

2010 LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE

OF THE

ALEXANDRIA CITY SCHOOL BOARD

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**ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ISSUES – 2010 GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Funding Issues

**Cost of Competing
Funding All Tests Required by the No Child Left Behind Act
Funding in the 2010 Biennium Budget
Funding Pre-Kindergarten Programs
Funding Staffing for Limited English Proficiency Students
Triennial Census
Virginia Retirement System**

Legislative Issues

**Childhood Obesity
Data Collection
Higher Education for Students Who Are Not Permanent Residents
Public School Calendar
Statewide Grading Policy
Vouchers and Tax Credits**

Continuing Issues

**Educational Alternatives
Public Transportation of Non-Public School Students
Seat Belts on School Buses**

COST OF COMPETING

The Alexandria City School Board supports fully funding the Cost of Competing factor which was established to address the higher cost of living in the Northern Virginia area which results in higher personnel costs.

The Cost of Competing factor is an attempt by the State to take into consideration the cost of teacher salary differentials in school divisions in Northern Virginia as opposed to the rest of the Commonwealth.

In its most recent study of the Cost of Competing factor, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) found that a Cost of Competing adjustment was needed for school divisions in Planning District Eight for the following reasons:

Wage data shows different regional wage markets in Virginia.

Regional consumer price index measures show regional cost of living difference in Virginia.

There is a long-standing practice of providing regional cost of competing differential to classified state employees in Northern Virginia.

The cost of living in Northern Virginia, especially Alexandria, is considerably higher than other regions in Virginia. Some examples are:

Living in Newport News is **40%** cheaper than living in Alexandria

Living in Richmond is **43%** cheaper than living in Alexandria.

Living in Roanoke is **49%** cheaper than living in Alexandria.

Salaries for beginning teachers are also less in other areas of Virginia:

Alexandria	\$43,115
Newport News	39,000
Richmond	39,712
Roanoke	35,000

FUNDING ALL TESTS REQUIRED BY THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT

The Alexandria City School Board believes that it is the State's responsibility to fund 100% of the costs of all testing required by either the state accountability program or the federal No Child Left Behind Act, including tests for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students.

Compliance with the State and Federal mandates regarding testing is not an option for a local Board.

Local school divisions are required to finance the tests used to meet approved testing of LEP students.

All other required tests are funded by the State.

If the State does not pay for the tests, either local funding or Title I or Title III funding must be used, reducing the funding that is available for programs for LEP and at-risk students.

FUNDING IN THE 2010 BIENNIUM BUDGET

The Alexandria City School Board understands the State budget challenges and appreciates all efforts to protect education from such cuts. We request that we be given maximum flexibility to make local budget decisions in the 2010 biennium budget and that there be a moratorium on all new mandates.

FUNDING PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS

The Alexandria City School Board supports the establishment of programs to make pre-kindergarten available for all four-year-old children. Through creative partnerships, the Alexandria City School Board provides, supports and would like to expand services for at promise, special education and ELL pre-kindergarten students. Although ACPS faces certain capacity challenges in the coming year, it has not deterred our efforts in expanding these programs. The Alexandria City School Board, in partnership with Virginia's legislators, looks forward to implementing the findings from the most current research detailing the great impact that quality early childhood education can have in raising academic achievement for all our students.

FUNDING STAFFING FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

The Alexandria City School Board supports State funding for staffing for Limited English Proficient students at a formula of 30 teachers per 1,000 LEP students and two auxiliary staff members per 1,000 LEP students.

Research shows that it takes a minimum of four years of English language instruction for LEP students to perform on grade level and students who enter school at or above age 12 typically require six to eight years to compete academically with native speakers of English.

In the Virginia Board of Education report to the Virginia General Assembly (2007 Senate Document No. 8), the first recommendation was:

“Review the formula that provides funding to school divisions for ESL teachers and conduct a study to assess the impact of increasing resources available to school divisions to support LEP student achievement.”

TRIENNIAL CENSUS

The Alexandria City School Board supports the elimination of the triennial census to be replaced by the annual March 31 average daily membership figure. Using this figure will provide more accurate and timely data since the information will be updated yearly and will include only those students who are attending public school. It will also save school divisions the money that is presently spent conducting the triennial census.

