

# SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Fredericksburg, VA

## FY2019 SCHOOL BOARD LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The Spotsylvania County Public Schools (SCPS) 2019 legislative priorities maintain the division's focus on continuous improvement that is supported by progressive legislation and that is driven by educational practices that maximize the learning of ALL students. To achieve our vision of quality education, essential funding of all mandates set forth by the General Assembly is paramount. Accordingly we move forward with advocacy that not only underscores our priorities, but that demands an infrastructure of state support that realistically enables SCPS to implement its mission for the future. Our 2019 priorities are as follows:

### I. BUDGET & FUNDING

Article VIII of the Virginia Constitution establishes public education as a shared responsibility. School Boards work in partnership with the General Assembly, the Virginia Board of Education, and local appropriating bodies to provide education in the Commonwealth. Past changes to state funding for education widened existing gaps between the actual costs of services at the local level and the state's reimbursement for the provision of these services.

- SCPS supports FULL funding of all mandates and programs passed by the General Assembly and required by the Virginia Board of Education. Partial funding or the absence of funding for mandates and programs causes additional burden on local school divisions.
- SCPS supports the Standards of Quality [SOQ] staffing changes recommended by the State Board and required by the revised Standards of Accreditation [SOA] that must be accompanied by appropriate state funding in addition to staffing flexibility if qualified applicants cannot be found to fill these added positions. Removal of the SOQ Support CAP will be critical toward this effort.
- SCPS supports additional state funds for technology and construction/renovations of school facilities that are needed to meet SOA requirements and better manage student learning needs.
- SCPS supports additional state funds which are needed to assist with the implementation of new Accreditation requirements (i.e. - chronic absenteeism).

### II. THE SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED TEACHERS

Effective teachers are essential to providing a high quality education as required in the constitution of Virginia. The recruitment and retention of teachers in the face of critical shortages across regions and subject areas is essential to maintaining education quality.

- SCPS supports the development of a long-range plan to raise teacher salaries above the national average. (\*Note: The average for VA teachers is \$51,049; the National Average is \$60,483(NEA)
- SCPS supports additional state funding to enhance mentoring programs for new teachers.

- SCPS supports the recommendation of local superintendents that the use of performance on the standards listed in the Virginia Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criterion for Teachers be allowed as an alternative assessment for teachers employed with a provisional license who have taken but not passed the Praxis. The rating on these standards should be *Proficient* or above.

### **III. STUDENT DISCIPLINE**

- SCPS supports the position that the General Assembly provide school divisions with additional funding needed to implement proven methods of prevention and addressing misbehaviors that lead to suspension and expulsion (i.e., VTSS, Restorative Justice, Regional Programs, Virtual Services, and community-based/parental services).
- SCPS supports the position that the General Assembly should provide school divisions with additional funding for local and regional alternative education programs such that alternative education programs are available to elementary and secondary students in every division.

### **IV. MODERNIZING THE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM TO STRENGTHEN VIRGINIA'S STANDARDS OF LEARNING**

- SCPS supports the position that standardized tests should be supplanted by more effective assessments that encourage student acquisition and application of deeper knowledge and skills.
- SCPS supports the position that assessments used to determine student academic growth as part of the SOA should be funded by the state.

### **V. STUDENT SAFETY**

- SCPS supports the position that state funding is needed to renovate and adapt school buildings to enhance student safety.
- SCPS supports the position that funding is needed to increase counseling and behavioral assistance to students in school.
- SCPS supports the position that funding is needed to place SRO/SSP in each school building.

### **VI. DUAL ENROLLMENT AND THE VIRGINIA COLLEGE SYSTEM**

- SCPS supports the position that school divisions and local community colleges must have flexibility in setting tuition costs for those courses delivered on-site at the local high school.
- SCPS supports the position that local high schools should have maximum flexibility in establishing the class loads and makeup of these courses.

#### **V. UNIFIED STATEWIDE SYSTEM OF PRESCHOOL SERVICES**

- SCPS supports the position that the VDOE should be the lead agency for preschool services offered by the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- SCPS supports the position that the governance of preschool programs that are housed in local schools should rest with each local school board.

#### **VI. CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS DUE TO GOVERNMENT ACTION**

- SCPS supports the position that in cases where schools are closed due to government action to address issues of public safety, a waiver of required teaching days or hours should be granted to all impacted school divisions without the requirement of petitioning the State Board for such a waiver.