

LWV-VA POSITIONED FOR ACTION, 2017
Education Position, last updated 2003
With Part III (Education Concurrence, 2018) Added

[Complete current position as published in 2017 *LWV-VA POSITIONED FOR ACTION* in black font; added text –**Part III-in blue font**]

EDUCATION

Position in Brief:

Support for state funding for public schools that insures a high quality education with equal educational opportunities for all children, including:

- Full funding for the Standards of Quality and state mandates
- increasing the state's share of education costs;
- funding for half-day pre-kindergarten programs for at-risk children, and full-day kindergarten programs;
- funding some portion of capital costs; and
- improving the funding formula for determining local ability to pay, using it as a basis for distribution of state education funds.

Support a challenging curriculum, high expectations of students and teachers in mastering that curriculum, and appropriate assessments of student achievement for a quality education in the public school system K-12.

Essential curriculum elements include:

- core disciplines (English, Math, Science, History and Social Studies);
- Art, Music, Physical Education, Health, and Foreign Languages;
- analytical skills;
- integrated technology; strong remedial programs;
- programs for at-risk, gifted and special needs students;
- education for students with limited English proficiency, in which emphasis is placed on teaching English; and
- career and technical education.

Support professional education for principals and teachers and on-going staff development; class size appropriate to instructional goals; a safe environment for students and staff; and discipline, preventative programs and a consistently enforced, well-defined system of rules; guidance counseling for academics and support services; and parental and community support and involvement. Support opportunities to select a specific program or school. These opportunities should be based on a system of equity so that all qualified students have equal access.

Elements of a quality education also include: school- based teamwork, goal setting and decision-making, and application of learning to life experiences.

The League's History

According to the 1970 Virginia Constitution, the state must provide quality public school (K-12) education, set Standards of Quality (SOQ), and share the cost with the local governments. As local Leagues studied their own school systems, they questioned whether the formulas to distribute the state monies were fair. In 1979, a state study of financing education in Virginia was adopted. The 1991

Convention adopted a new statewide study on Financing Public Education.

The 1997 Convention approved a study “of the essentials of quality education, including alternatives, initiatives, vouchers, charters, contracts, etc., in the public schools.” The study coincided with new state legislative and administrative initiatives to improve the quality of public schools in Virginia.

In the 1999-2001 bienniums, the LWV-VA Board recommended a review of current state positions. The following position was derived from combining Financing Public Education and the Education positions.

The League’s Position

The League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that state funding for elementary and secondary public schools should insure a high quality education with equal educational opportunities for all children.

PART I: Funding

In order to accomplish this goal, the League supports the following:

Funding for Standards of Quality (SOQ)

- Funding the SOQ by including all actual costs to localities;
- Establishing the SOQ to exceed the average level of practices in school divisions when evidence exists that the average level is inadequate; and
- Adopting a per-pupil cost figure which represents actual costs per pupil for school systems in Virginia.

Local Effort

- Improving the formula for determining the measure of local ability to pay and using it in the distribution of all state school funds;
- Increasing the state's share of the costs of education;
- Providing state funds to local school divisions for capital outlay, using an improved measure of local ability to pay and priorities of educational need; and
- Requiring at least a minimum local effort in funding school costs.

Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten Funding

- Providing state funding for half-day pre-kindergarten programs for all at-risk children; and
- Providing funding for full-day kindergarten programs provided at the option of localities.

Other Funding

- Funding fully the actual costs to local school division of state and federal mandates which are not included in the SOQ;
- Continuing the current methods of financing capital costs by low-interest loans and bonds;
- Continuing state funding of a share of the employer costs in local school budgets for Social Security, retirement, and group life insurance.

