



2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

Leadership • Advocacy • Support

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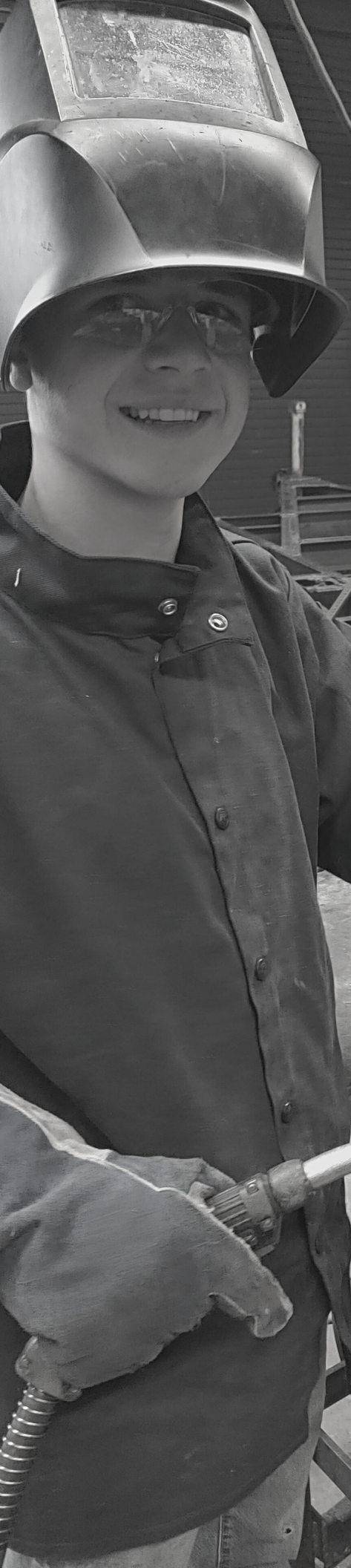
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VIRGINIA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION 2016-2023 STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION

Virginia School Boards Association, a voluntary, nonpartisan organization of Virginia school boards, promotes excellence in public education through leadership, advocacy and services. company and achievements.

VISION

VSBA is recognized and respected as an innovative leader in public education.

GOALS

- To maximize student achievement by taking a leadership role in education reform.
- To advocate effectively for Virginia's public schools and children before all levels of government and the public.
- To increase engaged participation of member boards and stakeholders in all VSBA services and activities.

FROM THE PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear VSBA Members,

It is with great pleasure that we present to you the 2020-2021 VSBA Annual Report. In this report are updates on the association's activities from July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021.

I know it is said every year, but truly, what a year it has been. Despite the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, VSBA hosted a very successful 100% Virtual Annual Convention, offered quality events and trainings, and worked on your behalf across the state and nation. In addition to pivoting meetings and conferences from in-person to virtual events, the VSBA staff focused on increasing the number of virtual offerings to members by focusing on adding free webinar opportunities, and by focusing on supplying resources that were aligned with the hot topics facing school board members and school divisions across the state. In addition to virtual meetings and conferences for school board members, the VSBA Board of Directors also conducted all of their business through Virtual meetings this past year. I want to salute the Board for their commitment to daylong virtual meetings as well as the staff for ensuring that we did not miss a beat when it came to addressing the business of the association.

VSBA was able to maintain the high-quality services that it has always offered and added new services that you will read about throughout this annual report. We have remained active on the national, state, and association levels even through these challenging times. The achievements you see throughout this annual report represent goals we set out to achieve in our strategic plan. Some accomplishments I would like to draw attention to include full implementation of a new database, updated reports from multiple VSBA Task Forces, expanding the VSBA Master Board Program, launching VSBA School Board U, launching a new website. VSBA was also able to maintain strong fiscal management and financial stability amid event adjustments. VSBA worked tirelessly to ensure that relationships with sponsors, vendors, and venues were managed throughout the pandemic and served as an exemplar for state associations across the country.

VSBA remains true in its core commitment to the improvement of public education in the Commonwealth and has channeled energy to create and implement continuous new ideas that will bolster stronger local board governance teams.

We look ahead to 2022 as you continue your work to provide a safe and productive learning environment for all students. We are grateful for the commitment and service you provide to education in your local communities. With your leadership, advocacy, and support, we will continue to positively influence the direction of public education in this great Commonwealth.



Janet Turner-Giles
VSBA President



Gina G. Patterson
VSBA Executive Director

last year's

FINANCIAL REPORT

James Coleman, Jr. Chair
VSBA Finance/ Audit Committee Chair
(Lynchburg City)

EXCESS*of revenue over expenses***NO INCREASE***in dues cost to membership*

I am happy to report that the VSBA Audit Committee performed its duties and took its responsibilities very seriously. Good questions were asked, and staff was able to answer without hesitation. The addition of non-Board of Directors members to the audit committee has brought fresh eyes and has truly added another layer of transparency to the finances of the VSBA. For the fiscal year which ended December 31, 2020, the VSBA had an excess of revenue over expenses.

Based upon an operations policy adopted by the VSBA Board of Directors in 1984, the VSBA provides generic services such as state and federal advocacy, day-to-day administrative and operational advice, publications, research, and individual training sessions for all its member school boards. Special services are provided to the membership on a “user fee” basis. That is, an exact fee is charged to those who want to use services not provided by dues. In this way, those who do not wish to participate in the special services are not burdened with the hefty dues increases to pay for those services. Special services include policy services, VSBA BoardDocs, governance training, strategic planning, and superintendent search services, etc.

The VSBA is fortunate that its membership is dedicated to ensuring that our association has the resources to guarantee its tagline of Leadership · Advocacy · Support for school boards throughout the Commonwealth. We welcome your comments and your continued willingness to participate in your association.

2021

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP



One-hundred percent (100%) of the public school boards in the Commonwealth are VSBA members, and we are an association that continues to offer its membership needed services through the most cost-effective means possible. VSBA has been very active at the national, state, and association levels. The association also made significant adjustments to conferences and services due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Here are some key highlights:

National

VSBA Executive Director Gina Patterson continues to work with the AASA/Howard University Urban Superintendent Preparation and Certification Program.

