



Newport News School Board 2017 Legislative Program

The Newport News School Board annually publishes a legislative program containing policy and funding positions. This program represents the School Board's recommendations for improving public education and the partnership between local and state government. The School Board approved the 2017 legislative program at its November 15, 2016 meeting.

PRIORITY POSITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

The Newport News School Board appreciates the General Assembly's action in 2016 that provided additional funding for K-12 education over the 2016-18 biennium. The increase helped mitigate huge reductions in K-12 state funding from previous years and needs to be continued in the coming session.

Even with the increase, state per-pupil funding is more than \$500 below that of 2009 when adjusted for inflation. And although the state approved additional funding for teacher pay, revenue shortfalls meant that the state support would not be provided, leaving local school divisions to find the funding or eliminate announced increases.

Today, Newport News Public Schools operates with less state funding than in 2008, not accounting for inflation. And while the school division has worked diligently to create greater efficiencies that limit the negative effects budget reductions on student needs, lower funding comes at a price, including deferred school maintenance, delays in technology updates, reduced professional development, lagging teacher salaries, and more. In addition, the school division has had to eliminate approximately 500 full-time positions over the past several years.

The Newport News School Board calls on the General Assembly to continue to address the significant gaps in public education funding by supporting the following:

1. **Teacher Salary Increase:** Provide a state-funded salary increase equivalent to or higher than the increase approved by the 2016 General Assembly, but not delivered due to lower-than-expected revenues. In the past 10 years, the state has funded a teacher salary increase just three times.
2. **VRS Funding Schedule:** Return to the schedule approved by the General Assembly in 2012 that would fully fund the Virginia Retirement System by 2020, rather than continue with the accelerated schedule that would move full funding to 2017. The accelerated schedule is costing the state approximately \$56 million annually and NNPS \$3 million annually. In light of the state's

action to eliminate the approved teacher pay raise, the cost savings could be put toward reinstating all or part of the state and locally funded portions of the raise.

3. **Capital Improvements:** Develop ways to assist local school divisions maintain, update and replace last century's facilities so that they can meet the educational needs of students in the 21st century. A study by Virginia's Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) study shows that, since 2009, Virginia school divisions reduced non-instructional spending, particularly related to facilities, by more than instructional spending. In Newport News, the loss of state support for renovation and construction is having a severe impact. As state funding was eliminated, the city also reduced its CIP support. The result is that many urgently needed projects are going undone.

Specifically, the Newport News School Board encourages the General Assembly to reinstate funding of the School Construction Program, which was eliminated entirely in 2010. With the average NNPS school 48 years old, renovation and replacement are essential for maintaining a good environment for students and staff. The elimination of state funds for construction and renovation means that school divisions must use funds that once went for student instruction to make essential repairs.

4. **Extended Learning Programs:** Provide additional funding for school divisions to implement extended year/day programming as a way to accelerate learning and use summer months as an opportunity to ensure that students begin each new school year ready to learn without need for remediation or review.
5. **Virginia Center of Aeronautics - Denbigh Aviation Academy:** Provide funding to build a new facility for the NNPS Denbigh Aviation Academy, which serves 340 students in a 1950s-era terminal building at the Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport (PHF). NNPS and the Airport Commission are working on plans to build a new state-of-the-art Aviation Academy that includes an aircraft hangar to provide an aircraft manufacturing/maintenance lab environment. The growth will permit enrollment of 500 students and serve as the cornerstone of plans to develop the Virginia Center of Aeronautics on airport property. Together with the Academy, the Center of Aeronautics will be a complete workforce development center, bringing business and academic communities together. This new workforce development center will foster new opportunities to bring aviation and aerospace manufacturing to Newport News and the Peninsula.

The Airport Commission, with support from NNPS, is requesting \$3.5 million in state funds towards the Academy's construction costs. The investment by the Commonwealth would represent approximately 16.5 percent of the total projected construction cost of \$21.5 million.

EDUCATION POLICY

1. **Transfer of Authority from Locally Elected to State-Appointed Boards**

The Newport News School Board opposes the following legislation that would remove decision-making authority from local communities and move it to unelected boards in Richmond:

- Legislation that would establish the "Board of the Virginia Virtual School." This bill would take give an unelected board appointed by the state full operational control of the what would become the Virginia Virtual School, which could enroll students from any locality in the state and compel those localities to turn over state funding to support the school.
- A Constitution Amendment on charter schools that would permit an unelected board in Richmond to determine the establishment and operation of charter schools within school divisions in Virginia. Additionally, the Newport News School Board requests that all public schools be provided with the same flexibility in meeting state requirements that are provided to charter schools

CONTINUING POSITIONS

1) **TRANSFER OF SOQ FUNDING OBLIGATIONS**

The Newport News School Board opposes shifting payments for Standards of Quality (SOQ) and other recurring costs to the state's Lottery and Literary funds.

- Since 2011 the General Assembly has transferred approximately \$200 million in obligations from the General Fund to the Lottery Fund. The result is a reduction of funds available to educational programs already funded by the lottery and the potential for certain obligations, such as textbooks, to lose funding if lottery projections are not met.
- Transfers of costs such as teacher retirement to the Literary Fund reduce funding available for much-needed school construction financing across the state. There are 27 projects dating from 2008 that are still on the Literary Fund priority waiting list.

2) **"FEDERAL DEDUCT" PROVISION**

The School Board urges the General Assembly to eliminate the "Federal Deduct" provision, which deducts a percentage of federal revenues from the state's Basic Aid funding calculation. State funds should not be reduced because a school division receives funds earmarked to implement federal mandates.

3) **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF TEACHERS**

In addition to supporting higher salaries, the Newport News School Board urges the General Assembly to seek additional ways to attract and retain highly qualified teachers, including those who want to work in hard-to-fill positions and hard-to-staff schools.

4) **FUNDING FOR CLASSROOM TECHNOLOGY**

The Newport News School Board seeks legislation to increase state funding to support classroom technology, hardware, software, and training needs, to enable school divisions to meet requirements found in the Virginia Standards of Learning and prepare students for success in a highly technological world.

5) **VOUCHERS AND TUITION CREDITS**

The Newport News School Board opposes legislation that provides for the use of vouchers or tuition credits for non-public school students, for a state-mandated program of choice that supersedes the local school board's authority to establish K-12 school zones, or allows for re-segregation of schools. Current state policies and regulations provide sufficient choice opportunities for local school divisions. Examples of choice opportunities which Newport News Public Schools currently provides includes specialized courses and programs, magnet schools, attendance at vocational centers, home instruction, and adult and alternative programs.

6) **BINDING ARBITRATION**

The Newport News School Board opposes legislation that would amend the Constitution of Virginia by limiting the authority of local school boards to make decisions affecting personnel matters.



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For more information about the NNPS Legislative Program, please contact Patrick Finneran, director of corporate and government relations, at patrick.finneran@nn.k12.va.us.