

# Cumberland County Public Schools



## 2020 Legislative Priorities

*Adopted: January 7, 2020*

Cumberland County Public School Board is committed to seeking positive changes in public education and fostering what is best for students and staff in the Commonwealth of Virginia. There are certain fundamental principles that are required for the success of all proposed changes. These include the full funding of all mandates passed by the General Assembly and required by the Virginia Board of Education. Also, local school boards should have primary authority in the implementation of these mandates and how resources from State Government are utilized at the local level. In addition to these two basic requirements, school divisions are facing some critical needs and issues.

- State Budget:
  - SOQ staffing changes recommended by the State Board and required by the revised SOA's must be accompanied by appropriate state funding in addition to staffing flexibility if qualified applicants cannot be found to fill these added positions. **Removal of the SOQ Support CAP will be critical toward this effort.**
  - Additional state funds for technology and construction/renovations of school facilities are needed to meet SOA requirements and better manage student learning needs.
  - Additional state funds are needed to assist with implementation of new Accreditation requirements (i.e. - chronic absenteeism).
  - Over the last several sessions of the General Assembly, there have been many new training requirements imposed on school divisions (i.e. – seclusion and restraint of students and school safety trainings). Additional state funds are needed at the local level to implement these required trainings.
  - Positions identified in the Standards of Quality should be funded by function (i.e. - curriculum development and support, instructional technology, individual school leadership and student support) rather than individual position title.
- The Shortage of Qualified Teachers - Virginia must appropriate state resources to support school districts to create quality teaching and learning environments that cause individuals to pursue the profession and stay in the profession.
  - A long-range plan to raise teacher salaries above the national average should be developed. VA-\$51,049, National Average - \$60,483 (NEA)

- It is recommended that the State provide funding over the next two biennia to allow localities to provide a teacher salary increase of up to 5% per year.
  - Added state funding is needed for enhanced mentoring programs for new teachers.
- **Student discipline:** The General Assembly and the State Board have identified the importance of providing added social supports for students in reducing student discipline problems and school violence.
  - The General Assembly should provide school divisions with additional funding 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).
  - The General Assembly should provide school divisions with additional funding for local and regional alternative education programs such that alternative education programs are available for elementary and secondary students in every school division.
- **Student Safety:**
  - Added state funding is needed to increase counseling and behavioral assistance to students in school. Funding provided in the current state budget will not meet the new school counselor ratios passed 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.
  - Added state funding is needed to place an SRO/SSO in each school building.
- **Dual Enrollment and the Virginia Community College System:**
  - School divisions and local Community Colleges must have flexibility in setting tuition costs for those courses delivered on-site at the local high school.
  - School divisions need greater flexibility in assigning staff to teach dual enrollment courses at the local high school.
- **Modernizing the Assessment System to Strengthen Virginia's Standards of Learning:**
  - Recognizing and supporting the progress that the State Board has made in this area, the need now shifts to added time and funding to implement these changes.