



VSBA President
Kerri Wilson
(Harrisonburg City School Board)

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

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DATES TO REMEMBER

FEBRUARY
School Board Appreciation Month

FEBRUARY 17 - 21
School Board Clerk Appreciation Week

FEBRUARY 21
Superintendent Evaluation Workshop

MARCH 4, 5, AND 10
Superintendent Evaluation Workshop

MARCH 26
Hot Topic Conference

MARCH 27
Jim Bearden Webinar 1 of 3
(see details on page 3!)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As your VSBA president, one of my goals this year is to visit each of the nine VSBA regions in Virginia. The priority is to see a sampling of the schools and communities within those regions that are among the most challenged; schools that may fall prey to Virginia's new OEI and A-F legislation. I want to gain a better understanding of not only the challenges that those schools face, but the successes, as well. In order to be a true champion for all of Virginia's public school children, whether it is with the General Assembly, the Board of Education, or the Secretary of Education, I must gain firsthand knowledge of the variables. It is important to me to be able to tell your story, and what better way to do that than to see it in person?

Another goal is to promote a culture of mutual admiration and assistance, towards and for, one another. The concept that we can accomplish more together than we can as individuals, "Virginia, we are ONE!", is our theme this year. By visiting school divisions state-wide, we can gain a better understanding of the struggles some are having as well as the resources that exist within our peer group, enabling us to share, learn, and grow from one another.

My first stop on the 2014 President's Tour was in Bristol City. Peter Sengenberger, VSBA's assistant executive director, and I were first greeted by Bristol City School Board Chairman Tyrone Foster (Tyrone is also the VSBA Southwest Region chairman) and Superintendent Mark Lineburg. Also in attendance for the day were other school board members, school personnel, the mayor, city council members, and the press. Wow, did we feel welcome!

Bristol is in Southwest Virginia, on the border of Tennessee. They have an enrollment of approximately 2,400 students in their four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Bristol's challenges primarily stem from their high percentage of students that fall within the low socio-economic category. Three of the four elementary schools have free/reduced lunch percentages that range from 74% to 86% (the 4th elementary is 58%) and homeless rates that range from



7% to 13%. As of January 2014, Bristol's unemployment rate rose to 11.5% and they have the 8th highest child poverty rate in Virginia. These types of statistics create significant challenges for schools.

Despite the above mentioned hurdles, Bristol City Schools are all fully accredited. They have some great programs in place to address a multitude of matters, including attendance, bullying awareness, discipline, parent engagement, remediation, and enrichment. There were many highlights to the visit and I was impressed with all that I saw. My favorite program was the school-wide book club at Virginia Middle School featuring a book on bullying awareness called "Wonder" by R.J. Palacio. Every adult in the building received a copy of the book and read it to students for 30 minutes each day. Upon completion of the book, there were group discussions in every classroom throughout the school, throughout the school day. They held contests in writing, art, poetry, and technology to incorporate the subject of bullying awareness into instructional components. The entire school was literally "on the same page" when it came to bullying prevention and awareness. The book club dovetailed nicely with the "Respect for All" program and the "Olweus Bullying Prevention" program that are used at Virginia Middle. As a result of these initiatives, the administration has seen a 45% drop in disciplinary referrals and a 36% drop in out-of-school suspensions this year.

Other impressive programs included the "Spring Training" program and the "Bearcat

Continued on page 2



Gina G. Patterson
VSBA Executive Director

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What kind of questions should I be asking when it comes to my school division's data?

Recently, a board member inquired, "What kind of questions should I be asking when it comes to my school division's data, without crossing the line between the responsibilities of the board and that of the superintendent and his administration? I ask because I have received frequent questions from community members on how the kids in our division are doing. Simply saying 'we're doing well; we have some issues but we're addressing them' is not a good enough answer anymore for a parent whose child is failing or falling behind."