Members of the VSBA Federal Relations Committee (FRC) met on February 1, 2021. FRC members hosted virtual meetings with Virginia's Congressional Delegation as part of VSBA's Virtual Advocacy Institute. The day concluded with a robust meeting with Senator Tim Kaine and Senator Mark Warner where FRC members addressed needs of school divisions to reopen schools, broadband access, testing and accountability, full funding of IDEA, and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

State

The VSBA Board of Directors continued to host a representative from the Office of the Governor for a healthy dialogue on current educational and legislative issues at each of its Board of Directors meetings.

Thirteen members of the VSBA Board of Directors sit on statewide committees ranging from VHSL Executive Committee to the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Licensure.

Governor Northam proclaimed the month of February 2021 as School Board Appreciation Month in Virginia. The VSBA established this month-long observance back in 1989 to encourage public recognition of the roles and responsibilities of school board members and to highlight the importance of public education throughout the commonwealth.

Governor Northam proclaimed the month of March 2021 as Equity in Education Month in Virginia. The VSBA established this month-long observance in 2020 to highlight the work that school divisions across Virginia are doing to promote equity in public education.

VSBA has built a collaborative relationship with the Governor's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion that featured Director Dr. Janice Underwood as a speaker at several VSBA Board of Directors meetings.

VSBA Past-President Rodney A. Jordan of the Norfolk City School Board for receiving the Mary Peake Award for Excellence in Education Equity in the category of Policy Maker for his work as VSBA President and as Co-Chair of the VSBA Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments.

State Continued

The VSBA continued to take the lead on hot-topic issues through the VSBA Task Force on Workforce Readiness, Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments, Task Force on Collective Bargaining, and Task Force on Student Discipline.

The VSBA held the 11th Annual Green Schools Challenge, which encourages implementation of specific environmental policies and practical actions that reduce the carbon emissions generated by both the local school division and the broader community. In 2020 three school divisions received top awards, and 21 school divisions were recognized as being Certified Green School Divisions.

VSBA held its 10th statewide Food for Thought Competition where school divisions showcased programs that combat childhood hunger, provide healthy school meals, and encourage wellness and physical activity. Six winning divisions were recognized at a Virtual Awards Ceremony.

VSBA continues to offer regional meetings in conjunction with meetings and conferences, so the regional board members can get together and talk about what is going on in their region with the Chairs of their region, who serve on the VSBA Board of Directors. For safety purposes meetings were held in a virtual format.

The VSBA Task Force on Workforce Readiness presented its third annual Excellence in Workforce Readiness Awards at a Virtual Awards Ceremony.

The sixth annual VSBA Advocate for Education Award was presented to Juandiego Wade, school board member, Charlottesville City Public Schools.

In its 8th year, the VSBA Student Video Contest gave Virginia high school students the opportunity to express their thoughts and creativity around the theme, "How Virtual Learning Changed My School Year."

VSBA Take Your Legislator to School Month, in November, continues to offer additional opportunities to further strengthen relationships between school division leadership and elected officials. The Governor issued a proclamation declaring the month of November as Take Your Legislator to School Month.

Employer commendations for supporting employees who serve on a school board were sent out in conjunction with School Board Appreciation Month.

VSBA Bullying Prevention Month in October provides a statewide spotlight on the issue. VSBA hosted a webinar series to highlight and share best practices. The Governor issued a proclamation declaring the month of October 2020 VSBA Bullying Prevention Month.

School Board Clerks Appreciation Week was celebrated during the third week in February and the Governor issued a proclamation in support of the celebration.

VSBA Past President Rodney Jordan continues to serve on the Commission on African American History Education, appointed by Governor Northam. Jarvis Bailey, Fredericksburg City School Board, also serves on this Commission.

VSBA Past-President Rodney Jordan served on the Teacher of the Year selection committee.

VSBA partnered with Virginia's Coalition of Small and Rural Schools to cohost the Virginia Crumbling Schools Tour.

VSBA Task Forces hosted Legislators with the first virtual Day at the Capitol.

“ Proof positive that what I've learned works. The local newspaper covered an interaction I had with a community member during public comment. My VSBA training gave me the knowledge and the courage to take CRT head on. And I might have even changed her mind! ”

Association

VSBA is celebrating its 115th year of existence as the 3rd oldest School Boards Association in the Nation.

VSBA had their first two school divisions receive the Master Board Award at the 2021 VSBA Annual Convention.

VSBA fully transitioned to the new Engagifii database and continues to offer many training opportunities to clerks that consist of quarterly meetings, weekly tip emails, and one on one training.

VSBA Updated the Layout and Delivery Methods of the Virginia Daily Education News.

VSBA continued its tradition of holding a Student Art Contest, although virtual divisions were encouraged to submit student artwork and all winners were announced at the virtual spring regional forums.

VSBA began a partnership with Forecast5 Analytics whose mission is to make a profound positive impact on students and communities by assisting our clients in the following areas: finance, planning, students, organizational.

VSBA now accepts credit card payments for registrations and events through the new Engagifii database.

VSBA created School Board U, which is a program for School Board Members to go through webinars at their own pace so they can stay up to date and sharpen their skills.

VSBA added a new FOIA webinar training that is for full board governance teams.

The VSBA Audit Committee fulfilled its responsibilities and the VSBA Board of Directors approved the recommendation that the official audit be accepted without any reservations.

President Turner-Giles issued a successful series of Public Service Announcements that were distributed for use by local school divisions. Topics included Equity in Education Month, Bullying Prevention Month, School Board Appreciation Month, School Board Clerk Appreciation Week, and Take Your Legislator to School Month.

VSBA hosted a webinar series on equity featuring presentations from across Virginia during Equity in Education Month.

VSBA hosted a webinar series on some Best Practices during Bullying Prevention Month.

VSBA and VACo began collaborating on a partnership to help facilitate conversations between the two coequal local governing boards around best practices in relationship building and collaboration.



Association

The VSBA Business Honor Roll recognized 111 businesses which highlighted successful school/business partnerships around the state.

There are 132 subscribers to VSBA Policy Services.

VSBA government relations specialist offered video updates of legislative initiatives around the state.

