



THE VOICE of BUSINESS

June 8, 2020

Dear President Gecker, members of the Board and Dr. Lane,

The Virginia Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) has been a strong supporter of the required course in economics and personal finance (EPF) from its inception. The EPF Standards of Learning are essential life skills that will serve students well throughout their lives, regardless of their future vocation. The content provides students with a foundational understanding of our free-market system. Students learn how businesses operate and individuals participate in our global economic system.

For students to gain the knowledge and skills contemplated in this course, it is essential that they have a knowledgeable EPF teacher. Thus, the Chamber supports efforts to ensure teachers who are new to teaching the EPF course have an educational background in the content. The proposal from the Add-On Endorsement for Economic and Personal Finance Working Group provided minimal, but appropriate, educational standards for new EPF teachers. I hope you will act favorably to that proposal, which requires the equivalent of 12 semester hours. This is essentially four courses--two in personal finance and two in economics.

I understand that there might be concern about the Working Group's recommended number of required courses. If the Board considers reduced course work for new EPF teachers, we recommend that you consider the reduction be made in the number of personal finance courses required. While financial literacy is as important as economic literacy, teachers are more likely to have some experience in this area even if they have not taken a course. However, this is not the case for economics where teachers need to understand the fundamental principles of microeconomics and macroeconomics.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. We appreciate the Board's work in preparing students for our future economy.

Sincerely,

*Keith Martin*

Keith Martin

Executive Vice President & General Counsel  
Virginia Chamber of Commerce

## June 2020 – Public Comment Received by the Virginia Board of Education

President Gecker:

Please consider these comments submitted by me on behalf of the Virginia Council on Economic Education regarding a proposal for creating an Add-on Endorsement for Teaching Economics and Personal Finance which I believe will be on your June 18th agenda.

We fully support and appreciate Dr. Lane and the Board seeking some meaningful criteria for those who teach this course. We fully support existing teachers being grandfathered. But, for many years we have recognized the need for some standards to promote teacher competency for those new to teaching this course. Too often we've heard of teachers being asked to teach this course with no background in economics or personal finance and their discomfort in doing so. We also support the goal of having greater flexibility for those who can teach the course, but not at the expense of teacher competency.

The proposal submitted to you for First Review in May was initially developed by a Working Group representing all interests and also supported by ABTEL. It was a compromise that sought to balance what the majority of teachers need to gain a minimum competency to teach the important basics in the EPF course while also keeping the requirements as minimal as possible and allowing for flexibility through non-credit courses.

VCEE can support a further reduction for the personal finance content by reducing the six semester hours to three semester hours (or, alternatively a 45-hour non-credit course) as Dr. Lane suggested. However, I believe it is **really important to keep the economics at six semester hours** (with the ability to substitute three semester hours with a 45-hour non-credit course) as in the current proposal from ABTEL. To ensure that teachers are exposed to all of the economics content covered in the EPF SOL, they need a course in both microeconomics and macroeconomics. I'm not aware of any university which offers both in a single course.

Several research studies have found that teachers need four or more economics courses to achieve significant gains in student learning. As someone who majored in economics, I'm sure you can appreciate that reducing the requirement to three semester hours will, by all accounts, be below what teachers need for minimal competency to cover the micro and macroeconomics concepts in the EPF course. This won't benefit students or be fair to teachers who are asked to teach it. With a reduction in the personal finance requirement, the EPF Add-on proposal would only require nine semester hours. This is more than reasonable and substantially below the 12 to 15 college semester hours that seems standard for most Add-on Endorsements.

The EPF course is designed to cover the basic concepts that *all* students need to be well-informed consumers, citizens, savers and investors, and successful employees in our economy. Reducing the EPF Add-on proposal to only require six semester hours sends the wrong message about the value you place on students learning the important life skills in this course. We would recommend no change at this time rather than establishing the criteria this low.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further. Thank you.

Dan Mortensen, President & CEO  
Virginia Council on Economic Education

## June 2020 – Public Comment Received by the Virginia Board of Education

Comments to the Virginia Board of Education re. EPF Add-on Endorsement

June 3, 2020

President Gecker, members of the Board and Dr. Lane – My name is Dan Mortensen, and I am President of the Virginia Council on Economic Education. As many of you know, the Council is a non-profit organization which seeks to ensure that *all* students graduate from high school economically and financially literate. We work toward this goal by being a resource for teachers and school divisions. Through our affiliated university-based centers for economic education, we provide professional development, classroom resources, and programs for K-12 teachers to assist them in teaching these important subject to their students.

