

## The ASCD High School Reform Proposal

Our high school students face significant challenges.

- More than two-thirds of new jobs now require some form of postsecondary education, and that percentage is growing rapidly (Barton, 2006).
- Almost one-third of college freshmen enroll in at least one remedial course (NCES, 2004).
- In 2003, 3.5 million young people ages 16-26 did not have a high school diploma and were not enrolled in school (Bridgeland, 2006).
- America has a steady high school dropout rate of nearly 30 percent, and the rate is significantly higher for Latinos and African-Americans (Barton, 2005; Thornburg, 2006).
- Researchers estimate that dropouts are far more likely to become incarcerated, suffer poor health, and have shorter life spans than high school graduates. (Martin & Halperin 2006).
- One economist estimated that if graduation rates were just one percent higher, crimes would drop by 100,000 per year, with an associated cost savings to society of \$1.4 billion per year (Moretti, 2005).



### The Proposal

American high schools' graduation rate hovers below 70 percent and leaders across all fields worry that even students who do complete high school are not adequately prepared for higher education or work success. ASCD has developed a High School Reform Proposal to provide educational options and resources for school systems or states. This is not an add-on or alternative to No Child Left Behind, but new legislation that goes beyond NCLB. Participating high schools must incorporate transparency and accountability, and must illustrate success. This voluntary program is guided by the knowledge that today's high school needs greater innovation, increased student engagement, and a rich and rigorous curriculum that is more educationally meaningful for students. The ASCD High School Reform Proposal places top priority on high academic achievement with greater flexibility to allow students and schools to reach those challenging goals in the best way possible. Improving a 100-year-old, largely unchanged education system is no small task, but the proposed elements will ensure the students of today are prepared to become the innovators and leaders of tomorrow.

### Recommendations: Multiple Assessments

The ASCD High School Reform Proposal calls for multiple measures of assessment because it is crucial that we develop a more sophisticated assessment system that incorporates more meaningful assessment data at the school level, such as portfolio assessments, demonstrations, oral presentations, and applied projects. Such a system will ensure not only that important accountability decisions are based on the best possible data, but also that educators can use the data to determine which students are struggling, what strategies are working, and how teachers should adjust their instruction to ensure that each child succeeds.

### Personalized Learning

The ASCD High School Reform Proposal calls for personalized learning to ensure that students assume ownership for connecting their learning with future goals. This enables students to work with educational mentors and career coaches within

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Laurie McCullough  
540-946-4600 x16  
lmcullough@waynesboro.k12.va.us

### Past President

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703-335-8859  
thomas.debolt@mpark.net

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Carol Wickersham  
540-473-8263  
cwickersham@bcps.k12.va.us

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804-225-2102  
Wendy.Geiger@doe.virginia.edu

### Historian/Parliamentarian

Peggy McMaster  
302-856-1118  
mcmasterpb@aol.com

### Research

Sarah Armstrong  
540-332-9320  
sarmstro@staunton.k12.va.us

### Regional Reps

#### Region I

Linda E. Hyslop  
804-540-6400  
lhyslop@hopewell.k12.va.us

#### Region II

Nancy Dunn  
757-591-4569  
dunnn@wjcc.k12.va.us

#### Region III

Nancy Coll  
540-658-6800  
ncoll@staffordschools.net

#### Region IV

Roberto Pamas  
703-658-5900  
Roberto.Pamas@fcps.edu

#### Region V

Lowell Lemons  
540-949-5755  
lemons@mbc.edu

#### Region VI

Lorraine Lange  
540-562-3900 x131  
llange@rcs.k12.va.us

#### Region VII

Debbie Colley  
276-619-4363  
dcolley@swcenter.edu

#### Region VIII

Paul Nichols  
434-476-3116  
pnichols@halifax.k12.va.us

### Executive Director

Ann Etchison  
434-296-6804  
434-296-6971 (Fax)  
annetchison@earthlink.net

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...



# VASCD Research Grant:

## Connecting Scientific Investigation and Teaching

Laurie McCullough, President

**S**ome of us have favorite authors, some have favorite sports teams. Perhaps you have a favorite band whose concerts you would never miss. I have a favorite scientist.

Richard Feynman participated in the Manhattan Project in the 1940's and won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1965. As a member of the commission investigating the Challenger disaster of 1986, Feynman appeared on television dropping a rubber O-ring into a glass of ice water. In this "teachable moment", millions of Americans understood the connection between a simple science concept and a horrible national tragedy.

