



# **DRAFT – 2022 Annual Report on the Condition and Needs of Public Schools in Virginia – DRAFT**

Presented to the Governor and General Assembly

December 1, 2022

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Article VIII, Section 5 of the *Constitution of Virginia* requires the Virginia Board of Education to make annual reports to the Governor and the General Assembly concerning the condition and needs of public education in the Commonwealth.

Previous annual reports of the Board have noted certain challenges facing Virginia's K-12 public education system. Despite increases in education funding, some required by rebenchmarking and some spent on additional supports and services, the core features of the Board's prescribed Standards of Quality have not been adopted by the General Assembly. The prescribed changes to the SOQs were clear steps to halt and reverse the decline that was evident in the pre-pandemic data.

Newly released data shows that learning losses were accelerated during the pandemic. The post-pandemic National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data that was recently released should heighten the Commonwealth's sense of urgency to take steps to ensure a high-quality education for all public school students. The NAEP reported the biggest drop in fourth grade reading performance in 30 years and the first-ever drop in math. The learning loss was most severe among low-income and minority students and those whose schools were closed longest.

Similarly, the results from the 2021-2022 administration of the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments highlight both a long-term downward trend and the impact of the pandemic and prolonged school closures on student learning. Despite one-year gains, student achievement in all subject areas remained below pre-pandemic levels.

The youngest learners in the Commonwealth did not fare well on the Phonological Awareness Literacy Survey (PALS) early literacy assessment, which identifies students at-risk in early reading. The rate of students scoring below the PALS benchmark decreased from Spring 2021 to Spring 2022. However, the 2022 below-benchmark rate remained higher than that of Spring 2019 (pre-pandemic).

In addition, Virginia faces a shortage of staff, including teachers, who enter and remain in Virginia's public schools. This critical shortage predated the pandemic but continues to worsen. For the 2021-2022 school year, there were 2,593 teacher vacancies as of October 2021. For the start of the 2022-2023 school year, there were 3,307 teacher vacancies on the first day of school.

The number of teacher vacancies correlates with the downward trend in Educator Preparation Program (EPP) enrollment. According to the state data, enrollment has decreased from 13,511 students in the 2011-12 academic year to 8,777 in the 2019-2020 academic year.

Early childhood programs are plagued with similar challenges. Compensation for early educators working across publicly funded programs outside of public schools fails to provide a living wage. Direct teacher incentive programs have an impact in reducing teacher turnover.

As the Board moves forward in its work into 2023, there are big challenges facing Virginia's public education system. The Board will focus its efforts on looking for ways to improve student outcomes and make up for the learning loss of the pandemic; The Board will explore the use of multiple measures to better understand student achievement, including discussing the implications of the Standards of Learning, NAEP, and other national assessments. We, as a Board and Commonwealth, need to address the challenge of bringing the cohort of students that was most impacted by the lack of in-person instruction during COVID up to an appropriate level of achievement, this includes our youngest learners. This new challenge is in addition to the previous challenges caused by inadequate and disparate resources.

## 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Article VIII, Section 5 of the *Constitution of Virginia* requires the Virginia Board of Education (Board) to make annual reports to the Governor and the General Assembly concerning the condition and needs of public education in the Commonwealth and to identify any school divisions which have failed to establish and maintain schools meeting the prescribed standards of quality. It is consistent with this mandate that the Board submits this report outlining the condition and needs of public education in Virginia.

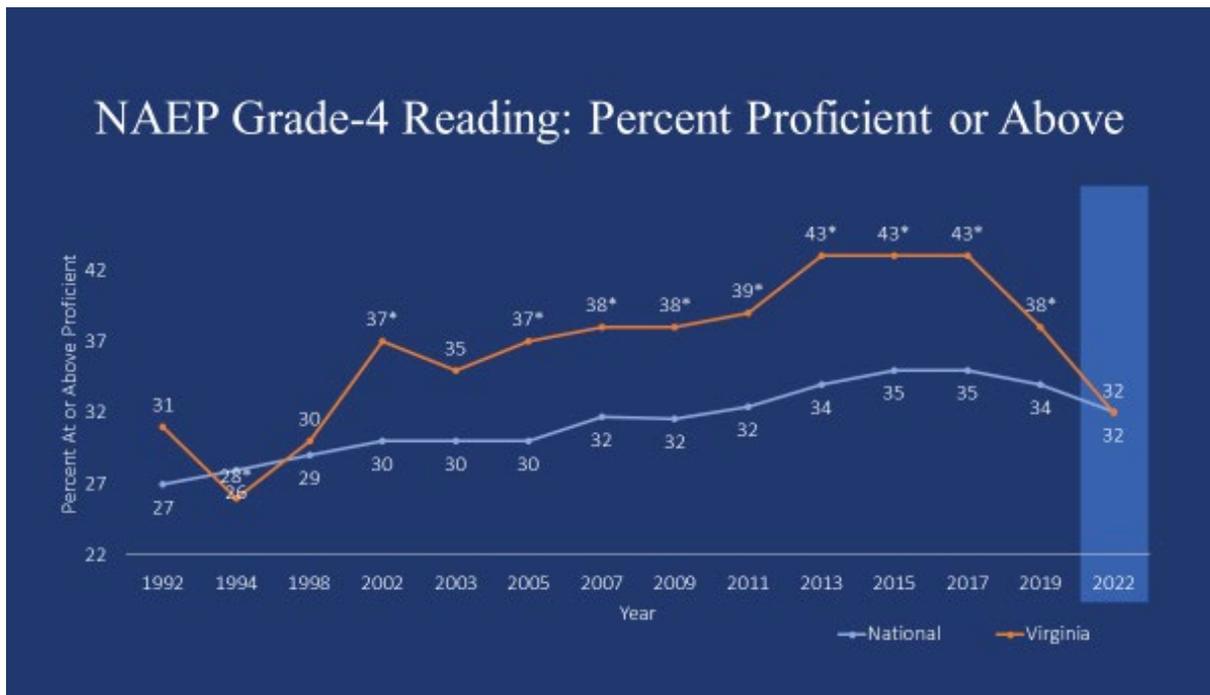
### THE CONDITION AND NEEDS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN VIRGINIA

Previous annual reports of the Board have noted certain challenges facing Virginia's K-12 public education system. These challenges have included the failure to fund the system adequately and the worsening teacher shortage. In our last pre-pandemic report in 2019, we noted "Virginia's disappointing results on the national tests . . . and asked that certain steps be taken in connection with Standards of Quality (SOQ) prescribed by the Board to deal with the issue. In 2019, the Board stated:

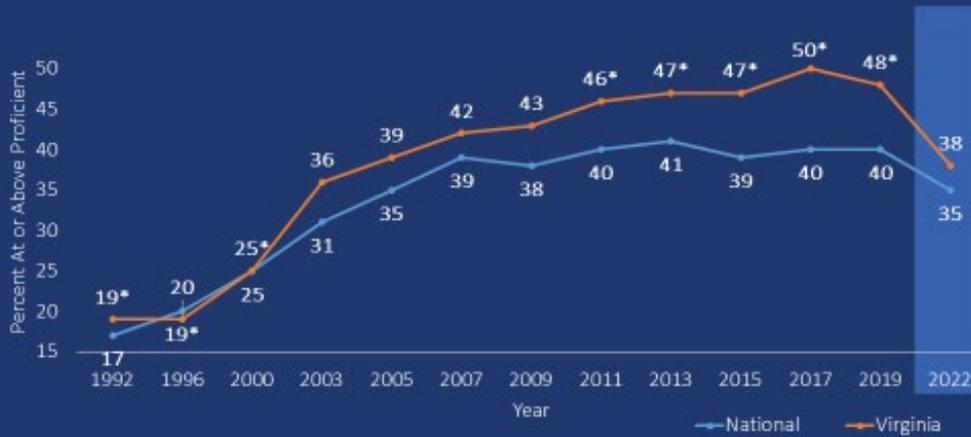
*The Board believes in setting high expectations for all students, regardless of who they are or where they live. But as the latest reading scores make clear, Virginia must do more to help young learners attain grade-level proficiency in reading, especially in schools where teachers are challenged by increasing numbers of students whose learning is impacted by poverty, hunger and trauma.*

Despite increases in education funding, some required by rebenchmarking and some spent on additional supports and services, the core features of the Board's prescribed SOQ have not been adopted by the General Assembly. While funding to support implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act made significant progress towards providing funding to support reading specialists there is still progress to be made to reach the Board's SOQ prescription. The Board's reading specialist prescription sets a minimum staffing ratio for reading specialists in K-5 determined by the number of students failing third-grade Standards of Learning reading assessments and would provide critical resources to our most in-need schools. Although it was adopted by the education committees in the House of Delegates and the Senate, it was not included in the final budget. Similarly, the Board's efforts to assist in the retention of teachers and improvement of teaching skills passed through the relevant committees unanimously, but were not funded in the budget. These changes were clear steps to halt and reverse the decline that was evident in the pre-pandemic data. Newly released teacher vacancy data and a Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) analysis shows that teachers leaving the workforce has accelerated during the pandemic. The post-pandemic NAEP data that was recently released should heighten the Commonwealth's sense of urgency to take steps to ensure a high-quality education for all public school students.