On behalf of VCEE, we applaud you and the Department of Education for pursuing an add-on endorsement to teach economics and personal finance at the high school level. Virginia is a leader in its efforts to have our students graduate economically and financially literate and has strong Standards of Learning for Economics and Personal Finance—currently, and even more so with some changes being proposed to the Standards.

For students to benefit from these strong SOLs, they need knowledgeable teachers. Teachers need to have this knowledge and understanding themselves before they can effectively teach their students.

We believe the proposal from ABTEL presented at your May 7<sup>th</sup> meeting was a positive step in that direction.

We would have preferred a proposal which required teachers **who are new** to teaching Economics and Personal Finance to earn more semester hours than the six in economics. Research shows that many teachers will need more preparation to effectively teach the micro and macroeconomics concepts in the course. But we also recognize the importance of not setting the bar too high and creating a teacher shortage. Thus we supported that initial proposal as an appropriate compromise which came from the Working Group with a broad array of members and also ABTEL. This includes support for the implementation period and grandfathering those teachers currently teaching the course.

In an effort to make the requirements to obtain an EPF Add-on Endorsement as reasonable as possible for teachers, and in deference to Dr. Lane's suggestion, we can further agree to reduce the requirement to three semester hours in personal finance and allow a teacher to substitute a non-credit course of 45 hours as described in the proposal endorsed by ABTEL.

**However, we cannot support a reduction of the six semester hours for economics and urge you to keep this at the level proposed by the Working Group and ABTEL. We believe it would be better not to move forward with a new credential if it only requires three semester hours for economics.**

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To ensure that teachers are exposed to all of the economics content covered in the EPF SOL, they need a course in microeconomics and in macroeconomics. I'm not aware of any university which offers both in a single course.

While one goal of adopting an Add-on Endorsement for EPF is to allow greater flexibility so that more teachers can teach this course, I hope we don't lose sight that teacher competency is also a key goal. Research studies have found that teachers need four or more courses (12 semester hours) to achieve significant gains in **student learning**. A requirement of only three semester hours will, by all accounts, be below what teachers need for minimal competency to cover the micro and macroeconomics concepts in the EPF course. This won't benefit students or seem fair to teachers who are asked to teach it.

With a reduction in just the personal finance requirement, the EPF Add-On proposal would only require nine semester hours. Considering that this Add-On Endorsement covers two separate bodies of knowledge (economics and personal finance), this is substantially below the 12 to 15 semester hours that seem standard for most Add-on Endorsements. Journalism and Speech Communications require 15 semester hours each, and Gifted Education requires 12, to cite some examples. Changing the EPF Add-On proposal to require only six hours, in total, sends the wrong message about the value we place on students learning the life skills in this course.

Since the inception of the EPF course, VCEE and its network of university-based centers have played a key role in assisting EPF teachers with both the content knowledge and effective hands-on ways they can teach it effectively. Since 2010, we have served thousands of teachers with Economics Institutes (both online and face to face) and Personal Finance Institutes, as well as other programs. All are provided at no charge to teachers because of generous contributions from the private sector, which fully understands the value of this education. **We are committed to continuing to provide this professional development, assisting new teachers who seek certification with the add-on endorsement, and providing ongoing assistance to all teachers.**

Taught well, Virginia's economics and personal finance class will provide students with essential life skills that will benefit them regardless of their future vocation. This education helps to level the playing field by ensuring that all students are exposed to valuable economic concepts and useful financial knowledge and skills. It helps in developing productive employees and entrepreneurs, wise consumers and savers, and informed citizens.

Again, thank you very much for your consideration.