Richard Feynman was an amazing teacher, and his teaching was as important to him as his science. He believed that if a topic could not be explained to a freshman-level student, then the explainer did not yet fully understand it. He became known among his university students as "The Great Explainer". His book, *The Feynman Lectures on Physics*, remains a popular resource for students who "just don't get it" until they get it in Feynman's words. Richard Feynman's insatiable curiosity and love of learning made him a great teacher and a great researcher. His life demonstrates that teaching and research are complementary endeavors.

Virginia ASCD recognizes that the professional practice of educators must be grounded in quality research. We know that good teaching and good research support and inform each other, and we are putting our money where our collective mouth is. Below you will find information about our annual research grant. If there is an issue in your field or a practice in your own classroom that you want to understand better, then I encourage you to develop that idea and submit it as a proposal for our research grant. We ask that the person or group who receives this grant share findings with Virginia educators through our conference, journal, and newsletter --- we are anxious to learn from your investigation!

### VASCD Research Grant

**Introduction:** Achievement for all students is the goal of educators. To effectively meet this goal, the degree to which educational practices are effective must be determined. Focused research can assist in this endeavor. Whether it is to validate new practice, corroborate the effects of existing practice, or challenge the assertions of existing policy and practice, it is incumbent upon educators to "ask the question."

The VASCD Board of Directors has established a \$10,000 research grant for the purpose of expanding insight and knowledge through research on proposed topics in education. Although specific research topics are not required, projects that are consistent with the position statements of VASCD will be viewed favorably. These position statements are available on the VASCD website: <http://virginia.ascd.org>.

**Proposal Timeline:** The Research proposals must be received by Friday, June 1, 2007. The final determination of grant awardees will be made by July 1, 2007. The grant recipient will be notified by July 15, 2007. Individuals submitting proposals that are not accepted will receive notification by July 15, 2007.

**Submit proposals to: Robert McCracken, Assistant Professor, Radford University,  
PO Box 6959, Radford, Va 24142**

**For more information email: [rmccracke@radford.edu](mailto:rmccracke@radford.edu)**

**Telephone: 540-831-5682**

**For a complete application, go to <http://virginia.ascd.org>**



## FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR...

# Influencing Policy

Ann Etchison, Executive Director



**W**hat does Virginia's political landscape have to do with our children at home and the students in our schools? How might the 2006 Congressional election results impact the day-to-day world of professional educators? What will be the connections between the 2007 Virginia legislative elections and the experiences of educators and students in Virginia public schools?

Well intentioned as law and policy makers may be, the perspective that teachers and administrators have must be aired and shared as decisions are made that impact classrooms, schools, and school divisions. Moreover, we believe in continuing to emphasize the importance of considering what's best for ALL children when making decisions. Specific situations are exactly that - one person's experience.

Given the range of school demographics across the Commonwealth, it makes good sense for any public education policy to allow for some flexibility of interpretation so that students and educators are not penalized for being in school divisions that are too large, too small, too urban, too rural, or simply different in a significant way. The importance of having policymakers consult practitioners about the potential impact---in all its forms--of proposed policy and legislation cannot be overstated. Many bills are written in response to specific situations and without consultation from those who will feel the most direct impact.

It is our duty to ask the questions that will help define policy and legislation more clearly. In many cases, the spirit of proposed legislation---*leave no child behind*, for example---speaks to the heart and soul of what educators do and why they do it. The operational details, however, may be far from the reality of what makes sense to the practitioners who run school divisions, lead schools, and facilitate learning in classrooms. Our mission then becomes an essential one---namely, to provide details about everything from potential fiscal impact to ways the proposals could affect individual children---to the well-intentioned law and policy makers who simply need more information.

On January 9, 2007, twenty-five teachers and administrators joined VASCD and ASCD staff members in a training institute on grass roots influence and advocacy. Participants were briefed on everything from the critical role of sub-committees in the Virginia General Assembly to ways to craft and deliver a message to legislators at both the state and federal levels. Points of view were exchanged and active bills debated as those in attendance role-played the legislative process and discussed how to speak up on behalf of public school practitioners.