The annual VSBA Regional Art Contest selected 27 student winners representing the nine VSBA regions. Winners were showcased online and at virtual conferences throughout the year.

The annual VSBA Media Honor Roll recognized 50 reporters and media outlets for fair and balanced reporting of local school divisions.

The annual VSBA Showcases for Success, a guide that features positive public-school programs, was sent out electronically to all media contacts, board members, superintendents, and legislators. The publication was also posted on the VSBA website as a source of best practices around the state that focused on School Choice in Virginia's public schools.

VSBA continued to offer webinars to members on a monthly basis and made recordings of the webinars available on-demand. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, VSBA significantly increased the number of free webinars available to members.

VSBA added new budget services training that included training for individuals as well as full board governance teams.

VSBA Executive Director Gina Patterson continued to host a series of podcasts on education-related topics that are available free to the membership.

VSBA presented two scholarships once again presented to Student School Board Representatives at the 2020 VSBA Annual Convention.

An Essay Contest was created to provide students an opportunity to express creative ideas and concepts, conduct research, think critically, practice public speaking skills, and subsequently receive recognition for doing so.

VSBA sent out weekly federal updates to keep members abreast of legislation and advocacy at the federal level.

VSBA offered a new virtual Orientation for New Clerks.



TALLY FOR TRAINING ACTIVITIES

2,500+

registrations were received for conferences and meetings.

726

school board members, superintendents, clerks and deputy clerks earned VSBA Academy Awards.

133

of the member school boards had a member who earned an award.

47

individuals earned the Award of Distinction, the highest level of the VSBA Academy Awards.

55+

customized training sessions were conducted for school governance teams.

53

webinars were offered to the membership.

VSBA RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Powering through the pandemic VSBA showed its leadership, advocacy and support for member school boards in many different ways by continuing to offer new and extended services virtually to assist our members.

VSBA held all of its meetings, conferences, and workshops virtually in order to be able to support members and give them the tools that they would need to succeed throughout the pandemic. The first ever virtual annual convention was held giving members a multitude of break out sessions to attend, and virtually network with one another. VSBA also offered a numerous amount of webinars available to the membership, including their new program School Board U.

SCHOOL BOARD TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

The VSBA offers many programs for school board members to enhance their knowledge of educational issues, governance skills, and communication. As an educational investment that benefits the entire community, the VSBA school board development programs are tailored to meet the needs of the association's diverse membership.

VSBA hosted several conferences in 2020 and 2021, which was the first year that all conferences were held virtually. Throughout the uncertainty of the pandemic, VSBA strived to meet the membership's changing needs through various methods, while keeping the safety of everyone a top priority. VSBA transitioned to hosting at least one webinar on relevant topics per week and continued to provide the hot topic conferences and meetings in a virtual format to ensure that board members received the most up-to-date information possible.

Additionally, VSBA offered numerous workshops virtually including Budget Training, Superintendent Evaluation Workshops, Title IX workshops, and the hot topic conferences that were canceled last year due to the start of the pandemic.

On November 18, 2020 school board members, clerks, superintendents, attorneys, and many other school personnel gathered for the first-ever Virtual VSBA Annual Convention. The convention offered three general sessions, over 30 different breakout sessions, two coffee and convo session, and many other activities for members to participate in. Attendees had the opportunity to network with membership from across the state through the chat and were able to meet with local and national businesses in the exhibit hall to get ideas on how to better their local divisions. There were a total of 538 engaged attendees that participated in the conference, whether that be in real-time or afterward on demand.

VSBA has other opportunities to assist school board members in becoming informed and effective leaders, including publications, networking opportunities, research, and personalized board training sessions. These opportunities are relevant to both new and experienced board members as it is vital for board members to constantly expand their knowledge base in order to keep current on topics and trends that impact their divisions so they can be effective advocates for education. VSBA has continued to offer Governance Training in a completely virtual format and has held a few in-person trainings. In offering the trainings virtually, Governance Teams continue to receive training and updates relevant to their work on the school board even though they were unable to meet in person due to the pandemic. The virtual sessions resulted in having the first Master Boards with VSBA, and new training sessions were offered to keep up with the changing and dynamic needs of the membership.



“ Thanks so much for today. Your calming personality helped, you struck the right tone with a couple of members. You have made us better today. ”

“ Thank you for taking time out of your personal schedule, to "deal with us!" As always, you guys were Great! Appreciate it so much! ”

AWARD OF DISTINCTION RECIPIENTS

Albemarle County

Jonno Alcaro
Katherine Acuff

Amelia County

Lorena Harper

Arlington County

Barbara Kanninen

Bath County

Sue Hirsch

Bristol City

R. Tyrone Foster

Brunswick County

Elizabeth Burns

Buena Vista City

Teresa Ellison

Caroline County

Nancy Carson
Shawn Kelley
Sarah Calveric

Carroll County

Joey Haynes

Culpeper County

Barbara Brown
Patricia Baker

Essex County

Harry Thomas
Ray Whitaker

FloudCounty

C. Gene Bishop

Fredericksburg City

Marceline Catlett
Jannan Holmes

Goochland County

Karen Horn

Hampton City

Joseph Kilgore

Hanover County

Robert Hundley

Henry County

Teddy Martin

Hopewell City

Linda Hyslop

Lynchburg City

James Coleman

Madison County

Anna Graham

Manassas City

Suzanne Seaberg

Mecklenburg County

Wanda Bailey

Middlesex County

Claudia Soucek

Montgomery County

Gunin Kiran

Nelson County

Janet Turner-Giles

New Kent County

Sarah Grier-Barber

Norfolk City

Tanya Bhasin
Rodney Jordan
Adale Martin

Nottoway County

Tameshia Grimes

Orange County

Sherrie Page
Cecil Snead

Petersburg City

Kenneth Pritchett

Prince George County

Lisa Pennycuff

Shenandoah County

Karen Whetzel

Surry County

Laura Pierce-Ruffin
Marion Wilkins

Tazewell County

Irene Mullins

Westmoreland County

Ralph Fallin
Iris Lane



VSBA Legal Assistance Fund:

The VSBA Legal Assistance Fund provides an avenue by which school board members and superintendents in divisions which are members of the Fund have access to the VSBA Director of Legal and Policy Services for legal information. Conversations take place daily on a wide variety of topics including constitutional issues such as freedom of speech and civil rights, the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act (COIA), the Family Educational rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), student discipline, and employment-related issues.

