

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE STANDARDS OF QUALITY

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS BY SPEAKER

Pulaski County - October 9, 2012

The Pulaski County hearing was held at Pulaski County High School (5414 Cougar Trail Dublin, VA 24084). There were 15 speakers and approximately 30 people in attendance.

The speakers below provided the following suggestions to the Virginia Board of Education regarding revisions to the Standards of Quality.

1. Stephen Hale - Virginia Academy of School Psychologists
 - Requested school psychologists be placed under "essential personnel" in the Standards of Quality.
 - Discussed the role school psychologists play in public schools - improve instruction and learning; support students; complete assessments; collaborate to provide appropriate learning and behavioral interventions; and create safe and positive school climates.
 - Shared statistical analysis of data collected in a large Virginia school division that indicates involvement of the school psychologist is correlated with significant positive change in students.
 - Shared information about the impact of school psychologists - increased student resilience, test scores, appropriate student behaviors, attendance, and positive parent/school interactions; decreased dropout rates, absences, retentions, and referrals for special education services.
(see written comments)

2. Joe Sheffey - Chairman, Pulaski County Board of Supervisors
 - Reiterated testimony of the Virginia Municipal League and the Virginia Association of Counties before the Board June 27, 2012.
 - Expressed concern that the SOQ are moving further away from reality and do not adequately reflect the actual costs of education, as evidenced by the fact that in FY2011 localities spent more than \$3.3 million per year above the state required local effort for k-12 operations.
 - Requested the state to ascertain why the true cost of education so dramatically exceeds state recognized costs, adequately fund their share of the true costs of public education, and if state funding is not provided, the Board should move to realign the Standards of Accreditation and Standards of Learning with the funding provided in the appropriations act.
(see written comments)

3. Fred Hoffman - Physics teacher, Roanoke Valley Governor's School
 - Requested state incentive funding to support districts to add mathematics specialist position, and if possible, to support districts which already have the position.
 - Discussed the important role math specialists play in education and their impact preparing students for STEM oriented careers and supporting teachers.
(see written comments)

4. Walter Shannon - Assistant Superintendent for Operations, Montgomery County Public Schools
 - Expressed support for the recommendations included in the matrix, if fully funded.
 - Expressed concern that the reduction in funding and the number of support positions in FY2012 does not recognize the level of support positions required to support the instructional programs and classroom buildings. Include, in the JLARC study, a review of support positions in order to establish standards for these positions that is based on realistic needs.
 - Requested the JLARC study to also include the SOQ level of positions to support guidance and social work functions.
 - Requested that any new standard that requires additional expenditure of funds should not be implemented unless additional funding is also provided.
(see written comments)

5. Jeff Bain - Member, Pulaski County School Board
 - Expressed support for the JLARC study regarding funding because the current funding formula does not work, especially for rural areas.
 - Requested that when the state sets requirements for staffing, etc., the funding is included with the requirements.
 - Expressed concern about the teacher contract legislation from the 2012 General Assembly session - until the state refunds money reduced from education in previous years, and gives it back to teachers, no changes should be made to teacher contracts.

6. Steven Lavery - Pulaski County Education Association, Virginia Education Association - District 3
 - Expressed concern about the higher demands on educators, but no subsequent increase in funding for public education or compensation for teachers.
 - Expressed concern over increases in class size that exceed optimal levels even though they may be compliant with the Standards of Quality.

7. Angela Clevinger - Teacher, Pulaski County Public Schools
 - Expressed concern regarding the low level of state funding for education per child, and the average teacher salary in the Commonwealth, as compared to other states - this especially puts rural areas at a disadvantage.
 - Expressed concerns over teachers paying for supplies out of pocket, and with deferred costs by the school districts, being asked to do more with less.
 - Reiterated the concern that localities are exceeding the required funding level, but it is still not enough because of increasing standards and accountability.
 - Expressed desire to see assessment tools used to give teachers information about how to improve their teaching, not just used as punitive measures.

8. Kimberly Hodges - Parent, Montgomery County
 - Expressed concern regarding the low level of state support and the growing need for more services for children in public schools.
 - Expressed concern that resources and staff for special education children are often reduced.

9. Sonya Meekin - Virginia Education Association
 - Reiterated concerns regarding lack of state funding - while the recommendations for required positions are needed, localities desperately need the funding to come with those required positions.