Our grass roots training group looked at HB 1442, "The Career and Technical Education Bill," as a case in point. It appears that this bill's purpose is to insure a better trained post-high school work force in Virginia where high school graduates will have the skills defined as necessary by prospective employers and will be able to contribute to a healthy economy and maintain a reasonable standard of living. However, the fact that the bill required a two-year CTE concentrated course sequence for all students seeking a standard diploma prompted a range of questions within the group: *How would this impact other programs like fine and performing arts? Where would smaller school divisions find the space and teachers to accommodate this requirement? Would these students have enough flexibility in their high school schedules to allow for this and other required courses? How would this impact smaller school divisions that buy space for student participation in regional technical centers?* The positions on this bill varied, but there seemed to be consensus that its potential impact was wide sweeping enough that further study and consideration was warranted.

What does Virginia's political landscape have to do with our children at home and the students in our schools? The Virginia ASCD Board of Directors continues to focus on such questions as we continue to advocate for sound education policy in Virginia. We believe that the collective experience of our organization's members must have a voice as these decisions are being made.

## Committee Chairs

### Membership

Michael D. Rettig  
540-568-3889  
Rettigmd@JMU.EDU

Regina Yitbarek  
757-786-5737  
yitbarekr@wjcc.k12.va.us

Pat Griffin  
757-473-5000  
pat.griffin@vbschools.com

### Professional Development

David D. Bockes  
276-783-8865 x239  
davebockes@scsb.org

Yvonne Smith-Jones  
804-541-6400  
ysjones@hopewell.k12.va.us

Robert McCracken  
540-831-5682  
rmccracke@radford.edu

Brenda Hess  
276-889-6506  
bhess@russell.k12.va.us

### DOE Liaison

Wendy Geiger  
804-225-2102  
wendy.geiger@doe.virginia.gov

### Communications

Betsy Poulsen  
757-867-7439  
bpoulsen@ycsd.york.va.us

Phyllis Milne  
757-833-2213  
pmline@ycsd.york.va.us

### Journal Editor

Reba M. Greer  
703-791-7251  
GREERR@PWCS.EDU

### Conference Chair

Linda Hyslop  
804-540-6400  
lhyslop@hopewell.k12.va.us

### Affiliates/Networks No. VA Council of Gifted & Talented Education

Rebecca Hayes  
540-286-8074  
rhayes@umw.edu

### ASCD Board of Directors

Gail Pope  
703-257-8808  
gpope@manassas.k12.va.us

### ASCD International

Kathleen M. Welling  
703-575-5617  
kwelling@ascd.org



# Legislative Agenda 2006-2007



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

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



# Virginia ASCD Fall Conference Williamsburg, Virginia



## Teaching with the Brain in Mind: An Interview with Eric Jensen

Eric Jensen inspired listeners at the Virginia ASCD pre-conference workshop on November 29, 2006. His presentation “Teaching with the Brain in Mind” focused on brain research that provides greater insight to scientific teaching. Dr. Jensen also shared strategies for engaging learners that are “the science and practice of consistent involvement of nearly every student.”

Following the conference, Dr. Jensen responded to this on-line interview from Sarah Armstrong, past president of VASCD and an educator who consults on applications of brain research in the classroom.

Sarah: Applying brain research to classroom instruction seems to fill in a proverbial “missing link” in education. Can you share your thoughts as to why this might be?

Eric: Brain-based teaching is the most focused, productive purposeful kind of teaching and learning. There's an emphasis on what's important, not what's trendy. Teachers are busy and often stressed. They don't have time to use the wrong strategies, re-teach, or use outdated methods. Today's teacher has to be better, sharper and more professional than ever. Applying the brain into classrooms is the best way we know how to support teachers.

Sarah: To what extent, if at all, can the focus on results of standards of learning assessments co-exist with “brain-compatible” instruction?

Eric: Many schools are able to juggle the two successfully. Having said that, it's not easy. Our brain LOVES to learn, but preparing for tests has no biological relevance—it's very artificial. Including the brain research means we are about students becoming better human beings, with survival skills like prediction, emotional intelligence, concentration, skill-building, learn-to-learn skills and social skills. These understandings are what schools should focus on to build students of tomorrow.

Sarah: Reaching all learners is the goal of every teacher, yet educators struggle with low SES and students with disabilities. In your opinion, what are we missing?