The Legal Services Department updated and distributed "The Virginia Freedom of Information Act: A Guide for School Board Members and School Administrators", aka "The VSBA FOIA Guide". This publication highlights the portions of FOIA most relevant to school board members as well as provides easy access to the law itself.

The Legal Services Department also updated and distributed a list of Required Notifications. This list provides a way for school divisions to be sure that they are complying with requirements of state and federal law to notify stakeholders of various types of information, ranging from asbestos inspections to certain types of student surveys.

VSBA Council of School Attorneys:

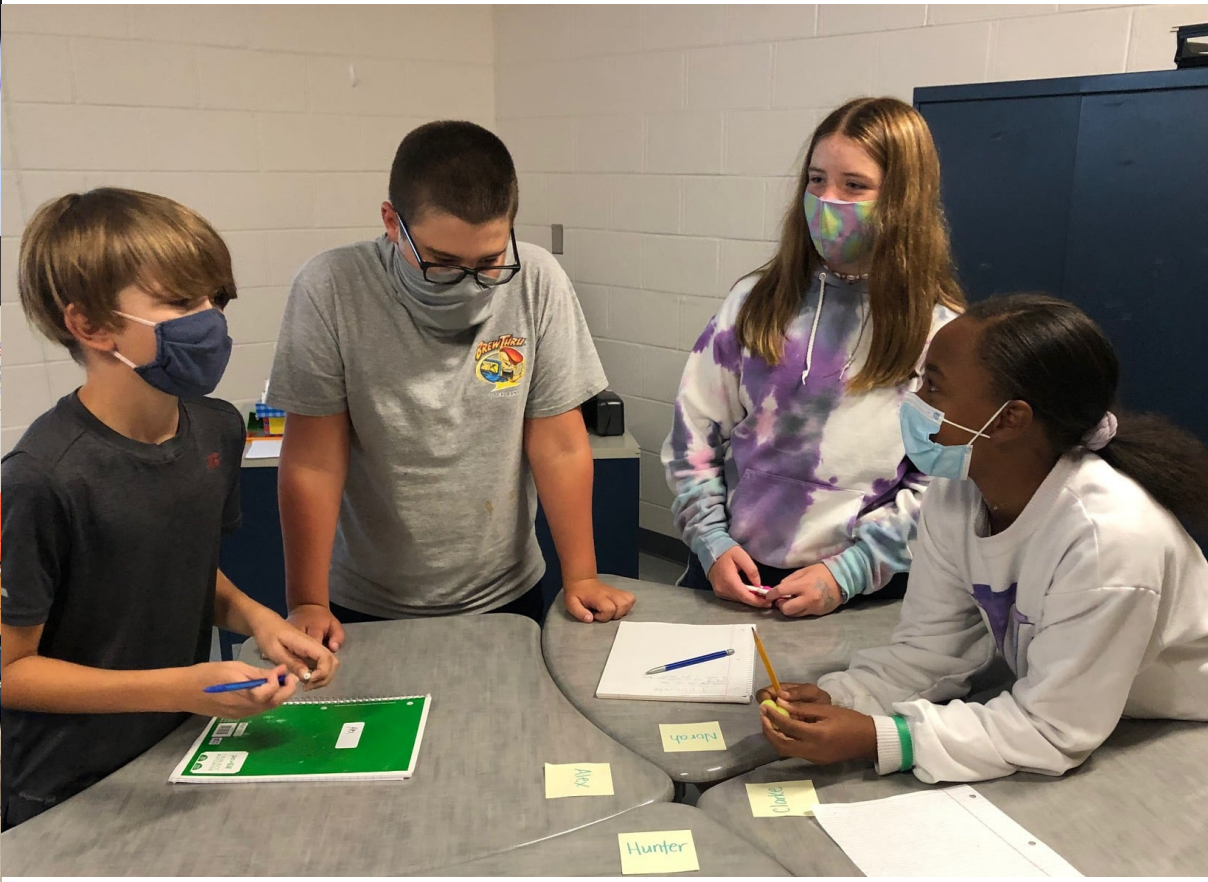
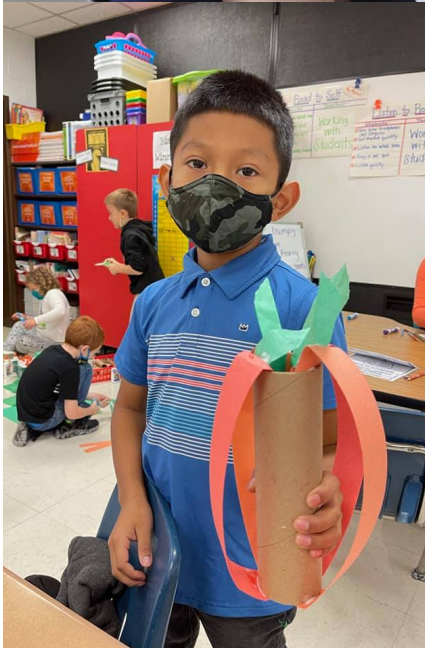
VSBA Council of School Attorneys (VSBA COSA) coordinates information and conferences on education law and provides opportunities for networking among its members. VSBA COSA is affiliated with a similar national group organized by NSBA. VSBA COSA has approximately 65 members, each of whom represents one or more school boards in Virginia. The members appreciate having the ability to discuss various legal issues at meetings in June and November as well as via the VSBA COSA listserv. Several VSBA COSA members served on NSBA COSA committees. Jason Ballum served on the Amicus Advocacy Committee, Mary McGowan served on the 2021 School Law Practice Seminar Planning Committee, and Kathy Mehford served on the IDEA Reauthorization Working Group



VSBA Policy Services

One hundred and twenty-six Virginia school boards, plus six regional, vocational and Governor’s schools, are now members of VSBA Policy Services. In addition to receiving new and revised policies based on thorough legal research, VSBA Policy Services subscribers benefit from “strength in numbers” if called upon to defend a policy. Subscribers received three Policy Updates, in July 2020 and February and May 2021, including policies changed as a result of new federal regulations on Title IX and actions by 2021 General Assembly. In addition, the Policy Page, offers timely information about policy-related issues. Over 100 division superintendents and policy contacts attended the Policy Workshop in May which focused on 2021 state legislation affecting school divisions. A series of conference calls was held after the July 2020 and February 2021 Updates were released to provide information and answer questions about the policy revisions in those Update.