10. Bill Benson - Teacher, Pulaski County Public Schools
 - Expressed desire to see state step up to the plate and accept its responsibility for its share of providing a fair and equal education opportunity to all students.
 - Expressed concern regarding inequities in pay and benefits throughout the state.
 - Reiterated request to include school psychologists in the Standards of Quality and set a ratio for number of students per position.
 - Expressed concern that it will be hard to staff public schools given the increasing demands and unfunded mandates, coupled with stagnant compensation and benefits.
 - Expressed appreciation to the Pulaski County Board of Supervisors who have gone above and beyond the required funding for public education. (see written comments)

11. Phyllis Albritton - Member, Montgomery County School Board
 - Expressed support for mandatory pre-k for all children in homes that receive Medicaid, welfare-to-work, or have a parent in prison, starting at age 3 months.

- Expressed disappointment that the Standards of Quality are not fully funded, especially since Virginia is the seventh wealthiest state in the nation.
- Expressed concern that Virginia has below average teacher pay, and per pupil expenditures compared to other states.
- Expressed concern regarding tax credit legislation that passed the 2012 General Assembly and was signed by the Governor, as well as charter and private schooling in Virginia.
- Requested that unfunded mandates be eliminated.
(see written comments)

12. Jill Jessee - Librarian, Washington County

- Expressed concern regarding recent requirement for all students pursuing a standard or advanced studies diploma to take an online course before graduation.
- Expressed concern that while Virginia is a wealthy state, our level of state support per pupil ranks 38th, and Virginia reduced per pupil spending by 10.9%.
- Expressed concern that in response to state cuts, local divisions have reduced staff, increased class sizes, reduced course offerings, deferred purchases and deferred maintenance - rural schools are particularly at risk.
- Expressed concern regarding teacher salaries and inequity in the system of funding public education.
- Requested the Board to significantly enhance the level of SOQ funding.
(see written comments)

13. Alex Johnson - Student, Pulaski County Public Schools

- Expressed appreciation for all the teachers at Pulaski County High School for the time and resources they provide to students and requested that teachers be given more compensation and benefits.

14. Lindsay Brook - Student, Pulaski County Public Schools

- Reiterated request to increase salary and benefits for all teachers, as teachers should not have to buy supplies out of their own pocket.

15. Denise Davis - Virginia Education Association - District 2

- Expressed concern that class offerings are decreasing because of limited staff resources.
- Expressed support of reading and mathematics specialist positions, if they are fully funded.

Fairfax County - October 10, 2012

The Fairfax County hearing was held at Centreville High School (6001 Union Mill Road, Clifton, VA 20124). There were 5 speakers and approximately 15 people in attendance.

The speakers below provided the following suggestions to the Virginia Board of Education regarding revisions to the Standards of Quality.

1. Dr. Ellen Goldberger - President, Virginia Academy of School Psychologists
 - Requested school psychologists be placed under "essential personnel" in the Standards of Quality.
 - Discussed the role school psychologists play in public schools - improve instruction and learning; support students; complete assessments; collaborate to provide appropriate learning and behavioral interventions; and create safe and positive school climates.
 - Shared statistical analysis of data collected in a large Virginia school division that indicates involvement of the school psychologist is correlated with significant positive change in students.
 - Shared information about the impact of school psychologists - increased student resilience, test scores, appropriate student behaviors, attendance, and positive parent/school interactions; decreased dropout rates, absences, retentions, and referrals for special education services.
(see written comments)

2. Debra Zeller - President, Virginia Association of School Nurses
 - Requested the Board amend the Standards of Quality to fund the staffing of a registered school nurse in every school building every day.
 - Provided information about the role of school nurses including providing direct care to students, assessing students, developing individualized care plans, and coordinating services.
 - Provided information on the impact of school nurses, such as reducing absenteeism and reducing barriers to learning.
(see written comments)

3. Dr. Michael Murphy - Superintendent, Clarke County Public Schools
 - Provided information about the demographic make-up of Clarke County.
 - Remarked that the fiscal impact to Clarke County for the recommendations for revisions to the SOQ may range from \$195K to \$260K - equivalent to a 2% raise for all employees in the division.
 - Provided information on next year's SOQ realignment related to elimination of a .5 social workers to support increased staffing in counseling, however, both positions are needed.
 - Requested greater flexibility in the implementation of the SOQ staffing standards.