This board member raised an excellent question. Today's board members have or should have an extensive amount of information available to them about student achievement in their division. They should be knowledgeable and familiar with the information so they can give the questioner an overview of the strengths and challenges related to the division's academic achievement and progress. When a board member is asked how the students in their division are doing, they should be able to provide a knowledgeable response to that question. To help board members start learning about how their division uses data, following are some suggested questions and discussion topics for boards.

- How does the division measure student performance, and what data is collected and analyzed in the division?
- How does the data measure the achievement and performance of all students, including sub-groups of students in the division?
- What has been learned from the data?
- How has the data been used to identify achievement gaps and to modify and improve instruction?
- How can the board use data to make informed policy and planning decisions about school improvement and to help determine division goals?
- How is achievement data tied to teacher professional development?
- Is student achievement and progress regularly discussed at board meetings?
- What data reports are available that summarize trends revealed by the data?
- How does the division's data compare to other divisions and statewide figures?
- Is the division measuring student progress by examining data using a growth model of year-to-year trends so that individual and group progress can be measured, analyzed and summarized for board discussions?

Student achievement and progress should be an important aspect of every school board meeting. Having access to and understanding student performance data will help give the board governance team direction and focus, and will help when community members ask these important questions.

Continued from page 1

Ask the Expert

Q. May the board vote on the superintendent's contract in closed session?

A. No. In fact, the board cannot vote on anything in closed session. Va. Code 2.2-3710.

Bandwagon" program. Spring Training is a test preparation program for identified students that occurs during spring break to ensure that the most at-risk students are prepared to take the SOL's in the upcoming weeks. The Bearcat Bandwagon is a parent engagement program where each elementary school invites every family to a tailgate picnic and a football game. During the meal, everyone enjoys a presentation on why it is important that their students graduate and then they all get on a school bus and head to the high school football game. The best part...every student is given a Bearcat T-shirt that has their graduation year on it! After school enrichment, summer remediation and enrichment, weekend backpacks, and

the high school's culinary arts and agriculture programs were also among the innovative and creative programs in place to keep students safe, fed, engaged, and on track to succeed.

I am certain that there are great things happening across the Commonwealth and I cannot wait to learn of them. If you think you could benefit from some of Bristol's ideas, contact Bristol's superintendent, Dr. Mark Lineburg. He is happy to share anything that results in student success. In addition, if you have successful programs that Bristol would benefit from, feel free to share those, too.

We can accomplish more together than we can as individuals. Virginia, we are ONE!



UPCOMING VSBA EVENTS, WORKSHOPS & TRAINING



JIM BEARDEN 3-PART WEBINAR SERIES!

March 27, April 10, and April 24 from 12:30 – 1:30 pm

Division Leadership & Division Culture: Closing the Gaps Between What Sounds Good & What Gets Done

Attendees loved him at last year's VSBA Annual Convention, and his book, "The Relentless Search for Better Ways" has been a hit among board members across the state.

DETAIL: So what is your division's culture? Is it the words in your literature, or is it the behavior of the people working in your division? The words may describe the professed culture, but the behavior reveals the actual culture. And there are almost always gaps between the words (what sounds good), and the behavior (what gets done). Leadership matters! Effective leadership is essential for closing those gaps. In his 3-part series of webinars for VSBA, Jim Bearden will review, then build on the powerful keynote presentation he made at our 2013 Annual Convention. Sharing additional insights and facilitating hands-on exercises, Jim will provide tools and direction for consciously creating cultures that support behavior essential to division success and student achievement.

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO

If a representative from your division signs up for the series before March 13, your division will receive a 45-minute coaching session with Jim Bearden (usually \$250)! Limit of one coaching session per division.

