

# SPOTSYLVANIA COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Fredericksburg, VA

## SCHOOL BOARD 2020 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The Spotsylvania County Public Schools (SCPS) 2020 legislative priorities represent a culmination of collective research that yields a framework of legislation that advances the achievement of ALL students. SCPS' newly adopted FY 2020 – 2025 strategic plan and vision for the future is not only a roadmap to ensure the academic success of our students, but it provides innovative pathways to achieve their “individualized” goals and the career readiness that they aspire. Maximizing the learning of our students is dependent upon sufficient funding of all mandates set forth by the General Assembly. Thus, the School Board's spirited advocacy underscores our legislative priorities / position statements and continues to demand an infrastructure of state support that enables SCPS to achieve its vision for the future. Our 2020 priorities are as follows:

### I. EQUITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL VIRGINIA LEARNERS

The Support Staff Cap, implemented during the Great Recession, disproportionately limits local capacity to serve students with special needs, at-risk students, English learners, etc. Instructional Assistants and other classroom supports are a cost-effective way to put caring adults in the lives of our most needy students, but the Support Staff Cap arbitrarily excludes the actual cost of educating challenged populations. SCPS recommends removing the cap, in phases over the biennium, if necessary.

- SCPS supports the removal of the SOQ (Standards of Quality) Support Cap. SOQ staffing changes recommended by the State Board and required by the revised SOA's (Standards of Accreditation) must be accompanied by appropriate state funding in addition to staffing flexibility if qualified applicants cannot be found to fill these added positions.
- SCPS supports the provision of additional state funds for technology and for the construction / renovations of school facilities. This will enable SCPS to meet SOA requirements and to better manage student learning needs.
- SCPS supports the provision of additional state funds to assist with the implementation of new accreditation requirements (i.e., chronic absenteeism).
- SCPS supports the elimination of “unfunded mandates” that are not aligned with the fiscal capacity of local educational agencies. The last several sessions of the General Assembly have featured many new training requirements that are imposed upon school divisions (i.e. – seclusion and restraint of students and school safety training). New training requirements have a local cost. The “mandating” of such training must be accompanied by state funds that, at the very least, assist localities to implement these new state requirements.
- SCPS supports the recommendation that the positions identified in the SOQ be funded by function (i.e. – curriculum development and support, instructional technology, individual school leadership and student support) rather than individual position title.

- SCPS supports the recommendation that the General Assembly authorize and fund an independent adequacy study to determine the appropriate level of resources needed for school divisions to meet state accountability requirements. The study should examine particular challenges for schools, such as the effect of concentrations of poverty, accelerated growth and declining enrollments, and identify the funding required to meet the Standards of Learning, Standards of Accreditation, and Standards of Quality.

## II. THE SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED TEACHERS

JLARC in its 2019 comparison of Virginia to other states ranked the Commonwealth 11<sup>th</sup> in per capita personal income and 33<sup>rd</sup> in average teacher salary. If the teacher shortage crisis is to be successfully addressed, Virginia MUST appropriate state resources to support school divisions to create quality teaching and learning environments that cause individuals to pursue the profession and stay in the profession.

- SCPS supports the development of a long range plan to raise teacher salaries at or above the Virginia income ranking of 11<sup>th</sup>. (Note: VA - \$51,049.00, National - \$65,721.00)
- SCPS supports the recommendation that the State provide funding over the next two biennia to allow localities to provide a teacher salary increase of up to 7% per year.
- SCPS supports the provision of additional state funding to enhance mentoring programs for new teachers.
- SCPS supports the removal of the SOQ Support Cap to help eliminate the shortage of teachers.

## III. STUDENT DISCIPLINE

- The General Assembly and the State Board of Education have identified the importance that providing added social supports for students in reducing student discipline problems and school violence. Leveraged support in this regard will enhance the overall quality of students' education.
- SCPS supports the recommendation that the General Assembly provide school divisions with the additional funding that is needed to implement proven methods of preventing 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 recommendation that the General Assembly provide school divisions with additional funding for local and regional alternative education programs. The goal is to make such programs available to elementary and secondary students in every school division.

#### **IV. STUDENT SAFETY**

- SCPS supports the recommendation of additional state funding to increase counseling and behavioral assistance to students in schools. The funding that is provided in the current state budget will not meet the new school counselor ratios passed by the General Assembly during the 2019 Session. Nor will it enable school divisions to meet the requirement that 80% of counselor time be spent in delivering direct services to students.
- SCPS supports the funding of SOQ positions by function instead of by title. Such allowance will be critical toward this effort.
- SCPS supports the recommendation of additional state funding to place school resource officers (SRO) and school safety officers (SSO) in each school building.

#### **V. 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 school divisions must establish greater flexibility in assigning staff to teach dual enrollment courses at the high school level.
- SCPS supports the position that the State needs to modernize the assessment system to strengthen Virginia's Standards of Learning. SCPS recognizes and supports the State Board's progress in this regard. The need now shifts to added time and funding to implement these changes.