In September, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported the biggest drop in fourth grade reading performance in 30 years and the first-ever drop in math. The learning loss was most severe among low-income and minority students and those whose schools were closed longest. In Virginia, the 2022 NAEP scores show sharp declines in both reading and mathematics for Virginia’s fourth – and eighth-grade students. For the first time in 30 years, Virginia’s fourth grade students have fallen below the national average in reading and are barely above the national average in math. The average scores of the Commonwealth’s eighth graders also dropped, with statistically significant declines in both reading and math. Virginia began participating in NAEP in 1990, and State NAEP assessments are administered every two years. The 2021 administration of NAEP was postponed to 2022 due to the pandemic.

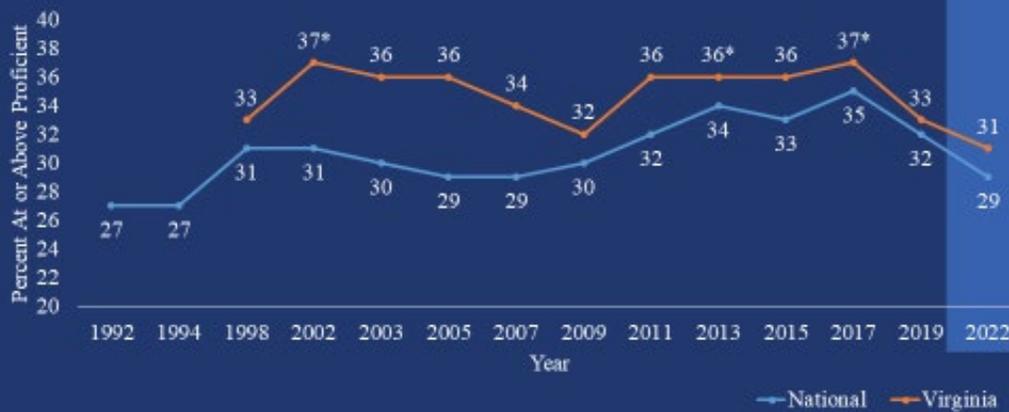


## NAEP Grade-4 Math: Percent Proficient or Above



The NAEP mathematics scores also highlighted troubling trends. While the average score of fourth grade students in Virginia was 236, not significantly different from the average score of 235 for public school students across the nation, the score was lower than their average score of 247 in 2019. Similarly for eighth-grade students, the average score in Virginia was 279, higher than the average score of 273 for public school students nationwide, but lower than their average score in of 287 in 2019.

## NAEP Grade-8 Reading: Percent Proficient or Above



## NAEP Grade-8 Math: Percent Proficient or Above



It is important to note the significant differences in scores among students who are eligible for National School Lunch. For fourth grade reading, the average score for students who are eligible for the National School Lunch program were 37 points lower than those not eligible. In grade 8

reading, the difference is 28 points. For fourth grade mathematics, students eligible for the National School Lunch program average score was 218, while those not eligible scored an average of 249, a 31-point difference. That same 31 point difference can also be seen in grade 8 mathematics with eligible students' average score at 260, and not eligible students' average score at 291.

### **Staffing Challenges**

Virginia faces a shortage of staff, including teachers, who enter and remain in Virginia's public schools. This critical shortage predated the pandemic but continues to worsen. Local school divisions are also experiencing challenges in other staffing areas such as bus drivers and cafeteria workers. The [Positions and Exits Collection \(PEC\)](#) requires the local school board to report the number and type of teacher, other instructional personnel, and support staff vacancies including bus drivers. This new annual data collection, as of October 2021, helps identify critical shortages by geographic area, school division, and subject matter, measures growth and decline of required staffing levels, and evaluates the reason licensed personnel leave the field. For the 2021-2022 school year, there were 2,593 teacher vacancies as of October 2021. For the start of the 2022-2023 school year, there were 3,307 teacher vacancies on the first day of school. An End-of-the-Year (EOY) PEC designed to collect information on the total number of unfilled positions was administered June 30, 2022. Exit survey data from licensed personnel who are no longer employees of the reporting division or regional center were collected in its inaugural administration. Preliminary results indicate that for 2021-2022, 8,944 responses were collected across 130 divisions. The top three reasons for educator exit are as follows: family/personal considerations, such as health, caring for others, career break, or other factors (29.7%); employment in the education field/accepted another job in a Virginia public school division (20.8%), and retirement (18.7%).

A recent JLARC report, *Pandemic Impact on Public K-12 Education*,<sup>1</sup> highlighted the challenges many divisions are facing recruiting and retaining a qualified teacher workforce. According to this JLARC report, local school divisions in Virginia report that the pandemic has made it more difficult to recruit and retain teachers. Ninety-four percent of local school division leadership surveyed indicated it has become more difficult to recruit classroom teachers than it was before the pandemic.<sup>2</sup> Ninety percent of local school divisions also indicated it has become more difficult to retain classroom teachers.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, local school divisions expressed concern about the declining quality of teacher applicants. Statewide teacher data shows local school divisions are relying more on provisionally licensed teachers. The number of provisionally licensed teachers increased 24 percent during the 2021–22 school year compared with the pre-

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC). *Pandemic Impact on Public K-12 Education*. November 2022. <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt568.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

pandemic average.<sup>4</sup> The number of teachers not fully endorsed in their content area (teaching “out of field”) more than doubled over the same time period.<sup>5</sup>

The number of teacher vacancies correlates with the downward trend in Educator Preparation Program (EPP) enrollment. (Add data on graduation statistics from EPP’s) According to the state data available through the Title II of the Higher Education Act’s website, enrollment has decreased from 13,511 students in the 2011-2012 academic year to 8,777 in the 2019-2020 academic year. These challenges are compounded by factors related to the pandemic, including increased levels of stress among educators, concerns over safety, and financial burdens exacerbated by the 2020 recession. The relationship between Education Preparation Program (EPP) enrollment and licensure is also worth noting. A similar downward trend in licensure applications has been reported by the VDOE Office of Licensure with overall applications falling from 30,894 in 2015 to 24,778 in 2021.

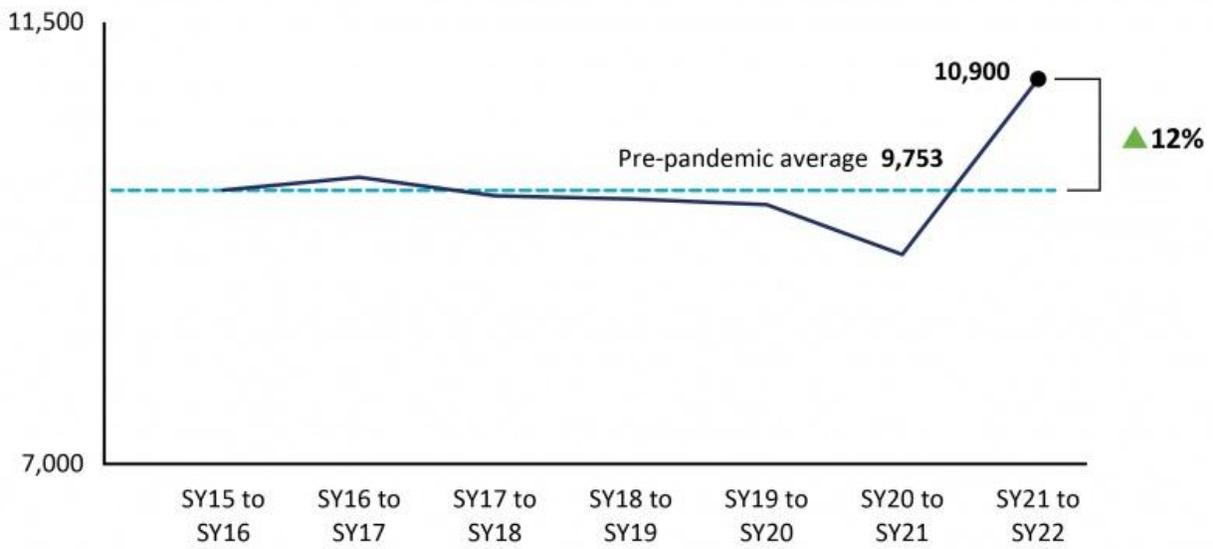
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<sup>4</sup> Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC). *Pandemic Impact on Public K-12 Education*. November 2022. <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt568.pdf>