We oppose placing a limit on the amount of local education funding which exceeds the cost of state requirements. (1993)

PART II: Quality Education

The League of Women Voters of Virginia believes the following elements are essential to quality education in the public school system, K-12:

A challenging curriculum, high expectations of students and teachers in mastering that curriculum, and appropriate assessments of student achievement. The following elements of the curriculum are essential:

- Four core disciplines: English, Mathematics, Science, History and Social Studies;
- Art, Music, Physical Education, Health and Foreign Languages;
- Analytical skills, application of knowledge and decision-making;
- Technology integrated throughout the curriculum;
- Strong remedial programs implemented at the earliest indication of a student's academic weakness;
- Special offerings for at-risk and gifted students and educational programs for students with special needs, using specified minimum standards;
- Education for students with limited English proficiency, in which emphasis is placed on teaching English, while other course content is presented in English;
- Career and Technical Education.
- Professional education of principals and teachers, and on-going staff development; Class size appropriate to instructional goals; A safe environment for students and staff; and
- discipline, providing preventative programs and a well-defined system of rules, consistently enforced;
- Guidance Counselors for academics and support services; and
- Parental and community support and involvement.
- Opportunities to select a specific program or school. These opportunities should be based on a system of equity so that all qualified students have equal access. (2003)

The LWV-VA believes that the following are important elements of quality education in the public system, K-12:

- School-based teamwork, goal-setting and decision-making;
- Application of learning to life experiences in further education, work, and leisure activities; and
- Incentives, recognition, and awards for both students and teachers. (1999)

Part III, New Section, to be added in 2018 if adopted at LWV-VA 2018 Council, as approved 4/3/18 by LWV-VA board (*text in italics is not part of position*):

PART III: School Choice Options: Standards and Criteria

A. The League of Women Voters believes that K-12 public schools should prevail as the highest priority for school choice in Virginia because public schools

Sustain democracy by being open to all children,

Serve the public and prepare citizens to maintain our government,

Allow the public to vote on school governance and school policy, and

Allow the exchange of ideas and participation in decision-making. (2018)

B. The League of Women Voters believes that Public Funds should go to Public Schools, not to Private Schools.

C. The League of Women Voters of Virginia believes that any programs that may provide public funds for school choice options should be required to meet certain standards and criteria for approval, funding, and operations.

The status, in 2018, of the League's approval for current school choice options or proposals are these:

1. Charter Schools: Support the current (2018) extensive regulations in the Virginia Code for establishment and administration of these Public schools.
2. Tuition Tax Credit Programs: Oppose this type of program, oppose any expansion from the current parameters (2018), and support limits to decrease the loss of revenue for public schools.
3. Vouchers: Oppose vouchers aka "Parental Choice Education Savings Accounts" (ESAs)
4. Virtual Schools: Support Public School Providers with the current (2018) regulations and oversight by the Department of Education and local public school administrators. Oppose profit-making providers.

D. Standards and Approval Criteria for School Choice Options

The League of Women Voter of Virginia believes that these standards and criteria should be required for school choice options.

1. Charter and Virtual Schools

NOTE: All Virginia Charter Schools ARE Public Schools.

- a. Require (the elected) Local School Board Authorization for establishing a Charter School
Include methods for public input.
- b. Require local monitoring of administration and management as in current (2017) VA law.

2. All School Choice Option Requirements

- a. Fair and legal funding. No Public funds shall go to sectarian schools.
 - i. Require Separation of church and state (See U.S. and VA Constitutions)
 - ii. Oppose unconstitutional "Educational Savings Accounts" *aka ESAs, aka Vouchers* that would allow public funds for private schools and schooling, especially sectarian schools.
(See VA Constitution Article VIII, Section 10)
 - iii. Prohibit for-profit operations and profiteering.
- b. Nondiscrimination
 - i. Uphold Federal civil rights law
 - ii. Uphold Virginia non-discrimination law:
Shall not discriminate against any individual on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services:
(Virginia Charter School Law (current in 2018))
 - iii. Ensure equity in choices,
(e.g. Transportation problems can limit participation by low-income students.)
 - iv. Require a non-biased student selection process such as,
 - (a) by lottery,
 - (b) by criteria (for a special purpose school option)
 - (i) need
 - (ii) ability

