

VACo and VML testify about the SOQs before the Board of Education; local leaders urged to testify at future meetings

VACo and VML recently provided joint testimony to the Board of Education's Standards of Quality Committee about the current and proposed standards and state funding for education. The organizations also offered timely recommendations. The board is charged with revisiting the standards every two years.

VACo and VML were invited to testify along with a host of statewide education groups on Wednesday, May 27 in Richmond. The public meeting was the first of approximately seven the committee intends to conduct. In addition to scheduled June and July meetings, the committee will schedule additional meetings in the fall. County leaders should plan to testify.

The committee is comprised of the entire membership of the Board of Education. The board, governor and General Assembly set the standards while the governor and General Assembly appropriate funding for them. As part of its testimony, VACo and VML urged the board to take more of an active role in the funding process.

Mary Jo Fields of VML and Mike Edwards of VACo offered the following comments and recommendations. [Their entire testimony including three important slides about local revenues and expenditures are here.](#)

Summary of VACo and VML comments:

- The SOQs do not adequately reflect the actual costs of education. Those actual costs are driven by requirements under the Standards of Accreditation and the Standards of Learning.
- Localities consistently spend about \$3 billion more per year than the minimum required by the state. The "over-spending" accounts for 22 percent of all K-12 appropriations. Without this extra local spending, school divisions and students would have little chance of meeting state and federal requirements.
- The state uses a linear weighted average methodology that depresses salaries and supporting costs paid by the state.
- The state changes funding formulas in order to reduce required state support. These formula changes do not change what it actually costs to provide education services, they only change how much the state has to pay.
- Due to the recession and falling state and local revenues, near term increases in state and local K-12 funding are doubtful, and indeed state and local K-12 funding may decrease in the next biennium.
- In FY 2008, local governments spent 84 percent of all real property tax revenues to fund K-12 education.
- Public education competes with additional core service demands. In this economy local governments cannot continue to do more for education while continuing to meet competing essential service demands (e.g. fire, police, jails, mental health and mental retardation, CSA, etc).

Summary of VACo and VML recommendations:

- The state should adequately fund the true costs of public education. The members of the Board of Education - collectively and individually - will have to be outspoken advocates for state funding with the Governor and the General Assembly.
- If adequate state funding - including re-benchmarking - is not provided, the Board of Education should realign the SOAs and SOLs with the funding provided in the state's appropriation act.
- The Board of Education should oppose the proposal to adopt a cap on the number of support positions funded by the state. It is unreasonable to set higher and higher goals without coming up with the funding to meet those goals.

Information about future public meetings hosted by the Board of Education's Committee on the Standards of Quality:

Purpose of the meeting: Interested parties are invited to give comments on the Standards of Quality, especially on the matter of staffing standards. The Board will receive comment on the SOQ from the public. Anyone wishing to speak on the SOQ may do so. Please limit remarks to three minutes and provide a written copy for our records.

Contact: Dr. Margaret N. Roberts, DOE Office of Policy & Communications
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Meeting dates:

-June 24, 2009 3:00 pm *

-July 22, 2009, 3:00 pm *

-The Committee intends to schedule additional public hearings in the fall. The meetings will be held outside of Richmond.

* Jefferson Conference Room, 22nd floor, James Monroe Building, 101 N. 14th Street, Richmond

For more information about the board and department, visit: www.doe.virginia.gov

VACo contact: medwards@vaco.org