



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

Leadership • Advocacy • Support

Addressing Misconceptions about the Virginia School Boards Association

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

What is the nature of membership in the VSBA?

Membership in VSBA is optional. It is a membership association formed specifically to serve school boards in Virginia. It is important to note that membership in the VSBA is made up of school boards as a whole, not individual school board members.

Does VSBA control the school board policies of local school divisions?

No, VSBA does not have control over the school board policies of local school divisions. The services we offer, including policy development and support, are optional, add-on services for VSBA members. Not all members of the VSBA are members of Policy Services. Sample school board policies aim to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and provide local boards with the autonomy to customize them according to their specific needs. It's false to say that VSBA controls, creates or establishes any local division's policies. Our role is to offer guidance and support.

What are the primary offerings and services of VSBA?

VSBA is a membership organization created to cater to local school boards. It provides networking opportunities, professional development sessions, and optional add-on services at competitive rates. Some of these services include Policy, Legal, BoardDocs, Governance Training, and Superintendent Searches.

How are VSBA's legislative positions determined?

Legislative positions are proposed by member boards and evaluated by a committee with representatives from all nine regions of the VSBA. This committee then proposes positions to the Delegate Assembly in November, where a representative from each member school board votes on them. The resulting legislative positions handbook is what our legislative staff uses to lobby at the general assembly. These positions can be updated, edited, or newly proposed each year.

Do larger school divisions have a stronger voice in the association?

No, each school division is granted one vote at all meetings of the Association, including the VSBA Delegate Assembly, regardless of the size of their student population. In fact, 70% of member school divisions have less than 6,000 students.

Does VSBA monitor regulatory compliance for school boards?

No, VSBA does not keep track of or oversee compliance on matters required of school boards or school divisions.

Can VSBA enforce rules or regulations on a local school board?

No, VSBA is not a governing body and does not have any authority over local school boards or school divisions. Our primary role is to provide services, networking opportunities, professional development, and other benefits to our member boards.

Does VSBA align with political parties under different administrations?

VSBA operates as a nonpartisan association, emphasizing a commitment to issues rather than political affiliations. Its unwavering stance centers around opposing any measures that compromise the autonomy of local school divisions, a position that has remained consistent throughout the association's 116-year history. An example of this nonpartisan approach is provided by VSBA Policy Services' response to both versions of the VDOE Model Policies drafted pursuant to Va. Code § 22.1-23.3. That law requires VDOE to develop and make available to every school board model policies concerning the treatment of transgender students and also requires each school board to adopt policies that are consistent with the VDOE Model Policies. In response to both the original VDOE document, which was released in 2021, and the current document, released in 2023, VSBA analyzed its existing sample policies and concluded that those sample policies are consistent with the VDOE Model Policies and thus that a school board which has adopted them is in compliance with the law.

Are VSBA board development training sessions and conference attendance mandatory?

No, both board development training sessions conducted by VSBA and VSBA conference attendance are optional. If a board decides to book a training session, it requires 100% attendance of school board members and the superintendent. However, boards are under no obligation to book such a session. Similarly, board members are not mandated to participate in any of VSBA's meetings, conferences, or webinars. These are offered as benefits to members.

Is VSBA subject to FOIA?

FOIA applies to a "public body" as defined in the FOIA statute. According to an opinion dated December 12, 2000, from the Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council, it was determined that "VSBA does not fall under FOIA's definition of a public body."

We hope that this document provides clarity on common misconceptions about the VSBA. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact VSBA.



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