Daily Personal Consultations: VSBA members continue to be pleased with the help they receive from the Policy Services staff. VSBA staff speak with school board members, superintendents, and policy contacts daily about a wide range of policy-related issues.



SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH SERVICES

VSBA staff assisted school boards in rural, suburban, and urban school divisions with superintendent searches, including Alleghany County, Buena Vista, Danville City, Franklin County, and Manassas Park City.

Staff placed over 300 calls to check references, verify eligibility, and evaluate job performance of applicants.

The VSBA Superintendent Search Procedures Manual, which is provided to board members for the duration of the search process, was updated.

146

applications received

1,790

community surveys processed

Everyone is Talking about the 2020 Annual Convention

“ I really enjoy the podcast. Informative and great way to share information. ”

“ Just wanted to let you know that I think the delegate meeting went well...smooth sailing! ”

“ You and your team completed the best virtual conference I have ever attended!!! The session choices were excellent; the technology was smooth; the membership engagement was outstanding... AND... unlike so many organizations, you pulled it off with fiscal creativity. Please, thank your staff for making this all come together under your leadership! I received many messages from amazed members that virtual could work. You and your team did it! ”

“ Gina, you and your team are super heroes!! You put on this terrific convention which in regular times is a very tremendous job! You superheroes created a great virtual convention and I can not thank you and VSBA enough for your dedication to us Board members. Please tell your team what a gift they are!! ”

“ I enjoyed the VSBA conference, and thought you all did an excellent job with facilitating it virtually. ”

TASK FORCE REPORTS

VSBA Task Force on Collective Bargaining

During the 2020 session of the Virginia General Assembly, lawmakers passed Senate Bill 939/ House Bill 582 which permits local governments to enter into collective bargaining agreements with their employees. Due to the economic effects brought upon by the COVID-19/ Coronavirus Pandemic, Virginia Governor Ralph S. Northam recommended changes to the enactment date of SB939/ HB 582 from July 1, 2020 to May 1, 2021. This significant shift in labor relations will impact the governance structures of local school boards that adopt resolutions to enter into collective bargaining agreements with division employees.

At the March 2020 meeting of the Virginia School Boards Association Board of Directors, Board members voted to establish the Task Force on Collective Bargaining. This task force was charged with studying and submitting recommendations to the Board of Directors for best practices and guidance for school boards when deciding to enter into collective bargaining agreements.

The VSBA Task Force on Collective Bargaining presented its report to the Board of Directors at its June 2020 meeting. The Board duly accepted the report and recommendations of the Task Force. As the debate over collective bargaining continues, the task force will monitor developments and determine if additional resources are needed to assist school boards across the Commonwealth.

In the past year, the task force has engaged in the following activities:

- September 2020: Presented an overview of the Task Force Report on Collective Bargaining featuring the findings and best practices for school boards at the 2020 VSBA Legislative Advocacy Conference.
- September 2020: Hosted Task Force members, Dr. Merv Daughtry, Dr. Kevin Siers, and Mr. Stephen DeVita in a panel discussion at the 2020 VSBA Legislative Advocacy Conference.
- April 2021: VSBA Chief Lobbyist and Task Force member, Stacy Haney, and VSBA Government Relations Specialist, J.T. Kessler, provided overview of collective bargaining along with a review key finding of the task force at the VSBA Hot Topic.
- May 2021: Virginia's Collective Bargaining Law officially becomes law. The Task Force will monitor implementation of the law across the Commonwealth by tracking divisions that adopt resolutions in favor of collective bargaining agreements and any issues that arise throughout the process for the purpose of deciding if any further actions or addendums to the initial report of the task force are needed.

[To view the report click here.](#)



VBSA Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments

In June 2013, the VSBA Board of Directors created the VSBA Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments to make recommendations to the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education on how VSBA can partner to help challenged schools in Virginia, and to identify and share research, resources and strategies that will empower Virginia's schools to reach higher levels of student achievement.

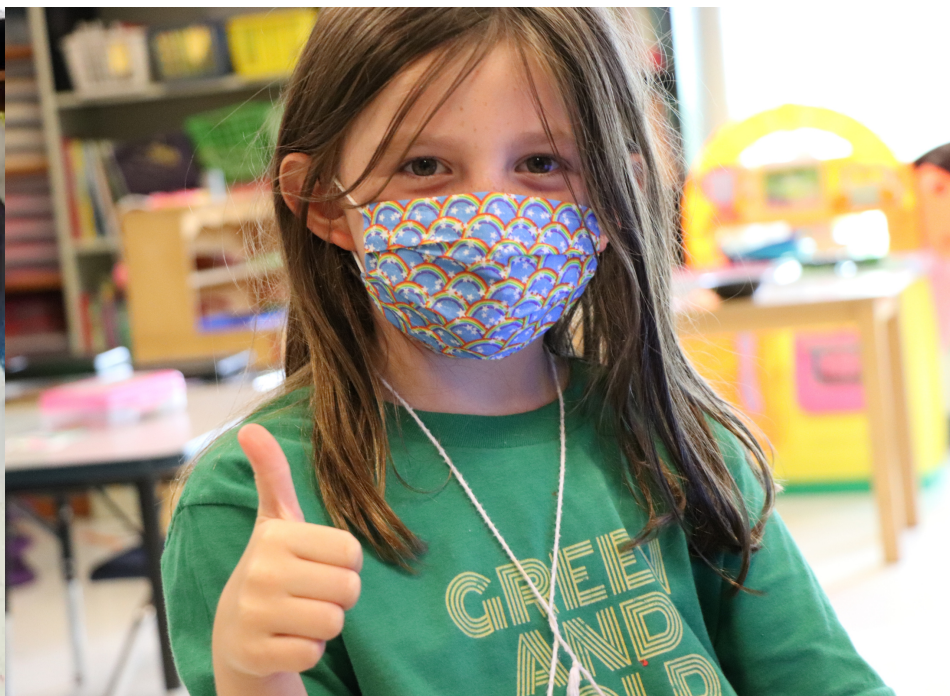
During the past year, task force highlights include:

- September 2020: Release of 2.0 Report of best practices and initiatives to advance success and opportunities for students and schools in challenging environments.
- November 2020: Discuss contents of 2.0 Report with Governor Ralph S. Northam and Secretary of Education Atif Qarni.
- November 2020: Provide overview of 2.0 Report at the VSBA Convention.
- December 2020: Present contents of 2.0 Report to members of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus.
- January 2021: Host members of the Virginia General Assembly in a virtual town hall meeting titled, Coffee & Conversations.
- March 2021: Task Force adopts 3.0 Report timeline and strategy.

