



VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION
OF SECONDARY SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS

The Professional Association of Middle and High School Administrators

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals, Inc., is to support school principals and assistant principals in providing leadership to their schools and communities for the purpose of improving the education of Virginia's youth.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of the Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals, Inc., is to be the Commonwealth's foremost authority on school leadership for Virginia's youth.

Positions and Priorities
Meeting with Governor McDonnell on September 28, 2010

The Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals (VASSP) is a century-old professional education association for middle level and high school principals and assistant principals. The Association's long history is rich with visionary leaders, influential action on political issues, and professional resolve. VASSP was founded in 1906 in the spirit of collegial determination and a desire to work with fellow educators and government leaders to foster a learning, literate, and ever- expanding civil society.

We thank our founders for their vision – a foundation upon which our Association has continued to grow in membership and influence. We honor their vision with a promise to future generations of principals in the Commonwealth of Virginia: VASSP, as the preeminent organization for middle level and high school leaders, will remain at the forefront in establishing standards for exemplary schools and leaders by fostering a greater understanding of the global marketplace, the effects of technology, and the impact of the information age on teaching and learning.

As a professional association, VASSP will continue to work with the Governor, the Board of Education, the Secretary of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and other members of the Department of Education to improve standards and accountability so that all students leave high school academically prepared for college or prepared for a career. To that end, VASSP proposes a number of initiatives that we believe will help to sustain and continue to improve Virginia's schools. These initiatives are highlighted below:

NASSP Affiliate
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1. **Professional Development.** The Commonwealth is nationally recognized as being on the cutting edge of successful school reform and improved student performance, and VASSP is proud to have been involved in these efforts since its inception. VASSP has a respected and effective role in the leadership development of Virginia's middle level and high school administrators and has a comprehensive leadership learning program for middle level and high school principals, assistant principals, lead teachers, and administrative support personnel. The Association sponsors – via the *VASSP Professional Program Series* – workshops, institutes, and conferences each year, some of which are in collaboration with the Department of Education. As a recipient of a National Governors Association grant, VASSP developed a statewide mentoring and coaching program and implemented the *NASSP Breaking Ranks* program for both middle level and high school administrators. With dwindling resources in tough economic times, it is important that administrators and school boards concentrate professional development activities on programs that are aligned with standards and initiatives that meet the needs of students and the Commonwealth.

VASSP proposes to provide to the Governor and State Superintendent a list of professional development conferences, workshops, and seminars sponsored by the Association. Each activity will include information on how the professional development links to the needs of the Commonwealth and to school improvement. VASSP asks the Governor and State Superintendent to review and endorse these activities.

2. **Principals Advisory Committee.** VASSP encourages the Governor to establish a “Governor’s Principals Advisory Committee.” Middle and high school principals are key leaders in communities across this Commonwealth and, as such, can provide the Governor with a unique and important perspective that other stakeholder groups cannot offer. The Association believes such an advisory committee could assist the Governor in implementing practical solutions, setting realistic expectations, and recommending relevant policy applications for secondary education.

3. **State Salary Supplement and Rebenchmarking.** VASSP supports restoration of state salary supplements to local school divisions for all instructional personnel – including principals and assistant principals – and strongly endorses appropriations for such supplements. Creating a culture of excellence requires the principal to be the instructional leader of the school. While state education funds need to get to the classroom, school principals are responsible for working with classroom teachers in a collaborative relationship to ensure that instructional objectives are met. If the goal is to get 65% of educational funding into the classroom, salaries for school administrators should count toward that goal. However, VASSP does not believe that the state should dictate how a local school board spends money above and beyond the state requirement. Local school boards must be able to decide where additional local money goes. Most of it will be supportive of classroom teachers and salaries; however, the local board may want to hire an additional assistant principal, a theater director, or make any number of decisions that would result in some local funds not going directly into the classroom. Local school boards need to have the authority to determine how those funds are spent beyond the state requirement.