March 26, 2014 Southwest Hot Topic Conference

LOCATION: Wytheville Meeting Center

DETAIL: This conference will pull together three hot topic issues from across the Commonwealth. First, you will hear from Sam McKinney, the executive director of Communities In Schools of SW VA. Communities In Schools works within the public school system, determining student needs and establishing relationships with local businesses, social service agencies, health care providers, and parent and volunteer organizations to provide needed resources. Participants will also hear from a panel of school division representatives who will share best practices in

the area of mental health services for students. Finally, popular convention speaker Andrew Block, director of the Child Advocacy Clinic at UVA Law, will speak about religious exemptions in Virginia. The presentation will examine and discuss Virginia's system, and board member responsibilities within that system, of granting religious exemptions to compulsory school attendance.

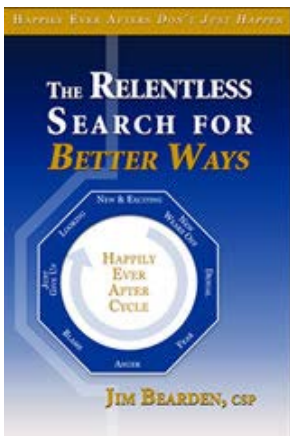
CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO

April 28, 2014 Hot Topic Conference

LOCATION: Norfolk Marriott

DETAIL: This conference will pull together three hot topic issues from across the Commonwealth. First, you will hear from Blaire Denson, the executive director of the Virginia Partnership for Out-of-School Time. Participants will also hear from the VSBA Task Force on Schools in Challenging Environments with an update on the work that they have been doing for the past six month. Then, a panel of school division representatives will present best practices on meaningful partnerships that divisions can share across county and city lines. Finally, Dr. Mark Lineburg, superintendent of Bristol City Public Schools, and Deborah Keys, director of the Council of Urban Boards of Education at the National School Boards Association, will lead a session discussion the similarities between rural and urban school divisions, and also address how good board governance can assist schools in challenging environments. We hope that you will join us for what is sure to be an exciting conference.

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO



Call for Presenters!

Do you or division staff have a powerful "best practice" that can be shared in 30 minutes? If so, the VSBA is looking for presenters for the 2014 VSBA Conference on Education, which is being held on July 22, 2014 in Richmond, VA. **CLICK HERE** to download detailed information and a presentation application.

Making a Difference Through Design

SHW Group is proud of the work we do with our clients in Northern Virginia, Central Virginia, Hampton Roads, the Valley, and beyond. Stay tuned for future installments highlighting their excellent projects! Will your district be next?

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Virginia delegation with Senator Mark Warner.

NSBA Advocacy Institute and Day on the Hill
February 2-4, 2014
Washington, D.C.

Twenty-seven of your school board colleagues attended NSBA's new Advocacy Institute and Lobby Day on Capitol Hill. The Virginia Delegation, led by Federal Relations Chairman Bob Hundley of Hanover County, met with Senator Mark Warner, Senator Tim Kaine, and many of our representatives, including Majority Leader Eric Cantor. The group urged support for ESEA reauthorization, an increase in federal education investments of key foundation programs of Title I and IDEA, and greater control and flexibility for local school boards. Thank you to those members who attended the Advocacy Institute.



Virginia delegation with Senator Tim Kaine.



A special thank you to MB Kahn for sponsoring the Virginia Delegation Strategy Session at the NSBA Advocacy Institute.

Jon Buttram, Fairfax City
Phillip Campbell, Danville City
Jerry Canada, Roanoke County
Ilka Chavez, Manassas City
Steve Constantino, Williamsburg/James City County
Heather Cordasco, Williamsburg/James City County
Dr. Elizabeth Daniels, Portsmouth City
Daniel Edwards, Virginia Beach City

Elise Emanuel, Williamsburg/James City County
Jody Grogan, Staunton City
Beth Hardy, Goochland County
Jannan Holmes, Fredericksburg City
Bob Hundley, Hanover County
Harold Jones, Surry County
Steve Koleszar, Albemarle County
Iris Lane, Westmoreland County
Ruth Larson, Williamsburg/James City County

Annette Lewis, Roanoke City
Jen Little, Mathews County
Keith Nance, Portsmouth City
Jennifer Phillips, Hampton City
Patty Reed, Fairfax County
Shelly Simonds, Newport News City
Warren Stewart, Norfolk City
Michael Stovall, Roanoke County
Kerri Wilson, Harrisonburg City
George Wilson, Danville City



Attendees at VSBA's new member orientation hear from Barbara Haywood (York County) and Brenda Tanner, VSBA consultant.