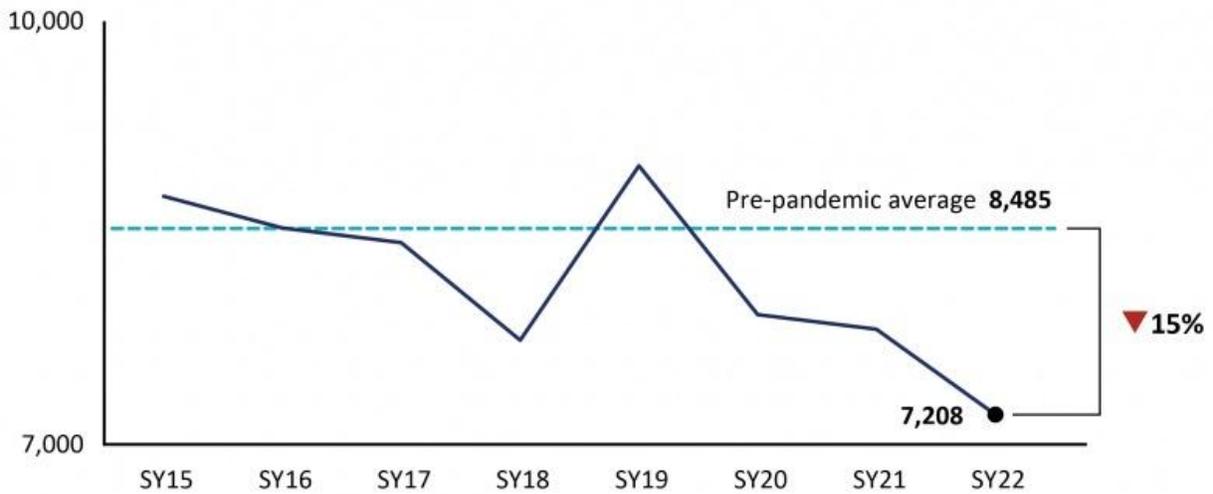
<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

**More teachers leaving profession, while fewer teachers are receiving licenses**

**TEACHERS LEAVING THE WORKFORCE**



**TEACHERS ENTERING THE WORKFORCE (FIRST-TIME LICENSES)**



SOURCE: JLARC analysis of Virginia Department of Education data, 2015–16 to 2021–22.



The 2022 Special Session I of the General Assembly appropriated \$10 million in federal pandemic relief funding to support recruitment efforts for school divisions to fill instructional positions between August 15, 2022, and November 30, 2022. The Department of Teacher Education and Licensure allocated an additional \$2 million from the unspent Recruitment Incentive for Public Education funds from fiscal year 2022 to bring the total available funds for the Recruitment Incentive for Public Education to \$12 million for fiscal year 2023. The Recruitment Incentive for Public Education (RIPE) data collection is a snapshot of vacancies reported on August 15, 2022. Ninety-four school divisions reported almost 4,000 vacancies. The most significant number of vacancies reported are in Special Education and Elementary Education, which was anticipated given that those are the top two categories in the critical shortage data collection every year. An eligible teacher will receive a \$2,500 incentive award for filling a non-hard-to-staff position, or an incentive award of \$5,000 for a hard-to-staff position as defined by the critical shortage list.

The 2022-2023 Ten Critical Shortage Teaching Endorsement Areas in Virginia are as follows:

1. Elementary Education PreK-6
2. Special Education
3. Middle Education Grades 6-8
4. Career and Technical Education
5. Mathematics Grades 6-12 (including Algebra 1)
6. Science (Secondary)
7. Foreign Language PreK-12
8. English (Secondary)
9. History and social science (secondary)
10. Health and physical education

An *Education Week* analysis of local media reports highlights the acute and widespread effects of staffing shortages nationwide. Nationally, 40% of school division leaders and principals describe their current staff shortages as “severe” or “very severe,” according to a survey conducted by the EdWeek Research Center.<sup>6</sup> In a nationally representative federal survey released in September, 60% of principals surveyed said that they are struggling to fill non-teaching positions, and 48% report that hiring teachers has been a challenge.<sup>7</sup> For both instructional and non-instructional positions, more than 6 in 10 principals said their biggest challenge has been finding enough candidates to apply, much less fully qualified candidates.<sup>8</sup> Subpar wages and benefits, tough work environments and pandemic protocols, and contentious

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<sup>6</sup> Lieberman, Mark. *How Staff Shortages are Crushing Schools*. Education Week, October 15, 2021. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/how-staff-shortages-are-crushing-schools/2021/10>

<sup>7</sup> Sparks, Sarah. *What School Staffing Shortages Look Like Now*. Education Week, September 27, 2022. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/what-school-staffing-shortages-look-like-now/2022/09>

<sup>8</sup> Sparks, Sarah. *What School Staffing Shortages Look Like Now*. Education Week, September 27, 2022. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/what-school-staffing-shortages-look-like-now/2022/09>

political disputes are among the factors described as contributing to this critical shortage.<sup>9</sup> Further, teachers and staff are being asked to take on additional responsibilities due to these vacancies and employees are taking more time off due to quarantine protocols or sickness.

In addition to the concerns surrounding the teacher pipeline, it is also important to highlight similar concerns with school leaders. A 2021 nationally representative survey from the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) found that job satisfaction is at an ultimate low with almost four out of 10 principals expecting to leave the profession in the next three years. Only one-third “strongly agree” with being generally satisfied as principal of their school.<sup>10</sup> This is a significant drop from the 63% who strongly agreed in 2019.<sup>11</sup> Twenty-four percent “strongly agree” that they plan to remain a principal until they retire.<sup>12</sup> This figure significantly increases for principals over the age of 55, but it is still only 50%.<sup>13</sup> The NASSP survey found that the top three factors most likely to cause principals to leave in the next three years are heavy workload (37%), state accountability measures (31%) and the amount of time and effort needed for compliance requirements (30%).<sup>14</sup>

Early childhood programs are plagued with similar challenges. Compensation for early educators working in publicly funded programs outside of public schools fail to earn a living wage. In 2021, Virginia conducted a study that revealed that 66% of child care directors reported that staffing was either moderately or very hard, and 52% said staffing challenges made them serve fewer children or turn families away. Virginia has made efforts to address this through 1) direct teacher incentives through RecognizeB5, an educator incentive program that provides funding directly to educators in child care and family day homes, and 2) increasing provider payment rates in the Child Care Subsidy Program. In 2022, the Virginia General Assembly doubled the financial investment in the RecognizeB5 program, enabling the program to increase incentive payments to \$2,500 to each eligible educator. In 2022-2023, approximately 10,000 educators are expected to be eligible for this incentive payment. Overall, this represents a total financial commitment of \$25 million (*\$10 million state funded, \$15 million federal*) for RecognizeB5 in Fiscal Year 2023. A 2019 study of RecognizeB5 found that in child care centers, a \$1,500 financial incentive cut teacher turnover in half, from 30% to 15% at participating publicly funded sites.

### RecognizeB5 Educator Incentive Program

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<sup>9</sup> Lieberman, Mark. *How Staff Shortages are Crushing Schools*. Education Week, October 15, 2021. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/how-staff-shortages-are-crushing-schools/2021/10>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.nassp.org/news/nassp-survey-signals-a-looming-mass-exodus-of-principals-from-schools/>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

School Year	Teachers Paid	Total Spent
2019-2020	2,023	\$2,876,000.00
2020-2021	2,669	\$4,969,500.00
2021-2022	5,229	\$9,546,450.00
2022-2023*	10,000	\$25,000,000

\*estimates for the current year

In addition to RecognizeB5, Virginia has recently revised the Child Care Subsidy Program payment rates to better support competitive compensation in the child care industry. In response to the 2022 Appropriation Act, the Virginia Department of Education worked with national experts to develop a best-practice model to set rates based on the cost to meet quality expectations. The model accounts for meeting basic health and safety standards and assumes competitive compensation for educators. Data show that Virginia programs that participate in the CCSP have lower average compensation and, as a result, have more turnover, vacancies and recruitment challenges. In contrast, increasing payment rates enables private providers to be more competitive, attract quality talent, fully staff classrooms, increase retention, and better meet the demand of working families in Virginia. The new rates, based on the cost estimation model, are effective October 1, 2022.