- Requested adequate state funding tied to the SOQ for any new initiatives or requirements generated by the General Assembly or the Board.
- Requested a slow down on onerous data collection and reporting requirements unless there is funding for staff.
- Requested the Standards of Quality be grounded in actual practice.
- Requested the Standards define educational priorities for the future, not yesterday.
(see written comments)

4. Francis Eberle - Virginia Mathematics and Science Coalition

- Expressed support of the recommendation for mathematics specialists as part of the Standards of Quality - recognizing that budgetary support for the specialists statewide may not be possible, it was requested the state provide incentive funding to support districts, particularly in underserved and under resourced communities, to add mathematics specialist positions, and if possible to continue to support districts which already have the position.
- Provided information about the student and teacher impact of math specialists.
(see written comments)

5. Tracy Soforenko - President, Potomac Chapter, National Federation of the Blind of Virginia

- Expressed concern that blind students are struggling to obtain a quality education because teachers for the blind have too large case loads - sometimes 30 to 40 students across counties.
- Expressed concern that blind students may only receive Braille instruction once every two or three weeks; that students receive only 30 minutes of travel instruction a month; and that classroom materials are not accessible as large print or Braille, described pictures, or tactile materials.
- Requested inclusion of the blind in the Standards of Quality, through a teacher/pupil ratio for blind and visually impaired students.
(see written comments)

Chesterfield County - October 17, 2012

The Chesterfield County hearing was held at Meadowbrook High School (4901 Cogbill Road, Richmond, VA 23234). There were 9 speakers and approximately 40 people in attendance.

The speakers below provided the following suggestions to the Virginia Board of Education regarding revisions to the Standards of Quality.

1. Terry Woody - Registered Nurse, Hanover County
 - Provided information about the duties of school nurses including monitoring blood glucose levels, calculating insulin dosages, serving as first responders to emergencies, administering medications, etc.
 - Expressed concern that not all schools have a school nurse on-site every day and that poses a risk to student health and places a burden on teachers and administrators.
 - Provided data related to absenteeism due to student illnesses.
 - Requested the Board to amend the Standards of Quality to provide for funded staffing of a registered nurse in every school building every day. (see written comments)

2. Lori Donovan - Treasurer, Virginia Association of School Librarians; Instructional Specialist for Library Services, Chesterfield County Public Schools
 - Provided information on school libraries and how they have changed - school librarians are teachers; school librarians are collaborative instructional partners with teachers of all disciplines; school librarians level the playing field by providing all students with access to high quality resources.
 - Requested adequate funding for school libraries and requiring appropriate staffing by highly qualified, credentialed school librarians. (see written comments)

3. Meg Gruber - President, Virginia Education Association
 - Provided information about the devastating effect budget cuts are having on students and school professionals.
 - Expressed concern that direct aid to education is below the levels of 2007, and that state funding policy changes since 2008, including changes to the SOQ, add up to \$1.8 billion in lost funding per biennium.
 - Expressed concern that the result of budget cuts has been reduced staff, increased class sizes, reduced course offerings, deferred purchases, and deferred maintenance.
 - Expressed concern that as state support is reduced, the quality of Virginia's schools is highly dependent upon the local wealth of school divisions, leaving students attending high-poverty urban and rural schools are at risk.

- Expressed concern that the state is holding back on providing critical resources that would allow educators to meet the increasing requirements and standards of our state.
 - Expressed concern that Virginia is not a place where the best and brightest teachers will want to start and continue their careers because of lower than average teacher salary.
 - Requested the Board to significantly enhance the level of SOQ funding. (see written comments).
4. Sarah Patnaude - Board member, Richmond Chapter, National Federation of the Blind.
- Expressed concern that blind students are struggling to obtain a quality education because teachers for the blind have too large case loads - sometimes 30 to 40 students across counties.
 - Expressed concern that blind students may only receive Braille instruction once every two or three weeks; that students receive only 30 minutes of travel instruction a month; and that classroom materials are not accessible as large print or Braille, described pictures, or tactile materials.
 - Expressed concern that high school students may only receive one hour of mobility training per quarter, and be placed in classes with students of a large age range, with different degrees of blindness and needs.
 - Requested inclusion of the blind in the Standards of Quality, through a teacher/pupil ratio for blind and visually impaired students. (see written comments)
5. Jackie Jones - Past President, Virginia Academy of School Psychologists; School Psychologist, Prince George County Public Schools
- Discussed the crucial role of school psychologists in public education including completing special education assessments, providing mental health services, providing counseling, providing consultation to teachers and administrators, serving as members of a Crisis Intervention Team, implementing prevention programs, etc.
 - Discussed the training and education required to be a school psychologist.
 - Requested inclusion of school psychologists as essential personnel in the Standards of Quality. (see written comments)
6. Frank Cardella - Chesterfield Education Association; Nationally Board Certified Science Teacher; Parent
- Discussed the critical role education plays as the foundation for priorities of the Commonwealth, such as economic development and transportation.
 - Expressed concern regarding crowded classrooms that don't allow teachers to interact with students in small settings or provide individualized instruction.

- Requested the review of the Standards of Quality to be focused on realistic practices, particularly regarding the JLARC study of SOQ funding, in order to deliver the kinds of services students actually need.