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Dear Mr. Gecker,

I am pleased to hear you are using a data driven and science-based approach to determine when schools can safely reopen. As a physical therapist trained in evidence-based practice at VCU, working at a local hospital with COVID-19 patients, I believe strongly in using science and data when making crucial decisions regarding public safety. From my personal experience, along with other fellow colleagues who work for various local healthcare systems, the overwhelming majority of patients we see fall into the high-risk category specified by the CDC. According to our own Virginia Department of Health data, we have experienced zero deaths in children under the age of 19, with a hospitalization rate between 0.7-0.8% in children.<sup>1</sup> These numbers do not justify keeping children out of the classroom when they have a very low risk of contracting and transmitting the disease.

There have been a few recent studies showing children are not the “super spreaders” we might have initially expected. In the French Alps, a 9 year old boy testing positive for COVID-19 with mild symptoms unknowingly came into contact with 172 people while staying at three different ski chalet schools and none of these individuals were believed to have contracted COVID-19 from this boy.<sup>2</sup> In Australia, 18 confirmed cases in 15 schools resulted in only two additional transmissions among 881 close contacts. One of those cases was in a primary school and the other in a high school and in either case, no teachers or staff members contracted the virus from their students.<sup>3</sup> In Iceland, they have “not found a single instance of a child infecting parents.”<sup>4</sup> Based on five weeks’ worth of data in Denmark, officials are stating they have seen no negative effects among the children or society in general due to the reopening of schools.<sup>5</sup> I know these are just a few small studies, but these results are promising.

Additionally, there are a growing number of studies that show a negative impact on student achievement when K-12 students move to online formats. Student and teacher morale is lower, with more than a fifth of students not participating in school. Furthermore, there is a higher truancy rate in families with lower income.<sup>6</sup> The L.A. Times reported that 15,000 of the students in their community “disappeared” and about 40,000 (1/3 of their student body) were not in daily contact with their teachers.<sup>7</sup> I believe this is partly due to a lack of resources such as high speed internet and online devices. There is a growing concern that these children will fall behind, especially in subjects such as math. Children thrive on schedules and routines and many working parents cannot provide an environment conducive for online learning because they are struggling just to make ends meet. We should never underestimate the impact of our teachers to educate and nurture our children as they invest and build relationships with each child. This is severely hampered when we move to online education. It may be effective at the collegiate level, but much less so in elementary school. So much of

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved 20 May 2020 from [www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/)

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved 20 May 2020 from [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8237633/Children-dont-pass-coronavirus-French-boy-did-not-spread-virus-172-people.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8237633/Children-dont-pass-coronavirus-French-boy-did-not-spread-virus-172-people.html)

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved 20 May 2020 from [www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/children-may-not-be-coronavirus-super-spreaders-australian-study-1.4923748](http://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/children-may-not-be-coronavirus-super-spreaders-australian-study-1.4923748)

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved 20 May 2020 from [www.nationalreview.com/corner/icelandic-study-we-have-not-found-a-single-instance-of-a-child-infecting-parents/](http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/icelandic-study-we-have-not-found-a-single-instance-of-a-child-infecting-parents/)

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved 30 May 2020 from [www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-denmark-reopening/reopening-schools-in-denmark-did-not-worsen-outbreak-data-shows-idUSKBN2341N7](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-denmark-reopening/reopening-schools-in-denmark-did-not-worsen-outbreak-data-shows-idUSKBN2341N7)

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved 21 May 2020 from [www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/04/10/national-survey-tracks-impact-of-coronavirus-on.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/04/10/national-survey-tracks-impact-of-coronavirus-on.html)

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved 21 May 2020 from [www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-03-30/coronavirus-los-angeles-schools-15000-high-school-students-absent](http://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-03-30/coronavirus-los-angeles-schools-15000-high-school-students-absent)

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what is taught in the earliest educational years is learned by being present in the classroom. These skills include sharing, working in teams, organizational skills, respect for authority, rewards and consequences, and learning and practicing self-discipline and self-control.

Furthermore, I would argue that the socialization aspect of school is just as important as the academic component and by continuing with an online education, we are robbing these children of the ability to develop the critical skills they need to be successful in life. I say all of this as a mom of a rising 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grader who only has to work part-time; which then affords me the time to teach and nurture my children while providing a safe and loving environment suited to their basic needs. However, I am not naïve to believe that our family setup is the norm for all children. There are many recent instances where other kids are being subjected to less than ideal environments, ranging from a lack of food to higher rates of child abuse and neglect.<sup>8</sup> While volunteering at the Chesterfield County Food Bank multiple days per week during the pandemic, I have noticed more and more struggling families coming to have one of their most basic needs met. In recent cases, the total distribution has been up to three times the pre-pandemic level.