In March 2017, the VSBA Board of Directors voted to re-institute the VSBA Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments. New members were added to the Task Force and the members are working to continue the mission of the task force and to keep a pulse on issues related to schools in challenging environments.

At their March 2019 meeting, the VSBA Board of Directors voted to add “Students” to the title of the task force.

[To view the most recent report click here.](#)



VSBA Task Force on Workforce Readiness

In March 2015, the VSBA Board of Directors created the VSBA Task Force on Workforce Readiness to study how career and technical education programs are being implemented in Virginia school divisions and how these programs are preparing the state's future workforce. In subsequent meetings, the task force members established the following mission of the task force: The mission of the VSBA Task Force on Workforce Readiness is to support school divisions by identifying and promoting workforce readiness opportunities that enable students to be prepared to succeed in a new economy.

In the Past Year, the Task Force engaged in the following activities:

- Hosted the Virginia Economic Development Partnership at its September 2020 meeting discussing the work of the VEDP and future collaboration between the two entities.
- Hosted winners of the 2020 Excellence in Workforce Readiness Award at the VSBA Convention allowing award recipients to showcase their winning programs.
- For a fourth straight year, requested that school divisions submit proposals highlighting how Workforce Readiness skills are being developed within school divisions with less than 5,000 students; divisions greater than 5,000 but less than 10,000 and those greater than 10,000 students. New for 2021, the task force added an additional category to highlight division's engaging in regional collaborative efforts around workforce readiness.
- Hosted members of the Virginia General Assembly in a virtual town hall meeting titled, Coffee and Conversations in January 2021.
- Created a subcommittee to produce a Workforce Readiness Resource Guide for school divisions in the Commonwealth to use in furthering work-based learning.

[To learn more about the task force, click here.](#)



LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

The Virginia School Boards Association's Government Relations team represented school board members virtually throughout 2020-21 as the Virginia General Assembly convened a Special Session in August 2020 and in the regularly scheduled session from January through March 2021. The two sessions posed many challenges for the government relations team with testimony at subcommittee and committee hearings being offered virtually making the essential function of providing legislators with important data and facts on the impact that pending legislation would have on local school divisions more difficult. The government relations team transitioned and relied on electronic communication and virtual meetings with legislators to impact the legislative process. Additionally, the government relations team wrote blog posts throughout the session, recorded a weekly video blog update, and provided legislative updates to members via email and through weekly Zoom calls each Friday afternoon. School board members actively participated in the lobbying efforts by answering action alerts, making phone calls, drafting emails, and conducting virtual meetings with their legislative delegations.

2020 Special Session

Governor Ralph S. Northam called the Virginia General Assembly into special session in August 2020 to revise the 2020-2022 Biennium Budget passed by lawmakers in March 2020. Due to the unknown fiscal impact to the Commonwealth from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor and General Assembly unallotted all new spending in the budget during the April 2020 Reconvened Session where legislators meet to review vetoes and amendments to legislation passed during the previous session by the Governor.

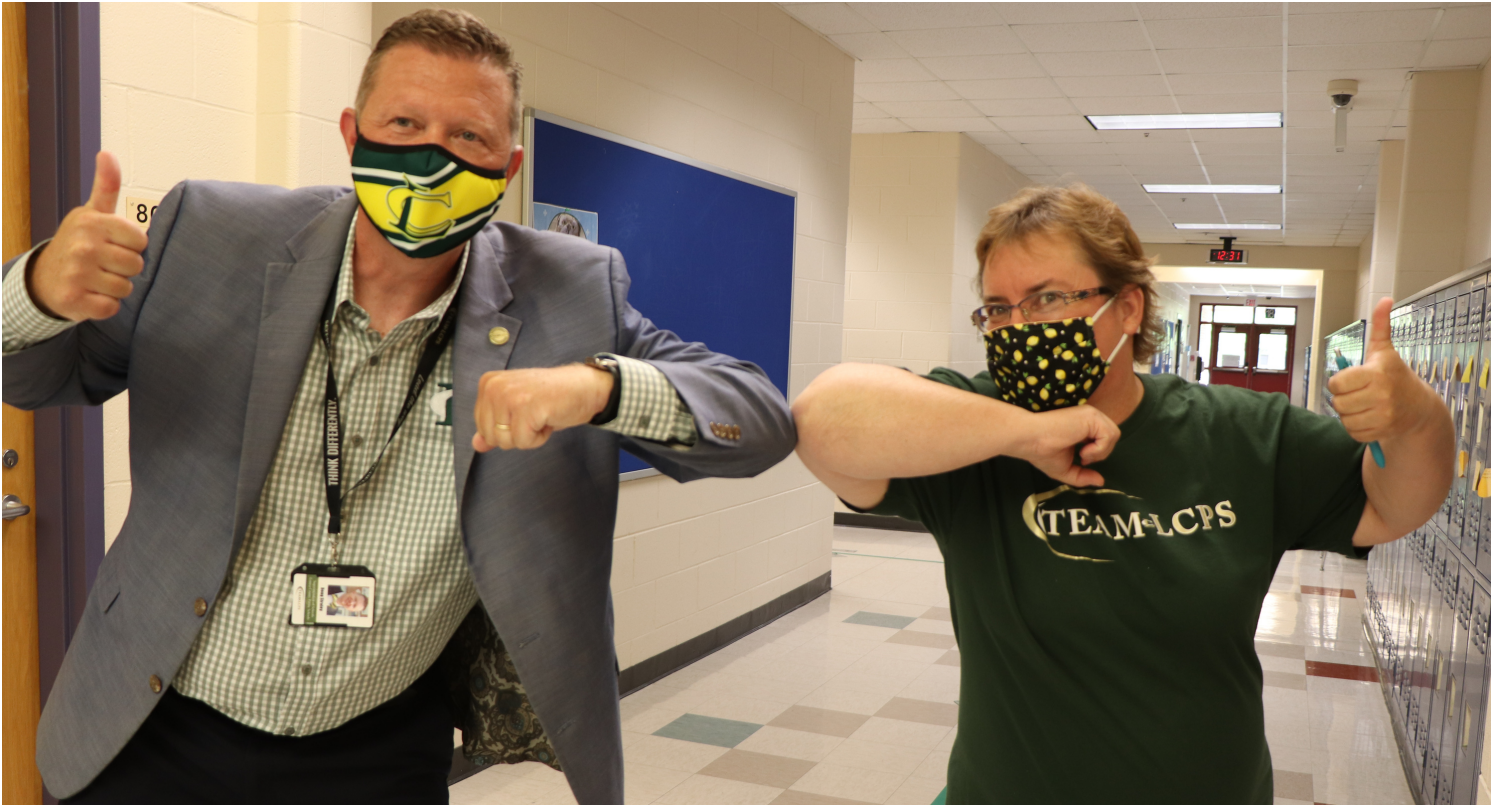
Special legislative sessions can be unique events and the 2020 Special Session had its fair share of twists and turns throughout the eighty plus days the legislature was convened. Without a procedural resolution, each Chamber operated on its own course and several pieces of legislation were filed dealing with issues related to the pandemic, social justice reform, etc. The VSBA government relations team successfully defeated legislation that would have required school boards pay workers compensation claims for employees that contract COVID-19 by presuming exposure to the virus happened at the workplace. The government relations team also successfully argued against legislation creating school choice and voucher programs, staffing mandates requiring a Registered Nurse in every school building, and legislation aimed at school boards to provide in-person learning for students.