Another factor in recruitment and retention is the working conditions for teachers and staff. We've heard from educators and staff about the challenging work conditions they're facing due to a variety of factors. According to JLARC's recent report, *Pandemic Impact on K-12 Public Education*, nearly three-fourths of teachers reported that their morale is lower since the pandemic.<sup>15</sup> About two thirds reported that they are less satisfied with their job.<sup>16</sup> Teachers cited the following issues as the most serious problems they face in their jobs:

- a more challenging student populations, including behavior issues;
- low pay;
- lack of respect from parents and the public; and
- higher workload because of unfilled vacancies.<sup>17</sup>

While the Board does not offer specific recommendations for the hiring of teachers, part of the discussion on staffing challenges must focus on salaries. When compared to similarly educated

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<sup>15</sup> Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC). *Pandemic Impact on Public K-12 Education*. November 2022. <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt568.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

professions across the country, Virginia teacher wages are less competitive, earning almost 33% less than their peers in similarly educated professions.<sup>18</sup>

As of 2020-2021, Virginia ranks 25<sup>th</sup> in average salary for K-12 public school teachers, and 29<sup>th</sup> in average salary for K-12 public school instructional staff.<sup>19</sup> According to the National Education Association's *Rankings of States 2021* report, the average teacher salary in Virginia is \$58,506 while the national average is \$65,293. Comparing teacher salaries to all other occupations, Virginia is 49<sup>th</sup> in the nation with teachers earning almost 5 percent less.<sup>20</sup> During the 2022 session, the General Assembly allocated \$231.8 million in FY23 and \$525.5 million in FY24 for the state share of a 10 percent teacher salary increase - a five percent increase in each year of the biennium - for funded Standards of Quality instructional and support positions. School divisions must provide a minimum 2.5 percent salary increase in FY23 and FY24 in order to access additional state funds through this program in FY24. Additionally, \$130.2 million in funding from the American Rescue Plan Act was appropriated to provide an optional one-time \$1,000 bonus for these positions in FY23.

### **Impact of Principal Leadership and Support for New Teachers**

The impact of principal leadership and support on teacher retention and student achievement cannot be overstated. Principals are the leaders of school improvement, and teachers know the important role that they play inside the classroom and in developing school climate. Teachers often identify the quality of administrative support as more important to their decision to remain in the field than salaries.<sup>21</sup> Since attrition accounts for nearly 90% of demand for new teachers, combating turnover is incredibly important.<sup>22</sup> For schools in challenging environments, typically high-poverty schools, teachers often rate their principals as less effective. Similarly, in the quartile of schools who serve the most students of color, teachers are twice as likely to report severe dissatisfaction with their principals compared to teachers in schools which serve the fewest students of color.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Will, Madeline. *The Gap Between Teacher Pay and Other Professions Hits a New High. How Bad Is It?* Education Week. August 22, 2022. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/the-gap-between-teacher-pay-and-other-professions-hits-a-new-high-how-bad-is-it/2022/08>.

<sup>19</sup> *Rankings of the States 2021 and Estimates of School Statistics 2022*, National Education Association, June 2022. <file:///C:/Users/neq66846/Downloads/2022%20Rankings%20and%20Estimates%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Okoren, Nicolle. *Best States for Teacher Pay in 2022*. August 2022. <https://www.business.org/hr/workforce-management/best-us-states-for-teachers/>.

<sup>21</sup> *Research Brief: The Role of Principals in Addressing Teacher Shortage* (February, 2017). Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

<sup>22</sup> Sutchter, L., Darling-Hammond, L. and Carver-Thomas, D. (2016). *A Coming Crisis in Teaching? Teacher Supply, Demand, and Shortages in the U.S.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

<sup>23</sup> *Research Brief: The Role of Principals in Addressing Teacher Shortage* (February, 2017). Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Research has shown that investments in instruction, especially quality teachers and school leaders, leverage the largest gains in student performance.<sup>24</sup> One study found that the impact of replacing a below-average elementary school principal with an above-average principal would result in an additional 2.9 months of math learning and 2.7 months of reading learning each year for students in that school.<sup>25</sup> It is important to note that the comparison on principal impact versus teacher impact isn't the same because principals' effects on students come largely through their effects on the teachers, including how they recruit, retain, develop, and cultivate teachers and their working conditions.<sup>26</sup> For an individual student, a quality teacher is the key, but for a school as a whole, the effectiveness of the principal is more important than the effectiveness of a single teacher.<sup>27</sup>

As such, teacher induction and mentorship programs are a strategy that can help with both student achievement and retention of new teachers. High-quality mentoring programs have been shown to increase both retention and effectiveness. One study by SRI Education found that if new teachers paired with high-quality, trained mentors and receive frequent feedback, their students may receive the equivalent of up to five months of additional learning.<sup>28</sup> Other research indicates that being taught by a teacher in the top quartile of effectiveness for four consecutive years would eliminate achievement gaps between black and white students.<sup>29</sup> This is concerning as black students are nearly two times more likely to be assigned an ineffective teacher, and half as likely to be assigned to the most effective teacher.<sup>30</sup> These inequities are reflected within different schools in single school divisions and across school divisions.

**(WAITING ON THE RESULTS FROM THE 2022 SURVEY TO PROVIDE UPDATES DATE POINTS)**

Local school divisions are required to provide mentor teacher support programs for new teachers. The 2021 Virginia School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions survey asked classroom instructors in their first three years of teaching whether they received any of four different strategies to support new teachers. Respondents were most likely to acknowledge being formally assigned a mentor (87.8%), followed by having formal time to meet with a

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<sup>24</sup> Darling-Hammond (2019) *Investing for Student Success: Lessons from State School Finance Reforms*. Palo Alto, CA: The Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/investing-student-success-school-finance-reforms-report>.

<sup>25</sup> Grissom, Jason A., Anna J. Egalite, and Constance A. Lindsay. 2021. "How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research." New York: The Wallace Foundation. Available at <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/principalsynthesis>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/mentors-for-new-teachers-found-to-boost-student-achievement-by-a-lot/2017/06>

<sup>29</sup> Gordon, R., Kane, T. J., & Staiger, D. O. (2006). *Identifying effective teachers using performance on the job*. Hamilton project discussion paper. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

<sup>30</sup> Sanders, W. L., & Rivers, J. C. (1996). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement*. University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center.

mentor (49.3%). Classroom instructors were least likely to endorse having a reduced workload (14.8%). There was little variation in types of supports reported in elementary, middle and high schools. Classroom instructors in suburban schools were more likely to endorse each of the new teacher supports than classroom instructors in city or town/rural schools.

The Board’s prescribed Standards of Quality would expand teacher mentor programs, develop teacher leader programs, and implement a statewide principal mentorship program. The prescribed SOQ incorporate the elements which studies have shown will increase teacher effectiveness and therefore improve both student outcomes and the retention rate for teachers. Studies have also shown the significant impact that quality building leadership has on student outcomes.

### Student Achievement

The results from the 2021-2022 administration of the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments highlight both a **long-term downward trend in elementary reading** and the impact of the pandemic and prolonged school closures on student learning. Despite one-year gains, student achievement in all subject areas remained below pre-pandemic levels. The 2021-2022 school year marked the return to in-person learning for all 132 Virginia school divisions and the return to normal levels of student participation in the state testing program.

In mathematics, 66% of students overall passed, compared with 82% before the pandemic. Gaps between pre-pandemic math performance and achievement in 2021-2022 were much wider among Black students, Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students, English learners and students with disabilities.

<b>Mathematics: Overall Percentage Passing Pre-Pandemic vs. 2021-2022</b>			
Student Group	2018-2019	2021-2022	Gap
All Students	82%	66%	-16 points

<b>Mathematics: Student Groups Percentage Passing Pre-Pandemic vs. 2021-2022</b>			
Student Group	2018-2019	2021-2022	Gap
Asian	94%	86%	-8 points
Black	70%	49%	-21 points
Economically Disadvantaged	72%	52%	-20 points
English Learners	59%	36%	-23 points
Hispanic	74%	53%	-21 points
Students with Disabilities	55%	39%	-16 points
White	88%	76%	-12 points

Seventy-three percent of students pass the SOL reading assessment, five points below the pre-pandemic pass rate in 2018-2019. Gaps between pre-pandemic performance and reading achievement in 2021-2022 were wider for Hispanic students and economically disadvantaged students.

<b>Reading: Overall Percentage Passing Pre-Pandemic vs. 2021-2022</b>			
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>Gap</b>
All Students	78%	73%	-5 points

<b>Reading: Percentage Passing Pre-Pandemic vs. 2021-2022</b>			
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>	<b>Gap</b>
Asian	89%	88%	-1 point
Black	65%	60%	-5 points
Economically Disadvantaged	65%	59%	-6 points
English Learners	35%	32%	-3 points
Hispanic	66%	60%	-6 points
Students with Disabilities	47%	43%	-4 points
White	85%	82%	-3 points

A Virginia Department of Education analysis of statewide data shows a strong correlation between in-person instruction during 2020-2021 and higher achievement on the 2021-2022 SOLs. For example, 69% of students who experienced in-person instruction for nearly all of 2020-2021, and 62% of students who experienced in-person instruction for most of 2020-2021 passed their 2021-2022 math tests, compared with 39% and 37% who experienced nearly all or mostly remote instruction, respectively.