7. Melissa Charnes - Law Fellow, Legal Aid Justice Center's JustChildren Program

- Urged the Board to support the proposed recommendations compiled by the Department after soliciting public comment, including reaffirming the unfunded standards recommended by the Board in previous years, and the recommendation for a study by JLARC.
- Urged the Board to re-examine the needs and impact of lifting the cap on support positions.
- Expressed concern that a lack of emotional and behavioral support translates to lost learning time due to punitive disciplinary practices. (see written comments)

8. Jane Kelly - Teacher, Henrico County Public Schools

- Discussed frustrations of many teachers as they feel overwhelmed, under-paid, under-appreciated, and discouraged.
- Expressed concern that good teachers are leaving the profession because they are discouraged and overwhelmed.
- Expressed frustration that requirements and standards continue to increase, but resources do not.
- Expressed concern regarding the Standards of Learning assessments use of multiple choice questions that don't allow or encourage out-of-the-box thinking.

9. Sonia Smith - Teacher, Chesterfield County Public Schools

- Urged the Board to help teachers by decreasing class sizes and decreasing paperwork that burdens teachers.
- Expressed concern that many teachers want to continue teaching because of their passion for education, but it is becoming harder and harder to be a provider to their families.

Hampton City - October 18, 2012

The Hampton City hearing was held at Bethel High School (1067 Big Bethel Road, Hampton, VA 23666). There were 16 speakers and approximately 40 people in attendance.

The speakers below provided the following suggestions to the Virginia Board of Education regarding revisions to the Standards of Quality.

1. Ericka Daniel - School Psychologist, Newport News Public Schools
 - Requested school psychologists be placed under "essential personnel" in the Standards of Quality.
 - Discussed the role school psychologists play in public schools, specifically how they address the Board's goal to close achievement gaps by improving instruction and learning, supporting students, completing assessments, collaborating to provide appropriate learning and behavioral interventions, and creating safe and positive school climates.
 - Shared statistical analysis of data collected in a large Virginia school division that indicates involvement of the school psychologist is correlated with significant positive change in students.
 - Shared information about the impact of school psychologists - increased student resilience, test scores, appropriate student behaviors, attendance, and positive parent/school interactions; decreased dropout rates, absences, retentions, and referrals for special education services.
(see written comments)

2. Dr. James Roberts - Superintendent, Chesapeake Public Schools
 - Expressed support for the JLARC study to identify the cost of prevailing practices, however, cautioned that previous studies have been done and recommendations made to increase the SOQ funding formula, but the SOQ remains underfunded.
 - Expressed concern regarding funding reductions, now below the minimum foundation. These reductions affect the quality of instructional programs and will drive away quality applicants from the educator profession.
 - Expressed support, on behalf of VASS, for greater flexibility in the implementation of the Standards.
 - Requested restored funding to the levels in 2007-2008 at least.
(see written comments)

3. Joe Burnsworth - Assistant Superintendent in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Virginia Beach City Public Schools
 - Provided examples of obsolete provisions in the Standards of Quality that are no longer relevant.
 - Requested clarity regarding the priorities and to what extent the General Assembly defines those priorities.

- Expressed support for flexibility for local school divisions and provided ideas for increased flexibility.
(see written comments)
4. Dr. Don Robertson - Assistant Superintendent in the Department of Educational Leadership and Assessment, Virginia Beach City Public Schools
- Provided feedback from a workgroup comprised of central office and building level administrators in Virginia Beach.
 - Expressed concern regarding the inadequate level of funding provided to address the increasing mandates in the Standards of Quality, specifically the increasing assessment requirements that require additional costs incurred by the school division, additional course and graduation requirements for students, and additional requirements for staff.
 - Expressed support of the VASS Blueprint, addressing balanced assessments.
 - Expressed support for the JLARC study and legislation to shift the SOQ review from even to odd numbered years.
(see written comments)
5. Mary Keeling - Past President, Virginia Association of School Librarians; Supervisor of Library Media Services, Newport News Public Schools
- Provided information on school libraries and how they have changed - school librarians are teachers; school librarians are collaborative instructional partners with teachers of all disciplines; school librarians level the playing field by providing all students with access to high quality resources.
 - Requested adequate funding for school libraries and requiring appropriate staffing by highly qualified, credentialed school librarians.
(see written comments)
6. Natasha Hubbard - President, Peninsula Chapter, National Federation of the Blind of Virginia
- Expressed concern that blind students are struggling to obtain a quality education because teachers for the blind have too large case loads - sometimes 30 to 40 students across counties.
 - Expressed concern that blind students may only receive Braille instruction once every two or three weeks; that students receive only 30 minutes of travel instruction a month; and that classroom materials are not accessible as large print or Braille, described pictures, or tactile materials.
 - Requested inclusion of the blind in the Standards of Quality, through a teacher/pupil ratio for blind and visually impaired students.
(see written comments)

