

Salem City Schools



2021 Legislative Priorities

Adopted: November 10, 2020

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 Achieving this vision will require purposeful elimination of some traditional barriers prescribed by outdated laws and regulations that have failed to keep pace with innovation in Salem City Schools.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.

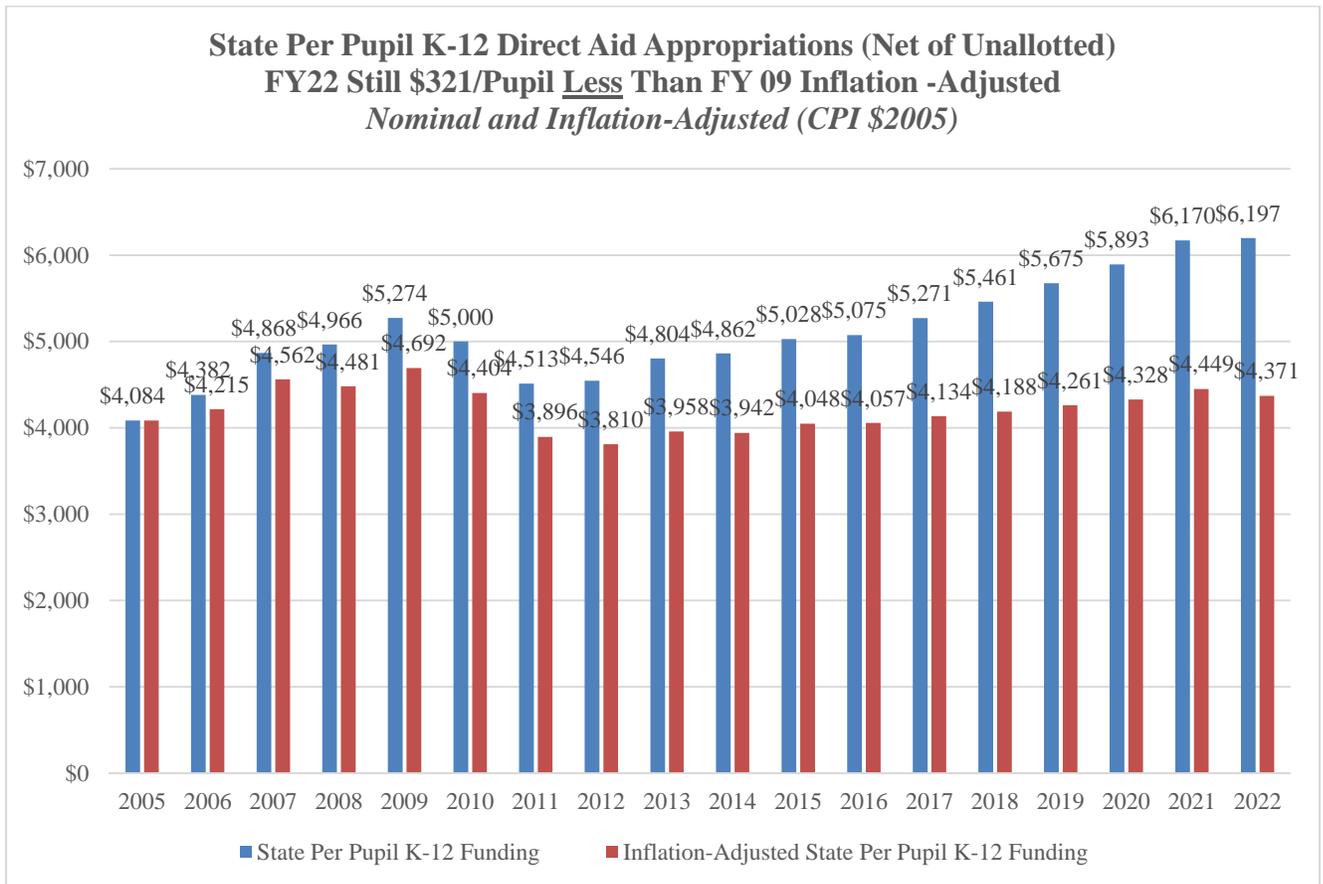
Legislative Priorities: The 2021 session of the General Assembly will consider numerous issues of profound importance to the Commonwealth’s public school students and to the school employees who deliver the promise of a high quality public education. Positions adopted by the Salem City School Board will 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.

2021 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 teaching and learning. When controlled for inflation, the current budget for FY 2022 provides \$321 less per pupil than FY 2009.
- **Employee Compensation** – Teacher compensation in Virginia significantly lags the national average while the Commonwealth is far above average in terms of economic capacity. In addition to teachers, competitiveness for other employee groups is lagging significantly (CDL drivers for school buses, for example). Additional state funding is necessary for divisions to recruit and retain quality employees in all areas of operation.
- **Assessment Reform** – The Commonwealth of Virginia has successfully implemented and evaluated performance-based assessments in multiple grade-levels and content-areas. Now that superior assessments are in place, the General Assembly is encouraged to reduce the wide-scale use of fixed-response assessments (SOL tests) to the Federal Minimum.

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 (Controlled for Inflation)



Source: Fiscal Analytics, Ltd using Virginia DOE - http://www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/budget/calc_tools/index.shtml

Current Reality: The budget adopted by the 2020 General Assembly endeavored to improve teacher compensation, but the impact of the pandemic significantly reduced revenue projections while dramatically increasing operational costs. Stimulus funds and grants are helping mitigate budget impact of COVID-19 related costs in the current year, but the second year of the biennium represents a formidable budget challenge. The SOQ Support Staff Cap implemented in the midst of the Great Recession is a significant and arbitrary limit on calculating actual costs. This cap is a significant part of the reason that the 17 year trend for state K-12 funding is of justified concern. When controlled for inflation, the current budget for FY 2022 provides \$321 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 to 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. **In the short-term immediate relief is needed for the ADM loss as a result of the pandemic in the second half of FY 21 that carries over into FY 22.**

Salem City Schools



2021 Standing Legislative Positions

Adopted: November 10, 2020

In addition to the annual list of Legislative Priorities, the Board and the Superintendent of Schools will monitor the proceedings of the 2021 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 representatives 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)	<i>Support</i>
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.	<i>Oppose</i>
Funding annual raises using the linear weighted average and real inflation figures derived from annual reports from the school divisions.	<i>Support</i>
Reducing funds to Risk Reduction Programs that are essential to assisting at-risk and disadvantaged students achieve at the high standards necessary to earn a diploma.	<i>Oppose</i>
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.	<i>Support</i>

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**

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 (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 continue to rethink and redesign assessment in the Commonwealth in an effort to take full advantage of the flexibility ESSA extends to states so that students and teachers in Virginia may persist in the transformation of the long-standing 1990’s approach to assessment in Virginia.