Moreover, the mental health of our kids is in jeopardy the longer they remain isolated and unable to see their friends, play sports, go on field trips, participate in art and music, along with the myriad of other fun and exciting things occurring throughout a normal school year. To put it simply, there is just no substitute for time spent in the classroom. Mental health experts are already reporting increasing anxiety, depression, and suicides which will continue to worsen if these children do not get back into the classroom soon.<sup>9</sup> As a parent and health care professional, I urge you to reopen schools on time this September. In closing, I ask you to carefully consider the long-term consequences for the children and our communities before you make your decision.

Respectfully,

Angie Royster, DPT

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<sup>8</sup> Retrieved 21 May 2020 from [www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642\(20\)30109-7/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642(20)30109-7/fulltext)

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved 21 May 2020 from [www.reliefweb.int/report/world/children-risk-lasting-psychological-distress-coronavirus-lockdown-save-children](http://www.reliefweb.int/report/world/children-risk-lasting-psychological-distress-coronavirus-lockdown-save-children)

## June 2020 – Public Comment Received by the Virginia Board of Education

To: The Virginia Board of Education

Copied:

Dr. James F. Lane, Superintendent of Public Instruction, VDOE

Dr. Samantha Hollins, Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction, VDOE

From: Carter Melin, Parent of a 16 year old child with Autism

Regarding: IDEA Legal Counsel State Policy Call to Action

I am writing to the Virginia Board of Education to express a call to action regarding legal counsel, based on years of personal conflict with the Norfolk City Public Schools regarding my child under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This law is Federal, and is written to be administered only by the State Education Agency (SEA), which is the VDOE, and the Local Education Agency (LEA), which is the Norfolk City Public Schools, in the case of my child.

The Norfolk City Public Schools do have an elected School Board, and this Board does hire a Superintendent who administers the division. However, the legal counsel pertaining to all IDEA administration, including disputes with parents, is not paid for by the Norfolk City Public Schools, nor is it accounted for in the Board's Budget. Rather, the legal counsel for these matters is provided by the Norfolk City Council under their budget. My experienced view, as a parent, is that the legal counsel for the Norfolk Schools, therefore, has greatly diminished obligation and responsibility to the children under IDEA, but is rather, responsible to the City of Norfolk, which is not an Educational Agency. This arrangement of the School division and City Council actually relieves the School Board and Superintendent of responsibilities for conflicts, litigation, and even policy, as they have no hiring or financial responsibility to the process.

I see this as the School Board Shirking their elected responsibility to take ownership of crucial IDEA legal counsel, and also as a conflict of interest on the part of any attorney who was hired by an outside party to serve the Norfolk Schools in Due Process Hearings. Furthermore, there is no financial incentive, whatsoever, for the School Board to resolve conflicts, as the legal cost is fully provided by an outside source. This issue has been raised by me and others locally, and will not apparently be changed.

Therefore, I am calling on the Virginia Board of Education to take action to mandate that Virginia School Divisions, as a state policy, must hire, employ, and retain their own legal counsel for the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act. I would suggest that this could be done legislatively, as well. Please use conflict of interest as a component to this matter. I know that this policy is generally utilized by many localities already, but that it does not seem to be mandated by the VDOE, the Commonwealth of Virginia, or the US DOE. In the case of my locality, this policy would be necessary to implement change.

I would expect, under this proposal, that larger divisions to retain a full time attorney, and that the smaller divisions would retain outside Attorneys or firms on an as needed basis.

These legal disputes need to have a financial cost to both parties to prevent unnecessary lengthy conflicts that only serve to erode trust in the division and harm the children.

If this is not a State mandate, it will not happen in my locality, ever.

Thank You for your interest, and I am always free to discuss why I am proposing this as a necessary change.