<b>Mathematics: 2020-2021 Instruction and Percentage and Number Passing in 2021-2022</b>		
<b>Instruction in 2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022 Percent Passing</b>	<b>2021-2022 Number Passing</b>
Nearly All In-Person	69%	587,870
Mostly In-Person	62%	33,179
Nearly All Remote	39%	12,889
Mostly Remote	37%	1,485

In reading, 75% of students who experienced in-person instruction for nearly all of 2020-2021, and 69% of students who experienced in-person instruction for most of 2020-2021 passed in 2021-2022, compared with 58% and 52% who experienced nearly all or mostly remote instruction, respectively.

<b>Reading: 2020-2021 Instruction and Percentage and Number Passing in 2021-2022</b>		
<b>Instruction in 2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022 Percent Passing</b>	<b>2021-2022 Number Passing</b>
Nearly All In-Person	75%	569,848

Mostly In-Person	69%	32,253
Nearly All Remote	58%	12,755
Mostly Remote	52%	1,472

With the exception of writing, students overall and students in all demographic groups showed improvement in 2021-2022, compared with performance during 2020-2021.

<b>Mathematics: Percentage Passing</b>			
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>
All Students	82%	54%	66%
Asian	94%	79%	86%
Black	70%	34%	49%
Economically Disadvantaged	72%	37%	52%
English Learners	59%	21%	36%
Hispanic	74%	38%	53%
Students with Disabilities	55%	31%	39%
White	88%	64%	76%

<b>Reading: Percentage Passing</b>			
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022*</b>
All Students	78%	69%	73%
Asian	89%	85%	88%
Black	65%	54%	60%
Economically Disadvantaged	65%	54%	59%
English Learners	35%	24%	32%
Hispanic	66%	54%	60%
Students with Disabilities	47%	40%	43%
White	85%	78%	82%

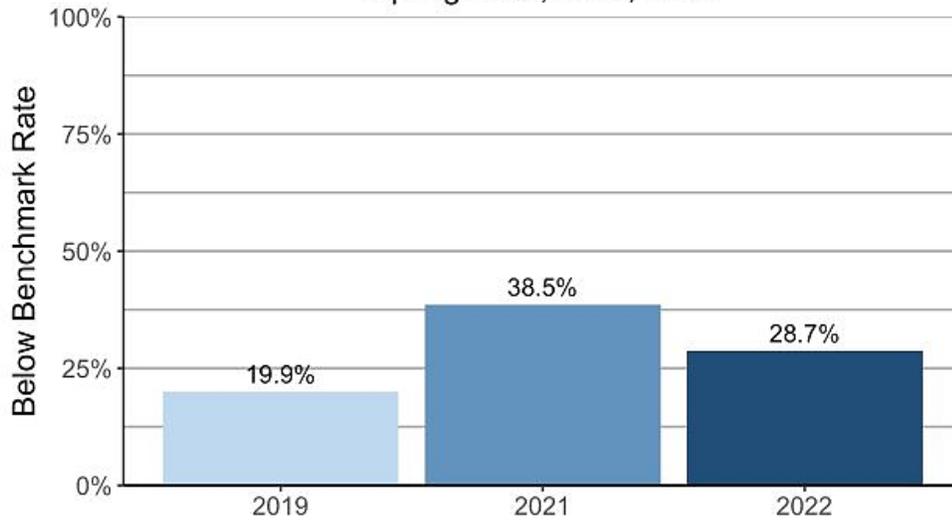
<b>Writing: Percentage Passing</b>			
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>
All Students	76%	69%	65%
Asian	91%	88%	88%
Black	61%	53%	47%
Economically Disadvantaged	61%	53%	49%
English Learners	23%	19%	18%
Hispanic	67%	60%	56%
Students with Disabilities	39%	35%	24%
White	83%	75%	73%

<b>Science: Percentage Passing</b>			
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>
All Students	81%	59%	65%
Asian	93%	80%	84%
Black	67%	39%	46%
Economically Disadvantaged	68%	40%	49%
English Learners	38%	12%	20%
Hispanic	70%	42%	50%
Students with Disabilities	51%	31%	36%
White	89%	70%	76%

<b>History/Social Science: Percentage Passing</b>			
<b>Student Group</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>	<b>2021-2022</b>
All Students	80%	54%	66%
Asian	93%	76%	87%
Black	66%	35%	47%
Economically Disadvantaged	68%	40%	51%
English Learners	47%	21%	30%
Hispanic	72%	45%	56%
Students with Disabilities	52%	32%	35%
White	87%	65%	76%

The youngest learners in the Commonwealth did not fare well on the Phonological Awareness Literacy Survey (PALS) early literacy assessment, which identifies students at-risk in early reading. The rate of students scoring below the PALS benchmark decreased from Spring 2021 to Spring 2022. However, the 2022 below-benchmark rate remained higher than that of Spring 2019 (pre- pandemic). Compared to kindergarten and first grade students, second graders showed the least improvement in below-benchmark rates from Spring 2021 to Spring 2022. The below-benchmark rate dropped by nearly 10 percentage points from Spring 2021 to Spring 2022 (a decrease of 18,668 students identified as at-high-risk for reading difficulties). This rate remained about nine percentage points (17,914 students) higher than the 2019 pre-pandemic level.

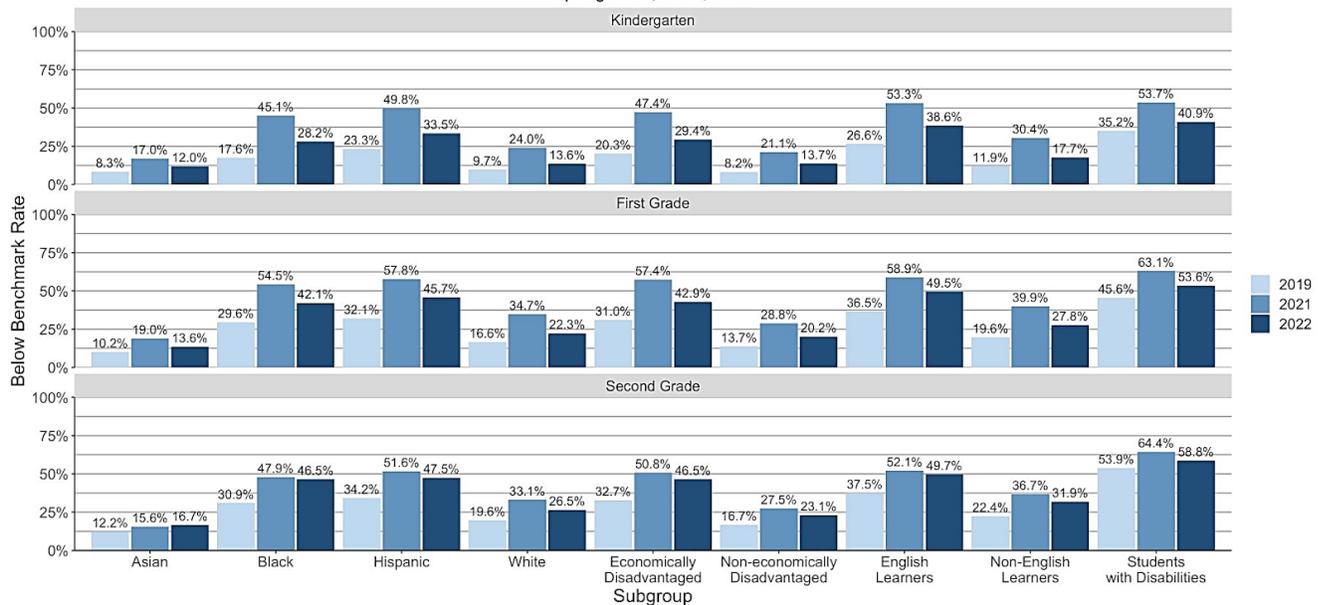
## K-2 Total Below Benchmark Rates Spring 2019, 2021, 2022



When looking only at the Spring 2022 data, students who are Black, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, English Learners, or who have a disability had a below-benchmark rate 2.2 times higher, on average, compared to students who are Asian, White, non-economically disadvantaged, or non-English Learners.