- (iii) being at or below a certain Federal Poverty Level (FPL) percentage.
 - v. Prevent re-segregation
(Analysis available; see “Controlled choice” (*Brookings*, *TCl.2*)
Brookings: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2017/06/23/integrating-charter-schools-and-choice-based-education-systems/>)
- c. Standards for School Climate
 - i. Require proper and effective student retention processes *in order to prevent easy removal of problem students that would return a student to public school.*
 - ii. Require proper and fair discipline policy (e.g. “Classroom not Courtroom”)
 - iii. Provide health and safety measures by following Virginia laws.
 - iv. Provide “positive”, “proactive” role in meeting needs of children.
- d. Accountability/oversight/transparency (See *NCSL National Conference of State Legislatures.*)
 - i. Require proof of well-maintained, monitored financial/fiscal management system.
Show proof of fiscal soundness and budget accountability with these procedures:
 - (a) Annual audit by independent licensed accounting firm with no personnel from receiving agency/individual,
 - (b) Tracking in the budget of designated gifts,
 - (c) Tracking of public money in the budget by line item,
 - (d) Require Board of Directors of agency receiving funds to be legally responsible for ensuring that all funds are used as designated.
 - ii. Require open meetings and public access to records.
 - iii. Evaluate periodically with minimum frequency established.
 - iv. Report attendance often, track students’ participation and completion of program.
 - v. Assess student achievement in all schools and report to Virginia Department of Education.
 - vi. Establish method and parameters for closing, discontinuing or denying recertification.
 - vii. Comply with Federal requirements including the *ADA*, *IDEA*, *Titles I, VI, IX*, *FAPE*, *ESSA*) *FAPE: 2010* <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html>
 - viii. Notify parents, prior to enrollment, of any loss of rights protection (*e.g. for students with disabilities. (See GAO report and COPAA .)*)
- e. Credentialed and qualified teachers; Personnel support
 - i. Maintain adequate number of personnel – in both “brick-and-mortar” and virtual schools.
 - ii. Provide Human Resource quality for employee pay, benefits, grievance processes.
 - iii. Provide a fair pay scale; Incentives to succeed not based on monetary bonus.
 - iv. Require continuing professional education and re-certification.
 - v. Require substantial initial mentoring of teachers.
 - vi. Require background checks (of all personnel).

3. Virtual Schools – Public, charter, and private

- a. Require robust Virginia Department of Education oversight, accreditation, and accountability
Follow current (2018) **M**ulti-division **O**nline **P**rovider Guidelines. (*MOP*) *Guidelines at VDOE*
- b. Require best student to teacher ratio. (Currently at least 150:1 or better for high schools.)
- c. Require in-person monitoring of testing for validation, accountability, reporting.
- d. Require method to determine actual time at computer, to prevent signing-in and leaving.
- e. Assure integrity and purpose of providers. Motive must not be for profit.

f. Require counseling that meets the Virginia Standards for Academic, Career, and Personal/ social School Counseling

- i. Academic counseling, that assists students and their parents to acquire knowledge of the curricula choices available to students, to plan a program of studies, to arrange and interpret academic testing, and to seek post-secondary academic opportunities;
- ii. Career counseling, that helps students to acquire information and plan action about work, jobs, apprenticeships, and post-secondary educational, and career opportunities;
- iii. Personal/social counseling, that assists students to develop an understanding of themselves, the rights and needs of others, how to resolve conflict and to define individual goals, reflecting their interests, abilities and aptitudes.

g. Require records and reports of amount of teachers' instruction and assessment time.

h. Assure fair funding statewide

Payment to MOP should be based on per pupil Standard of Quality (SOQ) of the student's resident jurisdiction; not the current (2018) practice that pays the MOP based on the per pupil SOQ of the school jurisdiction where the MOP has been established.

4. Non-Public schools that receive specific public funds

a. Assure that a Tuition Tax Credit program is well-managed.

(Virginia currently has a tax credit scholarship program: Education Improvement Scholarship Credit Program (EISTCP). (LWVUS opposes Tuition Tax Credits.)

b. Assure that a Tuition Tax Credit program is not a fiscal detriment to public schools.

c. Limit or oppose the Virginia Education Improvement Scholarship Tax Credit Program (EISTCP).

(Maximum scholarship amount per SOQ available online at VDOE.)

d. Support lowering EISTCP annual donation cap and/or lowering the percent credit allowed.

e. Prohibit private schools that may receive public funds from using the funds for religious training.

f. Prohibit establishing Educational Savings Accounts (ESAs) or other voucher-like programs where families receive local school funds for private education purposes.

As approved by LWV-VA Board, April 3, 2018