



## SCHOOL BOARD LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES —2020 GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION—

### FUND 100% OF STATE MANDATES AND PROVIDE K-12 BASIC AID ABOVE THE FY 2020 LEVEL

- Schools cannot maintain the status quo, much less achieve improvement, if basic funding is not increased. The state should increase Standards of Quality (SOQ) funding coming from general fund revenues, appropriated to elementary and secondary education. Currently, RCPS receives funding from the General Assembly for only SOQ positions which makes up around 45% of all of RCPS employees. Full funding of the SOQ, without policy modifications to the formula should be the goal.
- Personnel expenses make up a major portion of our school division costs (from 83% to 87%); the 5% raise for SOQ positions provided by the General Assembly last year was a favorable step in the right direction. Failure to fund realistic raises for teachers means they fall further and further behind the inflation rate. ***The General Assembly should demonstrate the value of current educators and enable our school division to attract and retain talented educators by enabling school divisions to offer adequate pay raises and attractive salaries to new employees.***
- The Support Staff Cap, implemented during the Great Recession, limits local capacity to serve students with special needs, at-risk students, English learners, etc. Positions such as Mental Health Specialists, Instructional Assistants, and other classroom supports are a cost-effective way to put caring adults in the lives of our most needy students. However, the Support Staff Cap arbitrarily excludes the actual cost of educating challenged populations. These vital services can help meet the need of all students and the Support Staff Cap impacts classroom learning for all.

### SUPPORT STATE FUNDING FOR ADDED STUDENT SAFETY MEASURES

- Include an allowance for increasing counseling and behavioral assistance to students in school. Funding provided in the current state budget will not meet the new school counselor ratios passed by 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.
- Include an allowance for placing a school resource officer (SRO) in each school building. Two years ago, RCPS was able to find grant money to place an SRO at Natural Bridge Elementary School. The result has been a safer and better learning environment for students, staff, and parents with a documented dramatic increase in student achievement.

### SUPPORT STATE FUNDING FOR IMPROVEMENT OF STUDENT DISCIPLINE

- The General Assembly and the State Board of Education have identified the importance that providing added social support for students has had 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 often lead to suspension and expulsion (i.e., Alternative Education Programs, Virginia Tiered System of Supports, Restorative Justice, community-based/wrap-around services).
- Across the Commonwealth, student needs are increasing requiring that they be educated in a setting other than the traditional school setting. Increased student needs and discipline issues are forcing local Community Services Boards to place students in private day or residential facilities. Providing more funding for preventative services would many of these needs and allow more students to remain in our local schools.



**DUAL ENROLLMENT & THE VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM**

- Dual Enrollment courses in partnership with local community colleges are an excellent means to allow students to earn college credit while still in high school. This opportunity helps better prepare them for higher education and 21<sup>st</sup> century careers.
- School divisions and local community colleges must have flexibility in setting tuition costs to ensure costs remain affordable for our families. Ideally, appropriate funding should be provided so students can take advantage of Dual Enrollment courses delivered on-site at local high schools with no tuition costs for families.
- Local high schools should have maximum flexibility in establishing the class loads and makeup of dual enrollment courses. Preventing students who are not seeking college credit from participating in the same dual enrollment class as those students that are college credit would prove detrimental to Dual Enrollment programs across the Commonwealth. Should this restriction be mandated, Rockbridge County High School, as well as most other high schools, would not be able to meet the resulting staffing demands ultimately leading to fewer dual enrollment offerings for our students.
- Additional state funds for construction/renovations of school and Career & Technical Education facilities are necessary to better manage student learning needs. Virginia is one of the “best states to do business”, and preparing our students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce is key to strengthening civic life, attracting families, and maximizing the economic development of our community.

**2020-2022 Biennium Comparison of Local Composite Indices**

ROANOKE CITY	.3284
CHESTERFIELD	.3584
AUGUSTA	.3769
ROANOKE COUNTY	.3660
HARRISONBURG	.3537
ROCKINGHAM	.3799
LYNCHBURG	.3668
SALEM	.3641
BOTETOURT	.3975
STAUNTON	.3877
VIRGINIA BEACH	.4082
<b>ROCKBRIDGE</b>	<b>.4506</b>

**BASE THE COMPOSITE INDEX FORMULA ON A LOCALITY’S TRUE ABILITY TO PAY FOR K-12 EDUCATION**

- Replace total adjusted gross income with median adjusted gross income in the formula so that the small number of very wealthy residents do not skew the current index formula misrepresenting our county’s ability to pay.
- *Continue to recognize the need for additional funding through the “At-Risk” add on which takes into account the percentage of enrolled students eligible for free/reduced lunch*; this is a fair indicator of the local poverty level and will improve the accuracy of the index for both large urban and rural areas such as Rockbridge County.

Approved by the RCPS School Board – December 10, 2019