Eric: Three things are missing. First, teachers have to know how to diagnose students better and develop appropriate interventions. Second, the interventions have to match up with what drives positive change in our brain including the specifics of the skill-building and the amount of time per day and week; and, third, there needs to be the will to follow through relentlessly until the student succeeds. The schools that succeed do all those things. They have 1) the desire to diagnose, 2) the smart interventions, and 3) the will to follow through.



Regina Yitbarek congratulates Ruby Payne after Dr. Payne's presentation, Working with Parents from Diverse Economic Experiences.

Laurie McCullough presided at the first general session of the Virginia ASCD 2006 Conference, Student Achievement: ALL Means ALL.



## November 29 - December 1, 2006



Sarah: "Learned helplessness" seems to be a factor with many students who are not successful at school. Are there ways teachers contribute to learned helplessness on the part of students?

Eric: Yes, learned helplessness is often a factor. Many teachers see students as inactive or even lazy; but learned helplessness is a legitimate stress disorder. First, teachers have to recognize it or they won't even know what they're doing to support or impair it. Second, the interventions revolve around smarter decision-making in the classroom, better relationships, and more physical activity. I highly recommend the book *Learned Optimism* by Martin Seligman.

Sarah: Is there a first step teachers should take if they want to move toward instruction based on brain-research?

Eric: A good primer is either of my books, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind* or *Enriching the Brain*. I think when a teacher sees the processes modeled, she becomes sold on using the tools. The classroom becomes much more engaging when students are learning more and enjoying the process to a greater extent.

Sarah: You speak compellingly about physical activity as an essential element of increasing student achievement. Can you share two or three suggestions on how teachers should incorporate movement into instruction outside of P.E. classes and recess?

Eric: P.E. classes and recess are the very best. If a school does not have those, alternatives, additional ideas are: 1) daily powerwalks on campus, and 2) after school activities.

Sarah: You have spoken about the role of fine arts as an assist to student learning. In what manner do the "arts" enhance student achievement?

Eric: Arts do so many positive things; there's not room here to list them all. Different arts (musical, theater, kinesthetic, visual, musical, etc.) do different things for the brain. As a generalization, arts develop our cognitive capacity, our working memory, our emotional intelligence, verbal memory, and sense of timing. They encourage diversity and allow many non-traditional learners to succeed. A study of over 25,000 students out of UCLA showed that art programs keep more kids in school, more graduate, they get better grades, participate more and have better life skills. (*Champions of Change*, Fiske, 1999).



Ann Etchison thanked Crystal Kuykendall for Dr. Kuykendall's engaging and dynamic presentation, *Strategies to Enhance Achievement for All Students*.

John Strebe presented an interactive break-out session where participants practiced team strategies for profitable student learning.



## Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (VASCD) Outstanding Supervisor/Curriculum Leader of the Year Award

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**Purpose of Award:** Recognition for outstanding contributions to supervision and/or curriculum development.

### **Qualifications:**

A nominee shall have served for a least two full years in a school division or other educational agency in Virginia with major job responsibilities in the areas of supervision and/or curriculum development.

A nominee shall have been an active member of the Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development for two years, and currently be a member. A nominee must be nominated by an individual or group, including teachers, administrators, or school board members. The nomination may originate within the school division or educational agency where the nominee currently serves or the nomination may come from outside the division or agency. Self-nominations will be considered.

### **Selection Criteria:**

The educator who merits recognition by the VASCD might be expected to display all or several of the following:

An autobiographical record of service and leadership highlighting notable accomplishments in the field of supervision and/or curriculum development at the local, regional, state and/or national levels over the last five years.

Three letters of recognition by persons familiar with individual's contributions to the field.

Other service to the profession beyond normal job responsibilities. These contributions to the field of supervision and/or curriculum development might include serving on committees or task forces at the local, state, and national levels.

### **Selection Procedures:**

A selection committee will be appointed by the President of VASCD. The five member committee will consist of two members of the VASCD Board of Directors, three members at-large, and the Executive Director. No more than two people may be recognized in one year. The award shall be presented at the VASCD Annual Conference.

Recognition in the form of a plaque will be presented to the recipient. The recipient of the Outstanding Leader Award will receive a free registration to the Annual Conference for the following year.

### **Selection Calendar:**

Recommendations should be sent to the VASCD office prior to **September 1, 2007**.

All materials from prospective candidates for the award must be received by **September 1, 2007**.

Selection of the final candidate will be made by the Selection Committee by **October 15, 2007**.