Sincerely,

Carter Melin

Good morning,

I am writing to you as a very concerned parent. I lose sleep every night thinking about how my 3 children (K, 2nd, 5th) will be learning under the current guidelines of the government. It absolutely horrifies me to think my kids will not be able to hug their teachers or their friends. It deeply saddens me that my little Kindergartner (along with every other Kindergartner) have to go through this scary environment of being 6 feet apart, teachers wearing masks, no lunches with their friends, possibly very limited recess or "play" time. I know there are multiple studies on how much better kids learn with hands on approaches, learning in groups, problem solving in groups, working in teams, touching, feeling, etc. Extracurriculars, recess, and sports are also critical to the physical and emotional wellbeing of children and have also been studied to have a positive impact on children's development and education. How are we expecting our children to be and do their best when these things are being taken away from them? I have noticed already that my kids are addicted to electronics more than ever before, they are more withdrawn and don't even want to see any of their friends, much less getting them to do any schoolwork is a complete nightmare! We have had multiple screaming matches, temper tantrums from frustration, anger, sadness, etc which is hurting our family and the relationships I have with my children beyond measure. I cannot imagine what our family will look like if this continues into the next school year or countless others that I know are struggling much worse than we are. I'm begging you to take into account the mental health effects on children if they do not go back to a normal school setting for in-person instruction this fall.

**Secondly**, I would love to know how the districts are planning on making sure that every child receives the same quality of instruction if the schools decide on the "hybrid" model and have 2 days they will need to learn from home? How do working parents do this? Are they expected to pay for child care, or nannies that are also qualified in helping with school work? What if they can't afford to do this? It seems to me this increases the disparity between the rich and the poor, and not to mention the disparity between different ethnicities? I would also like to point out that in many cases, it's the mothers that are the ones that are likely to have to quit their jobs or find new ones that are more flexible because they are typically the ones responsible for the overall well being of the children. How is any of this fair when the data shows there have been 0 deaths in the state of VA for children under 20? A new study also came out that says that children are not spreading the virus! <https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/world/no-child-known-to-have-passed-on-coronavirus-to-adults-global-study-finds/ar-BB13qj2t?ocid=sf&fbclid=IwAR0-K9ahqZ80eKrQz1GyXwnsQiTTsD1yarQSOwBYisK4UGF58wXqoxGrFBM>

**Thirdly**, It is absolutely imperative that a new survey goes out to all parents from their specific county's school districts. For example, I'm a CCPS parent, I want a survey regarding the opening of CCPS and parents of Henrico County need a survey from HCPS about the opening of their schools. The PTA survey that was sent out a couple of weeks ago had some major flaws. I would like to point out that 1) Not everyone received

the survey, 2) Parents of private schools were not allowed to fill out the survey. Their opinions and needs matter too! 3) The questions were extremely skewed and very vague and did not offer all possible options for parents to choose from. **Because of these errors, I think it is absolutely imperative to send out a new survey to the parents of CCPS ( and every other district) asap and to get as much parent and teacher feedback before any major decisions are made.** I hope you agree or you shouldn't be representing us.

**Additionally,** I propose that school boards in every county take the simplest approach to going back to school. This seems to be the most fair and equitable way for students, families, and businesses. Here is a general outline of the plan:

- 1) Parents will opt-in or opt-out for enrolling their children for in-person instruction with mostly normal circumstances with the exception of the following: temp checks before entering the building, a health dedicated team and isolation center for potential sick children and staff, frequent hand washing, hand sanitizer in classrooms where sinks and wash stations are not available, and nightly cleaning of the school.
- 2) If parent's opt-out, whatever their reason, then they will enroll their child to a virtual class with a virtual teacher. They will also have the option to re-enroll for in-person classroom in January should circumstances change.
- 3) For parents who opt-in, school will be as it was (with exception of what was mentioned above) and students get the education they so desperately need in a safe, loving, social, vibrant environment.
- 4) High risk staff/teachers - also opt-in or opt-out. For those that opt-out, they should be given the opportunity to be a virtual teacher to the students that need virtual learning. If there are more teachers than needed for the virtual learning, then they should be able to take paid leave (with a doctors note) until an effective treatment or vaccine becomes available. Other staff members that are not teachers, should have the same options, and I'm sure the virtual teachers could use help with lesson plans and other virtual jobs.
- 5) Transportation - after you get the results on who opt-in and who also needs transportation from the survey I hope you are sending out, then you will know what transportation gaps or hurdles you need to overcome or address. I'm hoping that in the zip codes that are more affluent, you won't need as many busses because parents are more likely to drive their kids to school, therefore opening up more busses to other schools who rely more on transportation. I know this plan is a broad overview, and there may be some cons to it, BUT I have spoken to multiple people (some education directors and teachers and of course parents) and they all agree, that this seems to be the least complicated, fairest solution to almost everyone.

