



# Legislative Agenda



*Providing resources and services to involve and influence educational decision makers in promoting quality instruction for learning.*

## VASCD 2007-2009

### Legislative Agenda

#### **Provide Flexibility, Resources, and an Accountability System which Support Innovative High School Reform**

VASCD supports high school redesign that includes rich and rigorous curriculum, meaningful and relevant learning experiences, relationships with caring adults who know students well, and an accountability system based upon multiple measures of assessment.

VASCD calls upon the General Assembly and Virginia Board of Education to support research-based approaches that engage high school youth and improve educational outcomes. These outcomes will reflect the preparation of high school graduates who become productive, successful adults, prepared for economic self-sufficiency and positive participation in society. VASCD supports reforms that align P-16 initiatives and efforts to this end.

VASCD calls upon the General Assembly and the Virginia Board of Education to encourage the U.S. Congress to become a partner in high school reform activities by providing flexibility, autonomy, and resources to states and local school districts that engage in innovative high school reform and to align other resources, laws, and policies accordingly.

VASCD supports innovative high school reform efforts that move towards customizing the high school experience and which promote multiple, yet equally rigorous, pathways for the completion of high school.

VASCD supports increased efforts to embed aspects of the high school experience into the larger community including internships, apprenticeships, and other community-based activities. VASCD opposes school choice programs that do not provide equal access for all students.

VASCD believes that the mastery of rigorous standards can be demonstrated in many different ways and therefore supports state and federal accountability systems that are based upon the use of multiple assessment measures. VASCD opposes policies that evaluate schools and students according to a narrowly constructed testing system.

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#### **Full Funding of the Standards of Quality**

Virginia ASCD acknowledges the burden that unfunded mandates place on local funding portions of school division budgets throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and supports full funding of current and future Standards of Quality. To that end, VASCD supports funding of the most recent recommendations of the Board that were approved but not yet funded by the General Assembly. These recommendations for positions to provide necessary services to students in order to meet the required educational goals of the Standards of Quality and Standards of Accreditation include:

- Reading specialists at 1 per 1000
- One principal in every school
- Assistant principals at 400 to 1
- Speech-Language Pathologist caseloads of not more than 60 to 1

Additionally, VASCD supports funding of future recommendations for positions to provide necessary services to students in order to meet the required educational goals of the SOQ and the SOA. Specifically, VASCD supports the anticipated recommendation for math specialists for school divisions at 1 per 1000.



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## **High Quality Professional Development**

Virginia ASCD supports comprehensive professional development that is research-based, data-driven, contextual, and focused on student learning. High-quality professional development provides time and opportunities for focused reflective discussion and collaborative planning to refine and implement effective instruction.

Students are better served when local school divisions are given ample resources and flexibility for professional development to build instructional and leadership capacity. Increased resources must extend to all professional development efforts and educators at all career stages. Local school divisions must be allowed the flexibility to use such resources to meet the specific needs of their professional and student populations.

Virginia ASCD recommends that the Department of Education work in partnership with state associations and local school divisions in an effort to make available innovative and necessary professional development services and calls upon the General Assembly and Virginia Department of Education to provide the resources and flexibility to support high quality professional development that is:

- Responsive to the diverse needs of educators across the Commonwealth
- Focused on best practices in instruction, assessment, and leadership
- Designed to foster student learning that meets and goes beyond the standards
- Concentrated on identified skills, content, and processes
- Focused on achievement for all students
- Supportive of collaborative structures within schools
- Designed, when appropriate, to support the specific needs of novice teachers and administrators

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## **Instruction and Assessment Focused on Students as Learners**

Virginia ASCD supports approaches to instruction and assessment that encourage a shift from teachers covering content to students mastering concepts. A focus on how a learner demonstrates knowledge through self-assessment, reciprocal teaching, student-led conferences, portfolios, and other student-centered approaches should replace the selected-response format assessments and didactic (teacher doing most of the talking) instruction.

Virginia ASCD believes that the goal of leaving no child behind can only be met if all learners are engaged in the learning experience. We recognize that research on the brain and learning indicates that an engaged student has increased recall and retention of content.

Virginia ASCD recommends that policies, procedures and guidelines for professional practice and professional development include acknowledgement of best practice focused on the learner mastering concepts, rather than teachers covering content.

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## **Accountability Through Multiple Measures of Assessment**

Virginia ASCD supports valid and reliable information based upon multiple data sources. The use of multiple and/or formative assessments provide appropriate evidence of student learning and growth to ensure accountability for students and the community.

VASCD supports the use of multiple measures in assessment systems that are fair, balanced, and grounded in the art and science of learning and teaching. Appropriate assessment systems must be reflective of curricular and developmental goals aligned with content that students have had an opportunity to learn. These assessments should be used to inform and improve instruction and designed to accommodate students with limited English proficiencies. Additionally, VASCD supports assessment systems that acknowledge student growth over time as a measure of success.

VASCD calls upon the Virginia Assembly and the State Board of Education to allow the use of multiple assessments for evaluating student growth and performance. Using a single test as the determinant for student, individual school, and school division performance does not present an accurate assessment and will result in inappropriately and inaccurately labeled students, schools, and school divisions.

VASCD is opposed to federal or state sanctions that are determined by performance on a single assessment.