to .10 per student lunch and .05 per student breakfast **Support**

Continued use of the Literary Fund for purposes other than school construction. **Oppose**

Supplanting state or local support for public education through use of federal monies **Oppose**

Reinstate funding of the School Construction Program **Support**

Maintain and consider increasing state funds for Instructional Technology **Support**

Expenditure of public funds on private schools through tuition tax credits or tuition vouchers **Oppose**

Fiscal autonomy for elected school boards **Oppose**

Changes to the authority of local governments to set and collect local real estate taxes **Oppose**

Employment Issues

Expansion of grievance procedures for Licensed and Continuing Contract Employees to Employees with an Annual Notice of Employment. **Oppose**

Continuing the requirement for teaching experience in order to obtain licensure as a school leader whether by traditional or alternative licensure **Support**

Amendment of the grievance procedure to provide for the decision of the grievance panel to be final and binding **Oppose**

Establishment of negotiation rights for school employees **Oppose**

Establishment of term contracts for professional staff **Monitor**

Requirements for written contracts for at-will employees (non-teachers) **Oppose**

School Board Governance Issues

Control of the school board calendar as authority of local school board (complete and total repeal of the requirement to open school after Labor Day) **Support**

Maintaining that only parents or legal guardians may make educational decisions for students and require that “Kinship Care” arrangements be reviewed by Local Departments of Social Services or approved by a District Juvenile Court **Support**

Increased court intervention for students and penalties for parents in proven cases of truancy. **Support**

Maintaining the authority of local school boards granted in Article VIII, Section 7 of the Constitution to regulate firearms on school property and at school events, including school board meetings **Support**

Parental choice of schools either within or across school divisions **Oppose**

Maintaining the Virginia High School League as a voluntary association to regulate high school competition **Support**

Legislation or BOE/DOE Regulation seeking to regulate the VHSL **Oppose**

Maintaining the Virginia charter school law in its present form whereby local school boards retain authority and control over such schools **Support**

State Leadership on Federal Issues

The Salem City School Division supports the 2015 Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (now referred to as ESSA) and urges the BOE/DOE to extend the spirit of increased local control. Further, the Salem City School Board encourages the BOE/DOE to rethink and redesign assessment in the Commonwealth in a manner outlined in the Board’s Position on Assessment and Accountability and in an effort to take full advantage of the flexibility ESSA extends to states so that students and teachers in Virginia may begin to transform the current 1990’s approach to assessment in Virginia.