Thank you for taking the time to read my message, I hope the school boards across VA will do the right thing and help our kids get back to in-person instruction, in an environment that they can thrive in! Not only because of the detrimental health effects it will cause them if they don't, but also for the parents who need to get back to work, for

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the businesses that need their workers back, and the parents who can't afford to homeschool or pay for additional care if there is any virtual learning. All parents should have the choice to do what is best for their family. Please don't hold our children hostage when this virus doesn't affect them.

**\*\*\* Be prepared for an uprising from parents all over the state. The Governor has overstepped his boundaries and we the people are not going to tolerate this. We will be at every board meeting, we will take our kids out of public school, we will peacefully protest. We are fighting for our children's future, their health, their education. Why are you not fighting with us???**

Thank you,

Jessica Elmendorf  
Parent of Robious Elementary in Midlothian.

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Dear Members of the Virginia Board of Education,

We are the parents of a rising third grader and a rising seventh grader and live in Fairfax County, Virginia. As concerned Virginians, we have been following Governor Northam's phased plans to reopen schools in Virginia.

We hope that Virginia continues to see a steady decline in the number of COVID-19 cases, and that by the end of the summer, schools around the state will be phase 3, ready to open their doors to all students.

We would like, however, to express a few of our concerns, which we hope you might be able to address:

- The CDC recommends that "Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes."
  - What measures will schools be taking to ensure adequate ventilation when using cleaning products in order to protect the teachers, custodial staff, and students?
  - How will instruction be impacted with teachers or custodial staff cleaning in between classes?
  - Are you taking into consideration possible allergies to cleaning product ingredients affecting teachers, custodial staff and students, especially with increased use? Will less harsh but effective options be explored?
  
- Staggered schedules and limited number of students on the bus, along with Virginia requiring that each school district maintain an online platform for distance learning (for at-risk children or teachers as well as in case we need to return to Phase 1), as well as an increase in the number of cleaners/disinfectants to be purchased imply additional costs for the school district in a climate where Fairfax County has seen its FY 21 budget reduced by \$67 million.
  - How will these additional costs impact the quality of instruction for students?
  - Will teachers have enough time for instruction? Will teachers receive adequate compensation for the extra time they put forth?
  
- Although we fully understand the need to keep everyone safe, we are concerned with the psychological and mental well-being of students. School plays an important role in allowing children learn how to relate to peers and adults, explore friendships and romantic relationships:
  - Will elementary age students be allowed to socialize? In what context? Will recess be allowed for elementary age students?
  - Will students be allowed to participate and interact in extracurricular activities?

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- Will secondary students have the opportunity to socialize? In what contexts?
- There is also mention of daily health screenings for staff, teachers, and students.
  - Given that COVID-19, just as other viruses, has an incubation period for at least 5 days, up to several weeks, how will taking a person's temperature reveal whether or not they are harboring the virus?
  - Are there other measures the schools are planning on taking for these daily health screenings?
  - Who will be conducting these daily health screenings? Nurses? Members of the staff? How will a person's health privacy be maintained? How will consent be obtained from a minor's legal guardian/parent?
  - What happens if consent is withdrawn from getting these health screenings?
  - How will the data collected from these daily health screenings be stored and used? Who will have access to it?

We do understand the need for safety and the need to decrease community spread of COVID-19, but we are also concerned about our children's long-term physical and psycho-social health and their learning environment in a world that will have to contend with this and other viruses for a long time to come.

We thank you in advance for considering our questions, and look forward to a response.

Best regards,  
Ms. Rajae Nami and Mr. Badr Chawki

## June 2020 – Public Comment Received by the Virginia Board of Education

Dear Virginia Board of Education,

I am an elementary teacher in Northern Virginia. My local school system is working to assure its policies and practices are anti-racist. The past two years they have really focused their work on equity. While these steps make me hopeful for change I wanted to reach out to make sure that the Department and Board of Education of Virginia are sending all school systems a clear message and directive on addressing racism.