## PALS Results - Spring 2019, Spring 2021 and Spring 2022

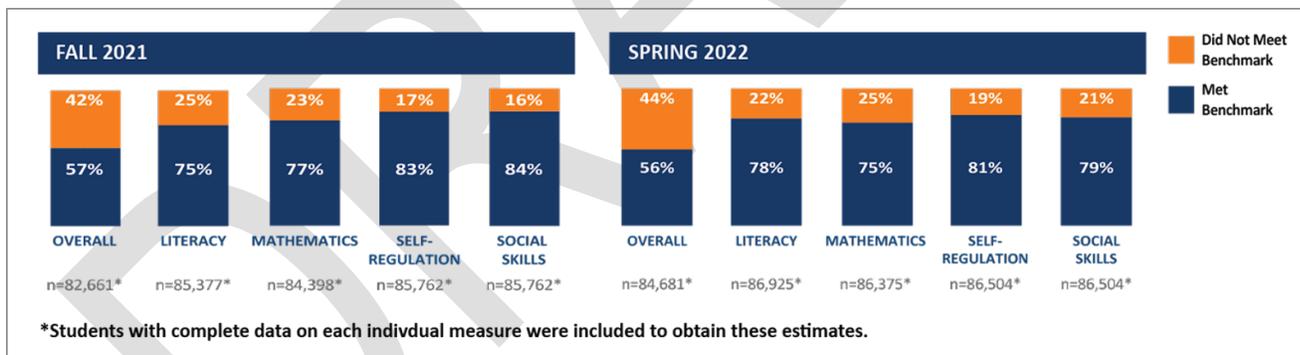
K-2 Below Benchmark Rates by Demographic Variables  
Spring 2019, 2021, 2022



The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) was administered statewide to kindergarten students for the first time during the 2020-2021 school year. In the fall of 2020,

45% of students fell below the benchmark in one or more foundational areas of learning. In the spring of 2021 that percentage rose to 52%. In the fall of 2021, 42% of Virginia’s kindergarteners began the school year still needing to build skills in literacy, mathematics, self-regulation, and/or social skills. In the spring of 2022, 44% of Virginia’s kindergarteners ended the school year below expected levels in literacy, mathematics, self-regulation, and/or social skills. These results indicate a small increase in percentage of kindergarten students not meeting the overall VKRP benchmark from fall 2021 to spring 2022.

Given these results, Virginia must do more to help young learners attain grade-level proficiency in reading. The Virginia Literacy Act (VLA), unanimously passed by the 2022 General Assembly, is a major step forward for the Commonwealth to better prepare and support educators on evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based literacy instruction to help every child learn to read. Other strategies to raise achievement must include individualized supports and services for all of the students who need them. While the VLA sets a divisionwide staffing ratio of one reading specialist per 550 students in K-3, the reading specialist prescription in the SOQ sets a minimum staffing ratio for reading specialists in K-5 determined by the number of students failing third-grade Standards of Learning reading assessments. Indicators of learning loss during the pandemic suggest a continuation and worsening of the trends we see in national assessment data; however, all students can learn with the right supports.



Students earning one or more Career and Technical Education credentials improved dramatically in 2021-2022 compared to 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

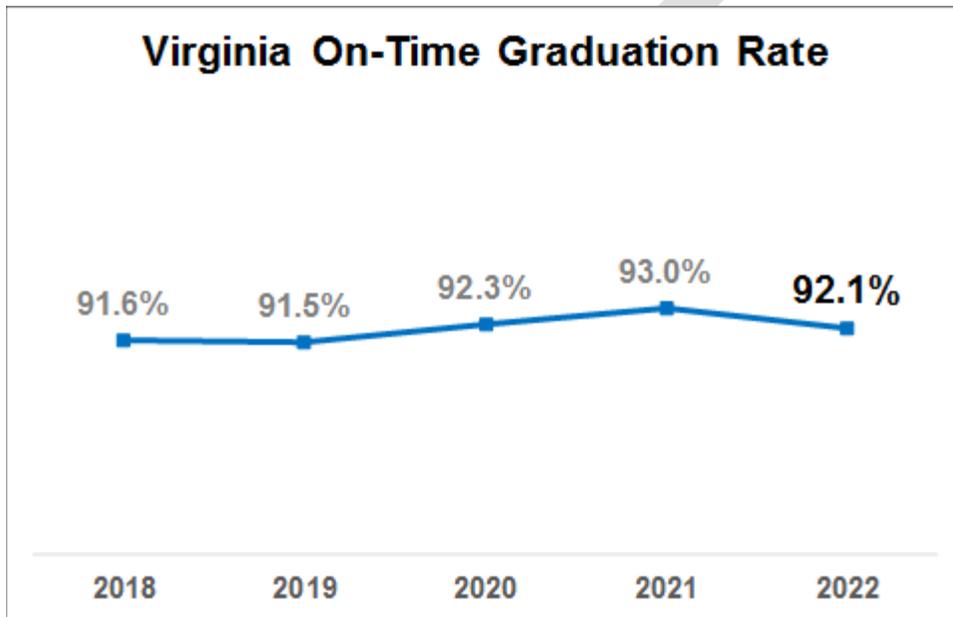
Career and Technical Education			
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
NOCTI Assessments	511	1,542	2,590
State Licensures	333	1,077	1,236
Industry Certification	43,660	51,685	95,688

### Career and Technical Education

Workplace Readiness	26,627	16,885	44,348
Total Credentials Earned	71,131	71,189	143,862
Students Earning One or More Credentials	62,899	60,992	115,682
Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Examination	917	302	761
CTE Completers	44,539	42,303	44,149

### Graduation and Dropout Rates

For the class of 2022, 92.1% earned a Board of Education-approved diploma, compared to 93% of the 2021 cohort. The dropout rate for the class of 2021 was 5.2% compared with 4.3% for the previous graduating class.



Of the students who entered high school as first-time ninth graders in 2018:

- 52.9% earned an Advanced Studies Diploma.
- 37.1% earned a Standard Diploma.
- 2.1% earned an Applied Studies or Modified Standard Diploma.
- 0.8% earned a GED.
- 5.2% dropped out.

The graduation rates and dropout rates for the various demographic groups are as follows:

- 98.3% of Asian students graduated; 1.1% dropped out.
- 90.3% of Black students graduated; 5.5% dropped out.
- 87.7% of economically disadvantaged students graduated; 7.7% dropped out.

- 78% of English learners graduated; 20% dropped out.
- 83.1% of Hispanic students graduated; 14% dropped out.
- 89.9% of students with disabilities graduated; 7.9% dropped out.
- 93.6% of students of multiple races graduated; 3.7% dropped out.
- 94.9% of white students graduated; 2.9% dropped out.

It's worth noting that the dropout rate is the highest at 20% for English Learner students. This demographic group continues to grow in our public schools, and these students need more resources and support to flourish. The Board's SOQ amends the staffing ratio for English Learner teachers to differentiate the distribution of positions based on the proficiency level of EL students, while maintaining local flexibility in deploying those positions.

### **Chronic Absenteeism & Student Behavior**

As our public education system continues to recover from the impacts of the pandemic, it's important to highlight the challenges schools continue to face with student attendance and chronic absenteeism. Attendance is a key factor of a student's engagement in their school and academic achievement. The pandemic and remote learning caused a disruption in attendance routines. The negative impact of poor attendance on academic achievement affects all students but is most severe for middle and high school students.<sup>31</sup> Chronic absenteeism nearly doubled last year compared with pre-pandemic averages. Nearly 20 percent of students statewide were chronically absent in the 2021-2022 school year, a nine percent increase from years before the pandemic.<sup>32</sup> Chronic absenteeism increased more in 2021-22 among certain student groups. For example, the proportion of Black and Hispanic students that were chronically absent increased 12 and 13 percentage points, respectively, in 2021-22 compared with the averages over the five years before the pandemic.<sup>33</sup> The proportion of chronically absent Asian and white students increased five and seven percentage points, respectively.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged and chronically absent increased by 13 points during the pandemic.<sup>35</sup> Local school divisions with the largest increases in chronic absenteeism during the pandemic generally were those with higher fiscal stress, with more economically disadvantaged students, and in small cities.<sup>36</sup>

While this Board is hopeful that the pandemic impact on chronic absenteeism, such as student illness and quarantine protocols, will continue to fade, there are other factors to consider. According to the JLARC report, local school division staff report that many older students began

<sup>31</sup> Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC). *Pandemic Impact on Public K-12 Education*. November 2022. <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt568.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

working during the pandemic to address financial stress or because the flexibility of remote learning made it easier to find time to work. Since in-person learning resumed, work schedules have conflicted with academics.<sup>37</sup> Additionally, some students have struggled to resume their normal routine once in-person learning resumed.<sup>38</sup>

As students have returned to in-person learning, student behavior problems have increased. According to research, a misbehaving student is more likely to struggle academically and can distract other students.<sup>39</sup> JLARC's report states that local school division staff rate student behavior as the greatest pandemic-related challenge.<sup>40</sup> Principals and teachers cited months of remote learning at home as the main reason for the increase in student behavior problems.<sup>41</sup> It is important to note that student behavior issues appear to be a challenge across the country and have ramifications on teacher retention.<sup>42</sup>

### **Importance of Parental Involvement in Education**

Parents are the first and most indispensable teachers of their children. This Board is entrusted by parents to ensure that our education system is world-class as we work to ensure that every child in the Commonwealth will learn and thrive. The critical role of parents is clear as extensive research has shown that students achieve more in school when their parents are involved in their education. Parental involvement enhances student achievement and has a positive influence on student behavior, absenteeism, and motivation. While the Board recognizes the vital role that parents play in their child's education, we also recognize that our education system must meet parents where they are and on their schedule. The Board, VDOE and local school divisions must communicate in plain, straightforward language. Local school divisions must communicate openly with parents about their child's progress and achievement, and about decisions or policies impacting them. We encourage local school divisions to provide training to parents on how best to contribute to their child's academic success, and allow the time and space for parents and teachers to meaningfully engage.