The government relations team worked with our public education coalition partners to gain reallocation of targeted funds into the 2020-2022 budget. The team also worked to educate lawmakers on division enrollment loss and gained assurances from lawmakers that the Hold Harmless for enrollment loss would be an area of concentration for the money committees during the 2021 regular session of the Virginia General Assembly.

Annual VSBA Capital Conference

The annual VSBA Capital Conference was held in January bringing school board members together virtually to engage lawmakers in the Virginia General Assembly. Participants heard from elected leaders, including Governor Northam, a legislative panel comprised of members of the General Assembly, as well as the VSBA Government Relations team providing an overview of the Biennium Budget and economic climate of the Commonwealth and what to expect in the 2021 legislative session.

VSBA continued to adapt tactics by providing conference participants with a tool kit and tips for successful advocacy for public education in a virtual setting. Participants scheduled virtual meetings with their legislative delegations and advocated for the key issues and concerns of the association for the association.



LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

2021 Legislative Session

The 2021 legislative session convened on January 13th with the Senate of Virginia meeting in person while the Virginia House of Delegates met remotely. The session saw numerous pieces of legislation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that significantly impacted the role of the local school board in the operations of their school divisions. The government relations team was able to defeat many of these bills that placed constraints or limited the local control of school boards.

The government relations team was not as fortunate with Senate Bill 1303, which requires local school boards to provide in-person instruction while severely limiting the local school boards decision-making authority when dealing with COVID-19 outbreaks within their divisions. This bill was passed by the legislature following heated comments from the public and vast debate within both legislative chambers. The legislation includes a sunset date of August 1, 2022.

The VSBA Lobbying team was able to defeat several pieces of worrisome legislation during the session. Among the pieces of legislation defeated were:

- SB 1191- would have required school nurse positions from requirements for student support positions and instead requires each local school board to employ at least one full-time equivalent school nurse position in each elementary school, middle school, and high school in the local school division.
- SB 1317- would have required all local school boards to establish and implement policies to provide for the open enrollment to any school of any student who is eligible to receive free or reduced lunch upon the request of a parent or guardian, subject to conditions and limitations established by the local school board.
- HB 1770- would have permitted any school division to establish a program to create savings accounts for students to be used for alternative educational programs.
- HB 1780- would have exempted employees of a local school board from the prohibition on striking, and from termination of employment for striking by public employees.
- HB 2277- would have given the Virginia Board of Education the right to fulfill its constitutional duty of determining school division boundaries by removing the local school boards right to consent.



2021 MEMBER OPINION SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Distributed May 2021





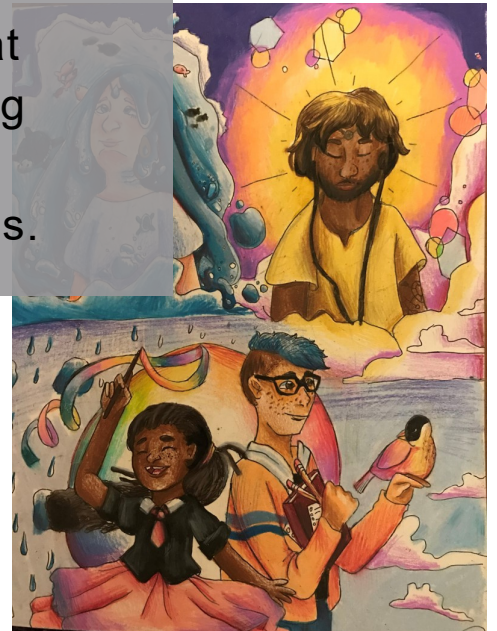
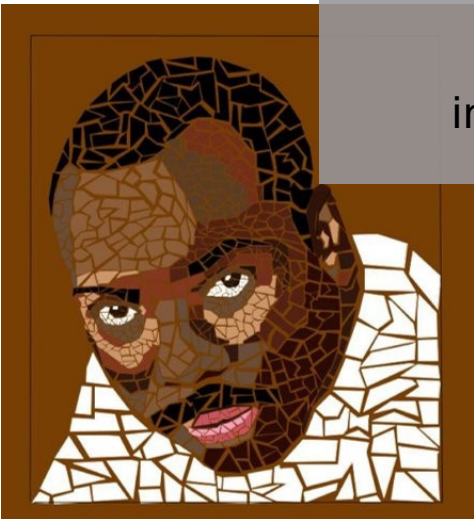
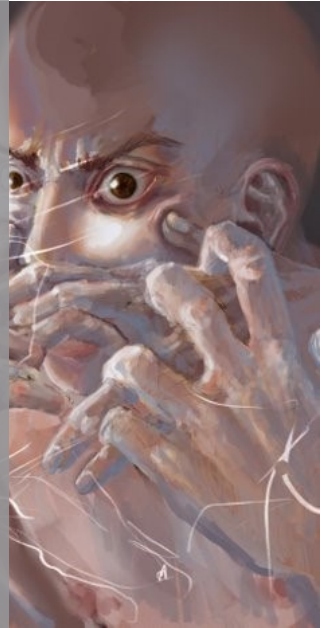
90%