Attendees at "The School Board's Role in School Improvement and Turnaround Conference" hear from Lauren Morando Rhim, author of "The Killer B's: The Role of School Boards in School Accountability and Transformation."



2014 Capital Conference Recap

This year's Capital Conference included greetings from the new Virginia Secretary of Education Anne Holton, commentary on the "big picture" of Virginia's political scene, an overview of the governor's budget, and an update on legislation being considered in the General Assembly. The conference included a reception that was attended by 35-40 delegates and senators, and fellow school board members conducting many productive visits with legislators.



Virginia Secretary of Education Anne Holton



James Regimbal of Fiscal Analytics, Ltd. reviews the governor's budget with a captive audience.

VSBA Legislative Blog

Regular Updates from the Capital!

<http://vsbalegislativeupdate.blogspot.com>



Dr. Bob Holsworth of Virginia Tomorrow, LLC addresses the Capital Conference audience.

Capital Conference Legislative Reception



Dr. Pat Wright, superintendent of public instruction, and Pat Lacy, VSBA lobbyist



Senator Phillip Puckett (38th District) and Delegate Rob Krupicka (45th District)



Senator Chap Petersen (34th District) and Senator Bill Stanley (20th District)



Dr. Alan Seibert, Salem City superintendent and president of VASS, talks with Delegate Tag Greason (32nd District), Education Reform Subcommittee chairman.



The Petersburg High School Concert Choir provided beautiful background music during the reception.

WHO ARE YOUR LEGISLATORS?

Visit the Virginia General Assembly web site to identify your local legislators and obtain contact information.

CLICK HERE

<http://conview.state.va.us/whosmy.nsf/vgamain?openform>



My Family Says “Yes” To Virginia’s Public Schools—Why Yours Should Too

As a middle class boy growing up in Newport News in the 1970s, I saw my parents experience first-hand the decision to say “Yes” to Virginia’s public schools. The integration of schools had begun, a new private school had broken ground right next to my neighborhood, and many middle class families were nervous about the “new diversity” in the schools. Still, my parents said “Yes” to Virginia’s public schools and that has made all the difference in my life.



Dr. Scott Brabrand, superintendent, Lynchburg City Schools

I challenge every parent who has never taken a sample SOL test to try the questions. These are not the tests you and I took in school years ago. The tests are far more rigorous. Rigorous tests are important to help us prepare for a more competitive world, but they should never be used to call our schools and children failures.

I am glad the General

Assembly is debating SOL reform, because it is long overdue.

2 Real world exposure to diversity is the game-changer for your child’s resume.

My parents could have sent me to that new private academy where students looked like me, talked like me, thought like me and lived like me. Instead, I was introduced to a rich and wide world of diverse thinking, living and believing. The future workforce of America is going to be more and more diverse.

How will keeping my children in a homogeneous environment for 18 years make them more ready for 50+ years of diverse workforce interactions? The most elusive quality for employers is “soft skills,” the ability to connect with anyone and everyone. Public education in Virginia provides the environment for soft-skill creation like no other through classroom instruction, sports, theatre, fine arts, and other activities.

Will the CEO lead only middle class workers? Will the doctor treat only middle class patients? Will the lawyer handle only middle class clients? How do we expect our kids to be leaders in a new multicultural society when they are only surrounded by the few and not the many? The real career edge in a more diverse workplace is for students

who are comfortable interacting with all people.

3 I want my child to be in the Top 10% of society, but will it be a thriving or failing society?

I know some parents who say that their kids must be in the Top 10% of society and serve as society’s future leaders in business, government, medicine, and industry. But will they lead in a thriving society or a failing society?