In reflecting on some of our current policies and examining our system for discrimination I have some questions and suggestions for our education systems to examine and consider.

- What steps will we take to teach and educate students and staff on being anti-racist?
- What steps will we take to look at our systems of how we identify students for additional services: Advanced Academics or Gifted and Talented? SPED?
- Will there be clearly defined consequences for students and staff who display racist behavior or language? Will there be specific consequences for repeat offenders?
- How can school systems work to hire staff that better represent their communities? How can we recruit and hire more teachers and staff that are Black, Hispanic, and Asian?
  
- We have mandated lessons for Constitution Day and expectations for Veterans Day, we should add mandated lessons and expectations for Black History Month.
- Directed by Governor Northam, our social studies standards are being re-examined. My school system took a hard look at 4th Grade Virginia Studies units to make sure students learned about multiple voices and perspectives of historical events. The Social Studies standards and curriculum need to be reviewed for ALL grade levels. There are many units across grade levels that only provide a eurocentric or white perspective of history.
- Funding for classroom and school libraries to have more diverse books. Students need representation in the literature available to them.

Thank you for taking the time to read and reflect on my email and suggestions. I'm glad that our Virginia school systems are working to do better and to serve our communities better. I look forward to seeing what our state can commit to as it works to be an anti-racist system that represents and serves all students.

Diana Grossman

**June 2020 – Public Comment Received by the Virginia Board of Education**

Written Comment - Proposed Revisions to the Suicide Prevention Guidelines

I would like to commend the Virginia Board of Education for their collective work to update and revise the Suicide Prevention Guidelines. Through our local suicide prevention efforts, I offer the following suggestions:

- Add a definition of Community Services Board (CSB) to the glossary [Community Services Board/Behavioral Health Authority function as the single points of entry into publicly funded mental health, substance use disorder, and developmental services, defined in § 37.2-100 of the Code of Virginia. CSBs are service providers, advocates, and community educators.]
  
- Add language to encourage local partnerships between school divisions and Community Services Boards that extend past referrals for evaluation and treatment. (CSBs are referenced on page 8, second paragraph under Threat Assessments and procedures for referrals; page 52 under Lead agency for youth suicide prevention; and page 54 under Threat assessment teams and oversight committees – procedures for referrals.)
  - o CSBs offer suicide prevention services to include gatekeeper trainings (Mental Health First Aid, Youth Mental Health First Aid, ASIST, SafeTalk, etc.), educational resources, presentations, and lethal means safety devices.
  
  - o CSBs often have staff trained for crisis debriefing and support that can be utilized following an attempt or death by suicide.

Thank you for your consideration.

**Michelle Wagaman**, Prevention Services Coordinator

Mental Health First Aid and ASIST Instructor

Understanding ACEs and CRI Course 1 & 2 Instructor

REVIVE! Trainer and Instructor

Lock and Talk Virginia Founding Member

Rappahannock Area Community Services Board

10825 Tidewater Trail, Fredericksburg, VA 22408

## June 2020 – Public Comment Received by the Virginia Board of Education

To: The Virginia Board of Education

Copied:

VDOE Superintendent Dr. James F. Lane  
VDOE Assistant Superintendent Dr. Samantha Hollins  
Norfolk City Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Sharon Byrdsong  
Norfolk City Public School Board Chair Dr. Noelle Gabriel

From: Carter Melin, parent of a 16 year old Norfolk resident child with a Disability

Regarding: Recently published VDOE Special Education Performance Report Statistics

Good Day, Virginia Board of Education,

I have just briefly reviewed the regional and state VDOE Special Education Performance Reports, which I do every year. Rather than sharing that data with my Norfolk City Public School Board members, I am going to just send it to you directly, because my local efforts haven't changed trajectories for my child, my district, or my region.

The South East Virginia Cities I have noted below are known regionally as the South Hampton Roads Cities, and are the immediate peers of my city of Norfolk.