VIRGINIA RETIREMENT SYSTEM

The Alexandria City School Board recognizes that increases in VRS rates are required to retain the soundness of the system but supports a long-term plan that would minimize the large fluctuations that occur from year to year under the present procedures.

Budgeting for increases, such as those proposed for the next biennium, makes it difficult, if not possible, for school division to provide appropriate funding for programs designed to meet accountability standards.

Establishing a stable rate that would be able to cover VRS needs, regardless of market and other situations, would enable school divisions to budget more realistically and more accurately plan for future needs.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

The Alexandria City School Board supports continued attention to the issue of childhood obesity in Virginia's public schools. Any such consideration should include the collection and dissemination of best practices for both nutrition and physical activity that may help combat childhood obesity. However, local school divisions should be allowed to retain flexibility in how they address this problem through local wellness policies.

The Alexandria City Public Schools have been doing their part with major changes in food served to students in cafeterias, the replacement of vending machine offerings with healthy alternatives, and the provision of wellness instructions and opportunities for more physical activities.

School divisions that are already stepping up to the plate in this area should be allowed to retain their flexibility.

DATA COLLECTION

The Alexandria City School Board supports amendments to the Virginia privacy laws to allow for the collection of data, with proper safeguards, to link P-12 education data with higher education data and P-16 education data with workforce data.

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE NOT YET PERMANENT RESIDENTS

The Alexandria City School Board supports legislation that provides eligibility for in-state tuition to students who are not yet permanent residents if they meet the following criteria:

- 1. Graduated from a public or private high school in Virginia;**
- 2. Resided in the Commonwealth for at least five years as of the date the individual graduated from high school;**
- 3. Registered as an entering student in an institution of higher education;**
- 4. Provided an affidavit to the institution stating that he has filed an application to become a**

permanent resident of the United States and is actively pursuing such permanent residency; and

5. Submitted evidence that he, or in the case of a dependent student, at least one parent, guardian, or person standing in loco parentis, has paid Virginia income taxes for at least three years prior to the date of enrollment.

At the Federal level, the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act) Act is bipartisan legislation that addresses these issues and is presently being considered by Congress. At the present time, ten states have passed legislation providing for in-state tuition to students who meet the above requirements. Those states are Texas, California, Utah, Washington, New York, Oklahoma, Illinois, Kansas, New Mexico, and Nebraska. These states provide the same in-state tuition rate to current residents of other states who meet the above requirements with the exception of #4.

PUBLIC SCHOOL CALENDAR

The Alexandria City School Board supports legislation to change the date before which schools cannot begin the school year from Labor Day to September 1. The Board also supports legislation that would allow Title I elementary school waivers from the current requirement.

This late start puts Virginia AP and IB students at a disadvantage as they compete in these national tests with students who have as much as two full weeks of instruction more than they do.

Using a September 1 date will allow school divisions flexibility in those years when Labor Day occurs at a late date.

Allowing Title I elementary schools to open before Labor Day will give much needed extra instructional time for students in schools with a large low-income student population.

STATEWIDE GRADING POLICY

The Alexandria City School Board opposes legislation that would create a statewide grading policy. As an elected board, the Alexandria Board believes that it is better able to respond to the needs of students and desires of parents than policies mandated by the state.

VOUCHERS AND TAX CREDITS

The Alexandria City School Board is opposed to any diversion of public education funds to nonpublic schools and specifically opposes the use of tuition tax credits, tax deductions, or vouchers as a means of reimbursing parents for their children's K-12 education expenses.

CONTINUING ISSUES

Educational Alternatives – The Alexandria City School Board believes that any decisions to establish alternatives to present forms of public education should be the sole and exclusive prerogatives of local school boards. The Alexandria Public Schools have many options for its students that have been designed with the input of the community. The Board believes it is able to respond to the needs of its students without state mandates.

Seat Belts on School Buses – The Alexandria City School Board opposes any state action that would mandate the use of seat belts on school buses. Studies by the National Transportation Safety Board show that, with the protection offered by the design of school buses, students are safer in an accident if they are not restrained by seat belts.

Public Transportation of Non-Public School Students – The Alexandria City School Board opposes legislation that would require public school divisions to provide bus transportation

to private and parochial school students. A mandate of this type would greatly increase the administrative difficulties of operating the school transportation system.