Notification of selection for the award will be made by **October 31 of each year**.

The Award will be given to the recipient at the Annual Conference.

### **For additional information or to submit recommendations, contact:**

Brenda Hess, Director of Elementary Education

Russell County Public Schools

P.O. Box 8, 1 School Board Drive

Lebanon, VA 24266

(276) 889-6506 or [bhess@russell.k12.va.us](mailto:bhess@russell.k12.va.us)

Nominations for Outstanding Supervisor/Curriculum Leader Award should be completed and mailed to:

Ann Etchison, Executive Director, VASCD

1622 Baileys Retreat

Charlottesville, VA 22901

Telephone: (434) 296-6804      Email: [annetchison@earthlink.net](mailto:annetchison@earthlink.net)

**For complete nomination and submission requirements, please visit <http://virginia.ascd.org>**

## Visit VASCD On-line!

On-line Registration is available for the Annual Conference, PDIs, and membership. Conference highlights, information on upcoming PDIs, VASCD award nomination information, and Legislative Information is also available.

Visit: <http://virginia.ascd.org>



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# Save the Date

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## Congratulations to Dr. Gail Elizabeth Pope Virginia ASCD's 2006 Curriculum Leader of the Year Award Winner

VASCD congratulates Dr. Gail Elizabeth Pope, Superintendent of Manassas City Schools, and recipient of the 2006 Virginia ASCD Curriculum Leader of the Year Award. Dr. Pope has been recognized for her commitment to excellence in education and the leadership she has provided in curriculum and instruction, staff development, and school improvement throughout her tenure working on behalf of children and public education. Virginia ASCD honored Dr. Pope at the 2006 Annual Conference in Williamsburg on November 30, 2006.

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the school building to not only to see greater relevance in their schoolwork, but also to grow increasingly engaged in school, connected to adults, and prepared for graduation and future success. Research has shown that students who do not believe their schoolwork is relevant and who are not engaged are at a much higher risk of dropping out. Engaged students not only attend school more, but are also likely to get more out of their time in school because they approach learning more eagerly, seek greater opportunities, and persist in the face of difficulty (Voke, 2002).

### Flexible Use of Time and Structure

The ASCD High School Reform Proposal calls for flexible use of time and structure because many schools are hindered by inflexible graduation, time and attendance requirements, such as the 100-year-old Carnegie Unit, that do not reflect contemporary knowledge of best practices. What counts is not the time spent in the school building, but the learning that the student masters. The best structures and environments to promote student learning may include connecting students to beneficial learning opportunities not only within the school, but also through internships, online instruction, and independent study.

### Professional Development

To fully support students in new kinds of learning, the High School Reform Proposal calls for flexibility, innovation and greater resources for professional development.

### Business and Community Engagement

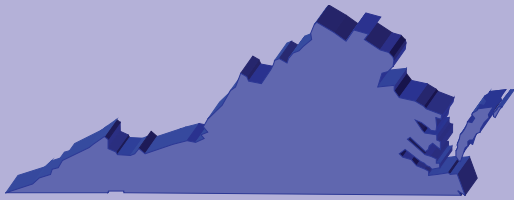
The key to helping students succeed is focusing on the best opportunities for students to master learning objectives, whether those opportunities take place inside a classroom or at a nearby business or other location in the community. Studies have shown that combining academic rigor with career or technical learning, work-based learning, and mentoring designed to help the student move toward postsecondary goals, not only improves graduation rates, but also helps boost scores in reading, math, and science (Bottoms, 2003).

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\* This article is a selection from ASCD's Legislative Agenda. For more information, visit [www.ascd.org/actioncenter](http://www.ascd.org/actioncenter).



If you are currently a VASCD member, you can pay your Virginia Affiliate dues the same time you renew your ASCD membership. If your ASCD renewal date has been recent, you may wish to use this application to process your VASCD membership now, so that you won't miss out on VASCD activities. Retired educators and full-time students will recognize a savings by renewing or joining separately.

Membership Annual Dues: \$40 payable to VASCD

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Business Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Region: \_\_\_\_\_

For the status report to ASCD, the following information is requested

Gender: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Age: under 45 \_\_\_\_\_ over 45 \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: African American \_\_\_\_\_ Asian \_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_

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1622 Baileys Retreat  
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VASCD Mission: To provide resources and services to involve and influence education decision makers in promoting quality instruction for lifelong learning.