The three alarming statistical trends I see are as follows:

**1. Virginia has a low IDEA graduation rate for a Standard Diploma, all South Hampton Roads Cities underperform that State rate, and my city of Norfolk, Virginia again has a disgracefully low graduation rate for IDEA, at 37% vs. the 70% for the USA and 61% for Virginia.**

Please see chart #1 for that data.

**2. Virginia has the 2nd highest US State rate of 10 day suspensions under IDEA. Therefore, other than North Carolina, Virginia is the most likely State to suspend a child for the crucial 10 day total for IDEA children.** Please see chart #2 for that data.

**3. 88% of Virginia School divisions do not excessively give 10 day suspensions by race or ethnicity under IDEA.**

**80% of South Hampton Roads Cities do excessively give 10 day suspensions by race or ethnicity under IDEA.**

Please see chart #3 for that data.

Since there are not State Board of Education members and State SEAC members from South Hampton Roads Cities, I will add a personal opinion that Low state and local graduation rates, excessive statewide suspensions, and excessive regional suspensions by race all look like an unfair treatment of children with disabilities served under IDEA to me.

My statistical data are listed below, and their core data is enclosed as attachments, including from VDOE, and part of the 41st Annual Report to Congress on the implementation of IDEA:

1. Graduation Statistics for IDEA (From VDOE Reports and the 41st annual ARC for IDEA):

United States	70.5
Virginia	61.24
Chesapeake	59.56
Virginia Beach	54.67
Suffolk	51.56
Portsmouth	49.47
Norfolk	37.62

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2. 10 day Suspension/Expulsion number per 10,000 children and students served (41st annual ARC for IDEA):

North Carolina 193 (Highest suspensions State in the U.S.)

Virginia 174 (Second Highest suspensions State in the U.S.)

United States 73 (Nationwide average)

3. Divisions with significant discrepancy by race or ethnicity, in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with IEP's:

Virginia, Statewide: 12.12%

South Hampton Roads: 80.00%

(Chesapeake, Virginia Beach, Portsmouth, Norfolk all do, under VDOE indicator 4b, Suffolk does not)

Hopefully, this can somehow be of use to Board policy, and is submitted in good faith.

Thank You,

Carter Melin

## June 2020 – Public Comment Received by the Virginia Board of Education

Dear Board Members,

Our children need to go back to school. By which I mean the traditional model of going in person, every day, with instruction by teachers not computers. I am the mother of two teenage children as well as the Director of a private daycare in Chesterfield county. My daycare has remained open to serve working families and will continue to do so as more families go back to work. Yes, we have had to make changes to our program, but we have found solutions and made it work. Not online, not hybrid schedules, but in person, all day, Monday through Friday. Children need the structure that school provides, and they need it for social and emotional growth. We not only send our children to school for instruction in math, English, sciences, etc. but for important social skills including making friends, understanding peer to peer interactions, working in groups, problem solving and having meaningful in person conversations about relevant and timely topics going on in the world. This cannot be accomplished by remote learning. Since the closure of schools, most children have fallen behind, and we have learned one main thing- remote learning is a disaster.

Many parents do not have the option to homeschool their children. Many are households with two working parents, and some cannot afford daycare. Some home situations are abusive, and children rely on school to provide a safe place. For many, it is the only reliable meal they have that day.

Is there risk? Of course, but risk is everywhere. Children have a greater chance of being injured getting to school than from COVID-19. They are not the vulnerable population regarding this disease. They are not the ones getting seriously ill. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the COVID-19 fatality rate in the U.S. for anyone younger than 19 is so low it is calculated as 0.0%. If some parents are not comfortable sending their children, then let them stay home and continue remote learning. The rest of us want our kids to go back to school.

If daycares can have 20 school age children in a classroom than so can public schools. Yes, this is the allowed number in phase 2 by the Virginia Department of Social Services. We have temperature checks and lots of handwashing, extra cleaning, and sanitizing (done by our teachers and staff) and limiting the numbers on the playground. We eat in our classrooms, stay in our primary groups, send kids home if sick. We have found solutions and worked the problem. Parents can go back to work and kids have a fun, safe place to come during the day.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I strongly urge you to open the schools in a traditional manner this fall.

Sincerely,

*Melody Morton*  
Curriculum Director  
The Cedarhouse School