7. Dr. Jennifer Parish - Superintendent, Poquoson City Public Schools
 - Requested flexibility for school divisions to determine which specific staffing positions are most needed, especially in times of reduced state revenues.
 - Requested the General Assembly to provide funding to support the Standards of Quality since school divisions are held accountable for meeting the Standards.
 - Provided examples of unfunded mandates in the Standards of Quality.
 - Requested that the SOQ be evaluated for their relevance in our current age of globalization and accountability.
(see written comments)

8. Dr. Phillip McNeil - Professor of Mathematics Emeritus, Norfolk State University
 - Expressed support for mathematics specialists.
 - Provided information from the National Science Foundation funded mathematics specialists program that schools in which a math specialist was placed, performed significantly better on SOL assessments, than those schools that did not have math specialists.
 - Requested the General Assembly provide mathematics specialists funding for all k-8 schools in Virginia, or at least provide incentive funding at some level for school divisions that employ math specialists.
(see written comments)

9. Liz Ayers - Registered nurse, Chesapeake City Public Schools
 - Provided information about the duties of school nurses including monitoring blood glucose levels, calculating insulin dosages, serving as first responders to emergencies, administering medications, etc.
 - Expressed concern that not all schools have a school nurse on-site every day and that poses a risk to student health and places a burden on teachers and administrators.
 - Provided data related to absenteeism due to student illnesses and chronic health conditions.
 - Requested the Board to amend the Standards of Quality to provide for funded staffing of a registered nurse in every school building every day.
(see written comments)

10. Robert Heffley - Parent, Hampton City
 - Discussed the treatment and representation of world religions in Virginia curricula and textbooks, specifically, the representation of Islam.
 - Expressed concern that more pages in textbooks are devoted to Islam than any other religion.
 - Requested the Board to establish a standing mechanism to routinely evaluate the treatment of religions in SOL, ensuring that those conducting the evaluations include qualified individuals representing all points of view, and publish the results of any evaluations.

(see written comments)

11. Dr. Joanne Morse - Professor, Hampton University
 - Expressed concern regarding the process the state uses to evaluate and select textbooks used to support Standards of Learning.
 - Discussed a report “Education or Indoctrination? – The Treatment of Islam in 6th through 12th Grade American Textbooks” which examines 38 texts used across the country and cites specific inaccuracies and provides full justifications for the findings.
 - Requested the Board read the report and consider its findings in future text reviews.

(see written comments)
12. Mandy Wrinkle - Volunteer, Legal Aid Justice Center's JustChildren Program
 - Urged the Board to support the proposed recommendations compiled by the Department after soliciting public comment, including reaffirming the unfunded standards recommended by the Board in previous years, and the recommendation for a study by JLARC.
 - Urged the Board to re-examine the needs and impact of lifting the cap on support positions.
 - Expressed concern that a lack of emotional and behavioral support translates to lost learning time due to punitive disciplinary practices.

(see written comments)
13. Patrick Finneran - Corporate and Government Relations, Newport News Public Schools
 - Expressed support for the recommendation to reaffirm support of the Board's Standards of Quality recommendations from prior years that have not yet been adopted or funded by the General Assembly.
 - Expressed support for the recommendation to request a JLARC study regarding realistic funding, especially as STEM education is changing educational needs and practices.

(see written comments)
14. James Schutle - Chesapeake City Public Schools
 - Expressed support for the JLARC study as the only recommendation to revise the Standards of Quality, since other recommendations require funding and the SOQ are already underfunded.
 - Encouraged new sources of funding for public education be considered.
 - Encouraged the Board to take a leadership role in advocating for adequate funding.
15. David Dietrich - citizen, Hampton City
 - Expressed concern that the purpose of the Standards of Quality seems to be establishing administrative requirements, yet the purpose of education

- is to prepare children to be good citizens and competitive upon graduation.
- Expressed concern regarding the applicability and ineffectiveness of the Standards of Learning.

16. Alan Booth - Vice President, Virginia Junior Academy of Science

- Provided information about the Virginia Junior Academy of Science which allows students to formally present original research, and recruits high achieving scholars with demonstrated interest in the pursuit of STEM careers.
- Requested support to recognize the efforts of these science students by establishing the Board of Education Seal of Advanced Science, with specific requirements.
(see written comments)