Parents are the first and most indispensable teachers of their children. This Board is entrusted by parents to ensure that our education system is world-class as we work to ensure that every child in the Commonwealth will learn and thrive. It is well documented and researched, and the Board understands that parents play a critical role in their child's education. Students achieve more in school when parents are involved in their education. Parent involvement is also known to have a positive impact on student behavior, absenteeism, and motivation. As local divisions focus on

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<sup>37</sup> Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC). *Pandemic Impact on Public K-12 Education*. November 2022. <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/reports/Rpt568.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

student achievement it's important that they communicate with parents in plain, straightforward language about their child's progress and achievement. Local divisions also need to ensure that educators are supported as they strive to engage with parents to address learning needs. Given the rich diversity of students and families served across the Commonwealth, ensuring that this support is tailored to address the needs of parents in each community is paramount. There are few one-size fits all approaches to realizing the benefits of fostering strong partnerships between parents and educators.

### **Educating the Public about the Board's Role and Authority**

Although this report is presented to the Governor and the General Assembly as a requirement of the *Virginia Constitution* and statute, the Board understands that the contents of the document are also important to parents, educators, and other interested stakeholders. Accordingly, the Board reiterates that it welcomes and desires broad input in matters that directly pertain to its power and authorities. Such responsibilities focus on prescribing the Standards of Quality, articulating

standards of learning and standards for accreditation of our schools, prescribing prerequisites for licensure, promulgating regulations, and taking actions to implement laws that are passed by the General Assembly, among many other duties. The Board recognizes that there are many issues confronting public education today and that our statutes empower local school boards with the authority to govern how local schools will operate. Our values also require respect towards those who give their time in service to our communities. Holding fast to these principles represents an important opportunity to model for our children what it means to live in a democratic society. We must safeguard these standards as we strive to work together to create strong public schools that benefit all children and families.

### **Enrollment Impacts for Local School Divisions and Early Childhood Care and Education** **Placeholder for enrollment numbers**

Participation in Virginia's birth-to-five programs has fully rebounded from the enrollment declines seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in enrollment that is now higher than program participation prior to the pandemic. Through the Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP), more than 32,000 children and families are enrolled at nearly 2,000 child care programs statewide (as of July 2022). Participation in the CCSP is at an historic high as more families engage in Virginia's growing economy. Prior to the pandemic, roughly 22,000 children participated in CCSP, while 35,000 are expected to enroll this year, representing an increase of 60%. Virginia's preschool programs have experienced a similar growth in enrollment, with the Virginia Preschool Initiative providing preschool to roughly 20,000 children in 2021-2022, an increase of nearly 16% from the prior year. The Mixed Delivery Program, coordinated with the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation, increased from 250 slots in 2020-2021 to 1,250 in 2021-

2022. And finally, Head Start and Early Head Start have similarly restored enrollment, maintaining access for up to 14,000 at-risk children across the Commonwealth.

### **Education Funding**

According to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission's report *Virginia Compared to the Other States: 2022 Edition*, Virginia ranks 28th of 50 for state and local per-pupil funding for Pre K-12 education, and 41<sup>st</sup> of 50 for state per-pupil funding. These figures demonstrate the gap between state and local funding of public education. The majority of public school funding in Virginia, 53%, comes from localities. The state contributes 40% of public school funding, with seven percent from federal sources. From 2017-2018 to 2018-2019, per-pupil school funding in Virginia increased 3.7%. State spending increased \$226 per-pupil, local spending increased \$208 per-pupil and federal spending increased \$54 per-pupil.<sup>43</sup> Across the country, state per-pupil spending increased an average of 3.5% between 2017-2018 and 2018-2019.<sup>44</sup> Despite significant progress by the legislature, state direct aid per-pupil has decreased 3.4%, adjusted for inflation, since 2008-2009.<sup>45</sup> For Fiscal Year 2021, local governments in Virginia invested \$4.2 billion above the required local effort for SOQ programs.<sup>46</sup> Localities continue to provide a greater share of funding, which allows wealthier divisions to go above and beyond local effort causing inequitable resources and opportunities for individualized education in divisions that are less wealthy and those divisions that serve high percentages of economically disadvantaged students.

The FY23-24 Appropriations Act provides an additional \$171M in FY23 and \$74.2M in FY24 to increase the Basic Aid per pupil add-on range from its current maximum of 26% in FY 2022 to 36.0% in both years, matching the 36.0% maximum add-on funded for fiscal year 2024. Additionally, \$30.8M in FY23 and \$31.6M in FY24 was provided to divisions to staff one reading specialist per 550 students in grades K-3. This funding provides flexibility for divisions to employ other instructional staff working toward obtaining the training and licensure requirements for reading specialists as prescribed in HB319 and effective in FY25.

One hundred million dollars was deposited into the College Partnership Laboratory School Fund in FY23 to support the planning, start-up and per-pupil costs for approved lab schools. The Board approved the *College Partnership Laboratory School Fund Planning Grant Guidelines* and the *Guidelines and Criteria for the Award and Distribution of Lab School Start-up and Per-*

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<sup>43</sup> Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission. "Virginia Compared to Other States: 2022 Edition." *Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission*, 2022.

<http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/other/Virginia%20Compared%202022-FULL%20REPORT-forweb.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Mendes, Kathy & Goren, Laura. "K-12 Funding Trends At-a-Glance: Data for Statewide and All 132 School Divisions." The Commonwealth Institute, 2022. <https://thecommonwealthinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Statewide-K-12-Virginia-Public-Schools.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Mendes, Kathy & Goren, Laura. "K-12 Funding Trends At-a-Glance: Data for Statewide and All 132 School Divisions." The Commonwealth Institute, 2022. <https://thecommonwealthinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Statewide-K-12-Virginia-Public-Schools.pdf>

*Pupil Funding Grants* this fall. Additionally, \$450 million was provided for the School Construction Assistance Program to provide competitive grants for school construction and modernization, and \$400 million in FY23 for the School Construction Grant Program for non-recurring capital expenses. This fall, the Board approved (*or is in the process of reviewing/approving*) the guidelines for the distribution of funds for both programs.

Finally, the FY23-24 Appropriations Acts took several actions related to the ongoing expansion and improvement of our early childhood care and education system, including 1) transitioning the at-risk three-year-old pilot in VPI to a standing program; 2) \$20M over the biennium for early childhood educator incentives; 3) expanding the Mixed-Delivery program via the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation to support public-private delivery of pre-kindergarten services for at-risk three- and four-year-old children, as well as pilot a program to serve 200 infants and toddlers; and 4) additional funding for the Mixed-Delivery Add-On Grant to better align state support amounts with the cost of service.

On the federal side, local school divisions began receiving supplemental federal assistance in FY20 to address immediate needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The federal government has awarded funding to states through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act of 2021, and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. In FY20 and FY21, VDOE distributed \$102.0 million in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds through Direct Aid to Public Education. In FY22, ESSER funds distributed through Direct Aid increased to \$619.8 million. VDOE also distributed \$12.9 million in Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds in FY21, and an additional \$35.2 million in FY22.

## **THE BOARD’S WORK**

### **The Standards of Quality**

Section 2, of Article VIII of the *Constitution of Virginia* provides that standards of quality for the several school divisions shall be determined and prescribed from time to time by the Board of Education, subject to revision only by the General Assembly.

“Standards of quality for the several school divisions shall be determined and prescribed from time to time by the Board of Education, subject to revision only by the General Assembly. The General Assembly shall determine the manner in which funds are to be provided for the cost of maintaining an educational program meeting the prescribed standards of quality, and shall provide for the apportionment of the cost of such program between the Commonwealth and the local units of government comprising such school divisions. Each unit of local government shall provide its portion of such cost by local taxes or from other available funds.”

Section 22.1-18 of the *Code* requires the Board of Education to indicate in its annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly whether it recommends any change or addition to the Standards of Quality:

“...[T]he Board of Education shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly a report on the condition and needs of public education in the Commonwealth and shall identify any school divisions and the specific schools therein that have failed to establish and maintain schools meeting the existing prescribed standards of quality. Such standards of quality shall be subject to revision only by the General Assembly, pursuant to Article VIII, Section 2 of the Constitution of Virginia. Such report shall include...[a] complete listing of the current standards of quality for the Commonwealth's public schools, together with a justification for each particular standard, how long each such standard has been in its current form, and whether the Board recommends any change or addition to the standards of quality...”