Over the past three to four years, many local school divisions have been forced to curtail spending for salary supplements and to release personnel, both detrimental to students in the classroom. As the Governor has indicated, the state’s fiscal situation is slowly improving, as evidenced by funding support for bonus subsidies for state employees, and we trust that salary supplements for Virginia’s principals and teachers will soon follow.

VASSP believes that acknowledging the efforts and hard work of our principals, assistant principals, and teachers through state salary supplements, maintaining the Commonwealth's commitment to quality standards for our schools, and providing professional development and mentoring opportunities are critical to the efforts of Virginia school divisions to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers and administrators and to maintain and enhance the highest quality educational experience for all students in the Commonwealth.

4. **Standards of Quality.** VASSP applauds the Governor's support and continuing commitment to public education in the Commonwealth and strongly endorses full funding of the Standards of Quality, rebenchmarking that recognizes the standards and initiatives mandated by the state, and local efforts that provide funding for programs and personnel that are necessary if Virginia is to continue to excel in providing a high quality education to all students. Our members continue to endorse a strong accountability system and funding of all mandates surrounding required state policy and programs. VASSP supports and approves of the State Board of Education's reaffirmation of the most recently prescribed revisions to the Standards of Quality and would draw the following to the Governor's attention:

- Increasing the number of Assistant Principals from 600 to 1 to 400 to 1. The demands and responsibilities of APs have intensified based on the increasing complexity of the principal's role as instructional leader and school manager and the increasing challenges such as those related to safety, crisis management, and discipline. Changing the SOQ requirement from one full-time AP for every 600 students to one full-time AP for every 400 students addresses the discrepancy between SOQ requirements and actual staffing practices in middle and high schools. JLARC compared the number of AP positions back in '99-00 with the number required by the SOQ and found that the number of AP positions at that time was exceeded by 140.5%.
- Adding one full-time instructional position for each 1,000 students to serve as the reading specialist. Reading is fundamental to student progress in all grades. This revision item will help students in middle level and high schools improve their literacy skills in order to graduate on time and to be successful.

5. **Public Education Funding Methodology.** VASSP supports state policy that acknowledges that reduction in funding to K-12 public education as a result of financial stress should not result in permanent changes to the funding methodology for state support of public schools unless or until careful study by the State Board of Education determines that such changes are necessary and beneficial to student learning. The Association also endorses a policy of delay/reduction of new programs and regulations during periods of financial uncertainty leading to reduced state funding for K-12. VASSP appreciates the Governor's recognition of the need to tie these mandates to funding availability, as indicated by his concurrence with 2010 legislation to delay implementation of new regulations.

6. **Dropout Prevention, Dropout Recovery, Academic Support.** With the implementation of the Graduation and Completion Index, it becomes increasingly important to focus on keeping students in school. While dropout and graduation rates are identified in high school, the issues of students either dropping out or not graduating on time are preK-12 problems and resolving them must involve a systemic approach. Increasing the graduation rate requires a comprehensive plan that addresses issues of academic support and involves school boards, superintendents,

principals, teachers, students, parents, and the community. VASSP members are committed to working with all stakeholders to decrease the number of students who drop out of school and increase the Commonwealth's graduation rate and encourage the Governor to support the efforts of VASSP in its *Professional Program Series* to address this problem with a statewide Governor's Educational Leadership Summit.

7. **Governor's Schools.** VASSP supports expansion of the Governor's School concept for gifted students to the middle school level. A Governor's school for grades 6-8 students focusing on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) would be a new model for Virginia. Our role as educators has now become increasingly more complex from a curriculum and instructional perspective. We are preparing students for their future and for jobs that do not yet exist. We must begin earlier than high school in challenging current curricular and instructional decisions. A Governor's School for grades 6 – 8 will allow prototype curriculum to be developed and implemented around STEM. Hopefully, a renewed focus in these areas will have the long-term effect of improving the education of all students as we reexamine what knowledge, skills, and attitudes are important for middle school students in the 21st century.