Arlington Public Schools

LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS 2027

INTRODUCTION

The Arlington School Board believes high-quality public schools are fundamental to keeping our local community and Commonwealth strong. The Arlington School Board represents Arlington County and will manage resources, set policies, and make curriculum decisions that are in the best interest of our community.

The Arlington School Board opposes legislation that would impose new unfunded mandates on public schools, including:

> Enacting new indoor air quality standards that impose costs beyond the framework approved in 2025.
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> Fully or partially repealing sovereign immunity, which could significantly increase insurance costs.

The Arlington School Board supports streamlining the requirements for state-mandated teacher training to make them less burdensome on teachers and opposes new teacher training mandates while that process is ongoing.

ASSESSMENTS

The Arlington School Board supports the development of content-area learning assessments in languages other than English that are present to a significant extent in the student population in Virginia.

FUNDING

The Arlington School Board supports the implementation of the recommendations in the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) report on Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula, particularly those that will provide the greatest benefit to jurisdictions across the Commonwealth, including:

> Directing the following changes to the Standards of Quality (SOQ) formula: (i) reinstate the non-personal cost categories removed in FY09 FY10 and (ii) reinstate the federal fund deduction methodology used prior to FY09;

Modifying the SOQ formula to better reflect the actual costs that school divisions face and fully funding this new formula;

Replacing the current SOQ formula calculations for English Learners, including any associated calculations for benefits and payroll taxes under other SOQ accounts, with student-based funding calculations that are based on actual average school division expenditures; and

Replacing the current cost of competing adjustment with a more accurate adjustment based on a Virginia cost of labor index that better accounts for differing labor costs across school divisions in calculating compensation funding through the Standards of Quality formula.

The Arlington School Board supports expanded funding to provide professional staff and services for student mental health needs, including:

Continuing funding for state grants available to schools to provide telehealth services, including mental health;

Developing specific ratios for school psychologists and school social workers, working towards 1 per 500 students;

Continuing funding for state grants for schools to train and provide Youth Mental Health First Aid, Teen Mental Health First Aid, and similar programs to increase the knowledge of school staff and students regarding mental health concerns and helping individuals access relevant resources; and

Lowering the ratio for school counselors to 1 per 250 students.

The Arlington School Board supports increased funding to help school divisions reduce chronic absenteeism, provide more social workers, reduce bullying, and support SLIFE (Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education).

The Arlington School Board opposes any diversion of public education funds to non-public schools including funding lab schools or utilizing tuition tax credits, tax deductions, or vouchers as a means of reimbursing parents for their children's K-12 education expenses.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Arlington School Board supports extending collective bargaining benefits to most public sector workers. Workers have a seat at the table when the decisions are

made that most affect them, which is good for recruitment, retention, and morale. The back-and-forth nature of negotiations has helped APS better meet the needs of our workers. The Arlington School Board requests that any bill expanding public sector collective bargaining not upset the balance that has worked so well at APS:

> Collective bargaining should be specifically about personnel policies, such as wages, benefits, leave, hours, working conditions, and other similar items. Allowing too many topics to be subject to mandatory negotiation could distract school boards from their core mission and make impasses far more likely.
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> Arbitration can be a useful way to resolve differences between parties and help them come to a result. However, binding school divisions to arbitrators' decisions runs afoul of Article VIII, Section 7 of the Virginia Constitution, which states that "The supervision of schools in each school division shall be vested in a school board", as held by the Supreme Court of Virginia in School Board of the City of Richmond v. Parham. Any bill should clarify that school boards have the authority to approve or reject an arbitrator's decision. This is very similar to the statutory process already in place for personnel matters, where a hearing officer recommends to the school board whether to uphold or reject a Superintendent's personnel decisions. Approval or rejection should not be the purview of any other body besides the School Board.
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> Any bill should not make it difficult for a school division to participate in negotiations, arbitration, legal action, or lobbying. School divisions also must be able to provide personally identifiable information about public employees to third parties, including insurance and supplemental retirement providers in order to provide these benefits to our employees.
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> The board set up under such a bill should be evenly balanced between labor and management, with similar selection mechanisms for each.

EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

The Arlington School Board supports allowing school divisions to be agile on educational technology and the developmentally appropriate use of devices. Arlington Public Schools has been leading on this issue, and has been working with teachers, students, and families to find the most appropriate balance on how best to utilize educational technology. Many other school divisions have been doing so as well, and school boards are in the best position to navigate this evolving landscape.

The Arlington School Board supports directing the Department of Education to review educational technology vendors and providing school divisions with its evaluations on which products are recommended and which ones are not.

The Arlington School Board believes that efforts to limit educational technology should be focused on vendors rather than schools. Any regulation should prohibit dishonest practices by vendors and should set expectations for the quality of programs offered to schools.

The Arlington School Board opposes mandates that limit the ability of school divisions to manage their teaching practices.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The Arlington School Board supports directing the Department of Education to work with experts to develop model guidance for the regulation of artificial intelligence in schools, while allowing for innovation and creativity by school divisions to determine how best to navigate its use.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Arlington School Board supports the implementation of the recommendations in the JLARC report on Virginia's K-12 Teacher Pipeline. The recommendations include various ways to reduce barriers to licensure and to admission to higher education teacher training programs.

The Arlington School Board supports increasing evidence-based incentives for potential teacher candidates to enter or re-enter the profession.

The Arlington School Board supports expanding the application of licensure reciprocity for endorsements to a teaching license.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The Arlington School Board supports modifying the state's accountability and accreditation system, the School Performance and Support Framework, to weight growth as heavily as mastery for elementary schools and more closely to mastery for middle schools.

The Arlington School Board also supports accreditation and accountability systems that reflect research regarding the length of time it takes English Learner students to acquire content area academic language skills.

OTHER CRITICAL ISSUES

The Arlington School Board supports policies and practices that protect individual rights and protect students and employees from discrimination due to gender expression, gender identity, sexual harassment, and transgender status.

The Arlington School Board supports current policy regarding eligibility for in-state college tuition for Deferred Action Childhood Arrivals and Temporary Protected Status students and opposes any attempts to modify or curtail this policy.

The Arlington School Board supports legislation to expand universal free meals at schools for all students.

The Arlington School Board opposes requiring schools to audit their libraries, classrooms, or curricula for content or to take away schools' control over their libraries, classrooms, or curricula.