During the 2019 SOQ review cycle, the Board, which included members whose terms of office and service have since ended, developed a comprehensive package of prescriptions, which were informed by education data and trends - particularly as they relate to student demographics, equity, staffing, resource allocation, nationally recognized best practices, and current prevailing practice in local school divisions. The Board also received feedback and public comment on the prescriptions and made technical edits to support implementation as part of its review. As a result of this work, the Board prescribed eleven amendments to the SOQ focused on directing funding to those divisions and schools with the highest levels of concentrated poverty and ensuring the necessary staffing for instruction, remediation, and student supports.

The 2021 prescriptions built upon the Board’s extensive and thorough work during the 2019 review cycle; representing evidence-based and research-driven proposals that help to create a stronger system of support for Virginia’s evolving student population as well as teachers, support personnel, and staff; and are designed to align state resources with need. Virginia ranks as one of the wealthiest states in the country, but is one of eighteen with a “flat” school funding formula, meaning high-poverty divisions and wealthier divisions receive about the same funding.<sup>47</sup> Through the work of school improvement over the past decade, the previous Board has seen firsthand that our children in poverty need additional services to be able to benefit from educational opportunity. Our schools in high poverty areas do not have access to the same local funding that schools in low-poverty areas do, and they have greater numbers of students that require access to additional services in order to receive the full benefit of the education being offered. Additionally, over the past 15 years, Virginia’s student enrollment has grown more diverse. The changing makeup of our schools has an impact on resources and supports needed

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<sup>47</sup> Farrie, Danielle and Sciarra, Davis. *2021 Making the Grade: How Fair is School Funding in Your State* (2022). Education Law Center.

for students. These standards are essential to fulfill the provision of a system of free public elementary and secondary schools for all children of school age, as required in Article VIII of the *Constitution*. At the October 21, 2021, meeting, the previous Board unanimously prescribed the 2021 Standards of Quality.

During the 2020, 2021 and 2022 General Assembly sessions, several pieces of legislation were passed that align with the Board's SOQ prescriptions. Legislation has improved ratios for school counselors as well as English Learner teachers, established the specialized student support personnel category, removed staffing flexibility, and expanded at-risk add-on funding. With federal funding, there has also been progress in implementing the regional support model for work-based learning coordination. However, none of the previous Board's 2019 or 2021 prescriptions have been fully implemented with the exception of one full-time principal for every elementary school regardless of size.

#### The Board's 2021 Standards of Quality prescriptions

1. **Enhanced At-Risk Add-On** (estimated cost of \$43.8M in FY23 and \$43.7M in FY24): Consolidates the current At-Risk Add-On as well as the Prevention, Intervention, and Remediation programs into a single, expanded fund. Also includes language directing school boards to equitably distribute experienced, effective teachers and other personnel among all of its schools, and a prohibition on clustering ineffective teachers in any school or group of schools.
2. **Teacher Leader and Mentor Programs** (estimated cost of \$112.6M in FY23 and \$113M in FY24): Establishes a new Teacher Leader program and expands Teacher Mentor program.
3. **Reading Specialists** (estimated cost of \$37.9M in FY23 and \$40M in FY24): Sets a minimum staffing ratio for reading specialists in K-5 determined by the number of students failing third-grade Standards of Learning reading assessments.
4. **English Learner Teachers** (estimated cost of \$15M in FY22 and \$15M in FY24): Sets a scaled staffing ratio that takes into account the different proficiency level of students and accordingly, the degree of instructional staff required to support these students.
5. **Principal Mentorship** (estimated cost of \$1.2M in FY23 and \$1.2M in FY24): Establishes a statewide principal mentorship program.
6. **Work-Based Learning Coordinators** (estimated cost of \$1.2M in FY23 and \$1.2M in FY24): Uses a regional coordinator model for supporting work-based learning at the local-level and the implementation of the Profile of a Virginia Graduate.
7. **Elementary School Principals** (Fully funded by the 2023-2024 Appropriations Act): Sets a full-time principal should be provided for every elementary school, regardless of size.
8. **Assistant Principals** (estimated cost of \$77M in FY23 and \$77.3M in FY24): Sets a ratio of one full-time assistant principal for every 400 students.

9. **Class Size Reduction and Experienced Teachers for K-3** (no state impact estimated): Moves K-3 class size reduction program from the Appropriation Act to the SOQ.
10. **Specialized Student Support Personnel** (estimated cost of \$51M in FY23 and \$51.5M in FY24): Establishes a new position category including school nurses, social worker, psychologist, and other licensed health and behavioral positions and sets a ratio of four specialized student support personnel per 1,000 students.
11. **School Counselors** (estimated cost of \$53.2M in FY23 and \$53.5M in FY24): Sets a ratio of 1 school counselor per 250 students.

### **Early Childhood Care & Education**

During the 2020 session, the General Assembly passed House Bill 1012 and Senate Bill 578, which established the Board and VDOE as responsible for the oversight and administration of early care and education out of the home by creating a single point of accountability for school readiness as of July 1, 2021. Since becoming responsible for the oversight of early childhood care and education, the Board has:

- Made appointments to the Early Childhood Advisory Committee;
- Approved the early childcare regulation transfer from the Board of Social Services;
- Approved the new Birth-to-Five Early Learning and Development Standards, establishing a unified set of learning and development guidelines for children across the early ages and developmental continuums;
- Approved the Guidelines for Practice Year 1 and Practice Year 2 of the Early Childhood Unified Measurement and Improvement System (VQB5);
- Begun the regulatory process to comprehensively review and revise the *General Procedures and Information for Licensure* regulations and *Background Checks for Child Day Programs and Family Day Systems* regulations; and
- Approved key changes to the Child Care Subsidy Program, including increasing eligibility for families in need, setting payment rates based on the cost of quality and making copayments affordable in response to the FY23-24 Biennial Budget.

### **Noteworthy Actions of the Board**

Over the past year, there are several noteworthy actions taken by the Board which include:

- Approving new *Data Science Standards of Learning*, *Physical Education Standards of Learning* and *Driver Education Standards of Learning*;
- Revising the *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Principals and Superintendents* to create a new performance standard as required by HB1904 and SB1196 from the 2020 General Assembly session;
- Setting passing scores for several new Praxis Tests for licensure endorsements. Those new Praxis tests include the Praxis Mathematics, Praxis Middle School Mathematics,

Praxis Reading Specialist, Praxis Teaching Reading, Praxis Chemistry, Praxis Biology, and Praxis Physics;

- Adopting new cut scores for the new Virginia Alternative Assessment Program tests in reading, mathematics, and science;
- Developing *Guidelines for Policies on Sudden Cardiac Arrest Prevention in Student-Athletes* to protect student-athletes through education, prompt recognition, and appropriate response;
- Adopting the Applied Studies Curriculum Map and supplement guidance based upon national research analysis and stakeholder input to meet the needs of students with disabilities more effectively and to align instruction to ensure student success over a variety of skill domains;
- Issuing the *Guidelines for Implementing the School Construction Assistance Program in the 2022-2024 Biennium* to provide funding for major school construction, renovation, and additions projects, giving priority to high-need school divisions and localities.

### **Looking Ahead**

As the Board moves forward in its work into 2023, we understand the challenges facing Virginia's public education system. The Board will focus its efforts on looking for ways to improve student outcomes, and make up for the learning loss of the pandemic. In order to make those gains and significantly improve results, the Commonwealth will have to put more direct resources into public education. **The Board will explore the use of multiple measures to better understand student achievement, including discussing the implications of the Standards of Learning, NAEP, and other national assessments.**

The pandemic showed that we are not prepared to administer a fully virtual school system. The amount of learning and growth made by students in the in-person environment significantly exceeded the gain by students in the virtual environment. We have no doubt that the educators and schools that were excellent pre-pandemic are still excellent as we recover. We, as a Board and Commonwealth, need to address the challenge of bringing the cohort of students that was most impacted by the lack of in-person instruction during COVID up to an appropriate level of achievement, **this includes our youngest learners. This new challenge is in addition to the previous challenges caused by inadequate and disparate resources.**

### **Conclusion**

The Board is committed to creating a public education system that supports the needs of students and provides a high-quality, diverse teacher workforce, utilizing its authority provided in the *Virginia Constitution* and *Code of Virginia*. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the deep inequities and division that exist in our public education system. Addressing these needs requires additional investment of financial resources and human capital, as well as partnerships between the Board, General Assembly, the Governor, and local school boards and divisions. Money isn't

a silver bullet, especially in education, but to build a world-class education system and workforce pipeline, we need to prioritize funding it. The 2021 Standards of Quality are founded in research and best practice. If funded, the SOQ would make significant progress toward creating a best-in-class public education system for Virginia’s students and help the Commonwealth address the learning loss from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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