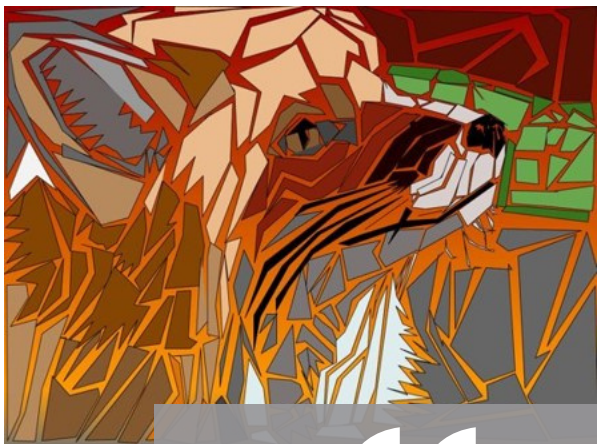
Extremely Satisfied or Satisfied
with the services VSBA has
provided.



97%

strongly agree or agree that
VSBA is effective at keeping
your board up-to-date and
informed on advocacy issues.



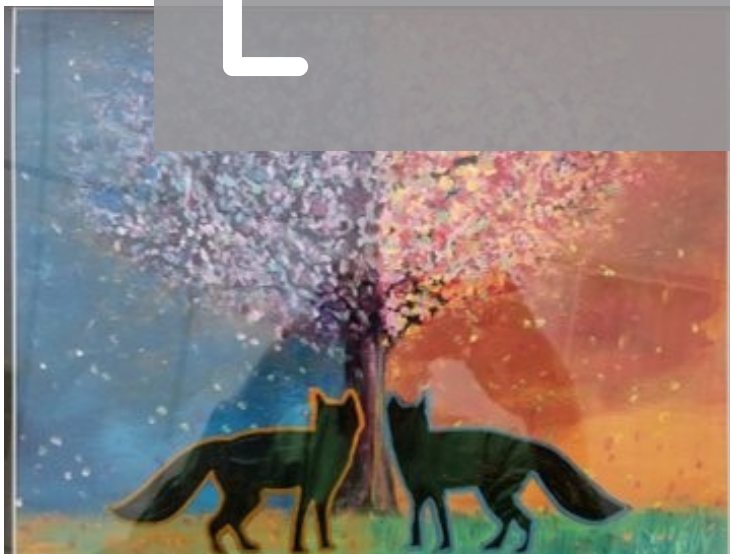


“

On behalf of our Superintendent and nine-member School Board, allow me to extend a huge THANK YOU for affording us the opportunity to share in four dynamic higher-level training sessions. The Master Board Training was absolutely phenomenal. The Lynchburg City School Board is the better because of our participation in this noteworthy program. The facilitation was sincere, sensitive, substantive, strong, and successful. Great Job!

James Coleman
Lynchburg City School Board Chair

”





96%

strongly agree or agree that the VSBA tagline of Leadership · Advocacy · Support accurately represents the activities of the VSBA.

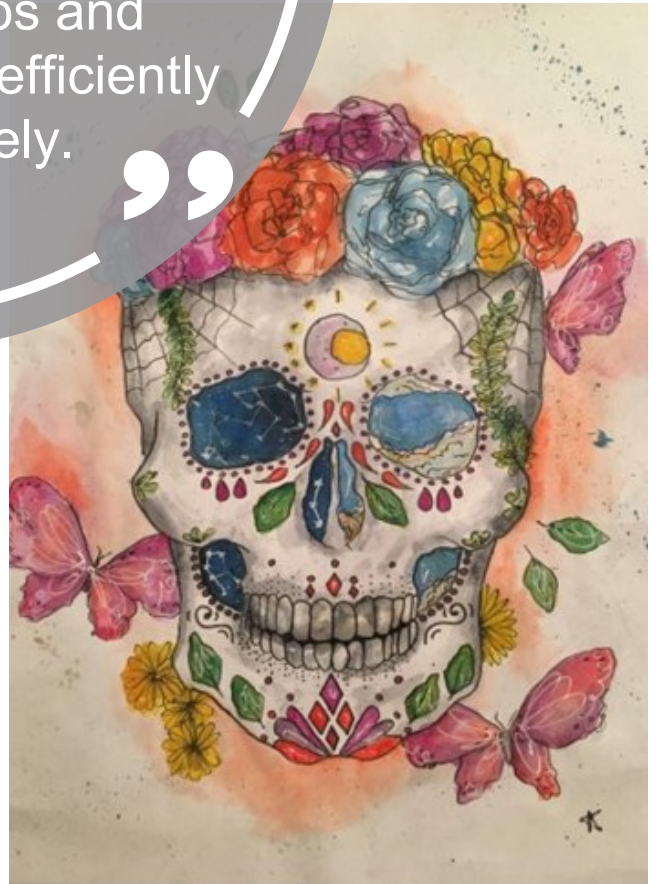
85%

strongly agree or agree that the VSBA is viewed as an influential organization in developing public education policy.





“Gina and all her staff are always very helpful and informative when asked for help or any information. They plan and organize great workshops and conferences very efficiently and effectively.”



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