Jared Diamond’s New York Times Best Seller “Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed” concludes with a powerful argument. Diamond notes after studying societies like the Mayans or those on Easter Island that no longer exist that, “in the long run, rich people do not secure their own interest and those of their children if they rule over a collapsing society and merely buy themselves the privilege of being the last to starve or die.”

Some say education should just be an individual’s choice. But by investing in public education, you are not only investing in your child’s individual future, but investing in the future of the society in which he or she will thrive.

* * *

Today, we have a choice. I, like my parents before me, have chosen to say “Yes” to public education for my children. I don’t believe the false narrative of failure. I see that my children are having tremendous success when they bring home their grades. I watch them building the “soft skills” necessary to compete in the 21st century workplace. In Virginia’s public schools, I know they are getting the real training to be leaders for the 21st century.

It is time again for Virginians to reaffirm their commitment to children, to families, and to the future of our society and say “Yes” to public education.

Over four decades later, my wife and I face the same choice my parents did. Diversity has only increased since then—socio-economically, ethnically, and religiously. Public education has been mislabeled as failing. And we too have still said “Yes.”

If you have considered saying “No,” here are the reasons you should say “Yes” to Virginia’s public schools.

* * *

1 The current labels of failure on our public schools are false.

SOLs and the obsession with testing that has dominated the last 20 years have produced a false narrative of failure for public schools. In fact, it shows that testing has become so negatively associated with education that it is assumed, in some families, that private schools with no SOL test results to share are better than public schools. If SOL tests are that important, shouldn’t private and home school students take these same tests? Shouldn’t every parent know the SOL test score for their child? If you don’t buy that argument, then don’t use these same tests to buy the argument that public schools are failing.



The Virginia School Boards Association is proud to sponsor the U.S. Communities Government Purchasing Alliance. U.S. Communities is the leading national government purchasing cooperative that reduces the cost of goods and services by aggregating the purchasing power of public agencies nationwide.

CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION



National School Boards Association

NSBA Sets Up a National Connection

By Lisa Bartusek, NSBA associate executive director

Virginia school boards will have access to enhanced national services this year through a partnership between VSBA and the National School Boards Association. In early December, the VSBA Board of Directors endorsed changes being made by the National School Boards Association to the long-standing National Affiliate program, which has engaged more than 1,600 school divisions nationally, including several in Virginia.

First, the program is getting a new name, National Connection, to reflect the important partnership between school divisions, their state school boards associations, and NSBA, working together to share best practices across the country.

Participating school divisions will receive a package of new resources designed to help school boards and division leaders stay on the leading edge of American public education. The new resources include:

- **Federal Insider:** This resource includes federal policy analysis and reports on major actions of Congress and federal agencies, as well as implementation guidance that can save your division time and money in complying with mandates. In addition, participating school division will received details of federal legal cases that will impact the way your division operates, as well as regular updates on school law issues across the country.
- **The Public Engagement Toolkit:** This resource includes practical tools that boards and division leaders can use to build public understanding and engagement around major educational issues, and to help create the public and community support for the local division and for American public education.
- **The School Board Leadership Resource Center and CPE Briefing Room:** These two resources provide national school improvement research, best practices and

examples from high-performing school systems, along with expert guidance that can help school boards set a course for improving student achievement and division excellence.

- **Meet the Experts:** Some of the nation's leading thinkers and experts on public education are scheduled in monthly webinars, providing a 24/7 method for school boards across the country to hear from nationally recognized speakers.
- Money-saving resources such as a guide to the latest education grants and funding opportunities, as well as discounts on other NSBA publications and Annual Conference registration fees.
- Timely reports that can help you understand national trends and issues related to public education leadership through NSBA's award-winning magazine, American School Board Journal, and weekly e-newsletter, School Board News This Week.

"It is important for school boards to take a state and national view and have the latest information on public education issues. Participating divisions help support NSBA as a strong national voice on behalf of public education and local governance," said Gina Patterson, VSBA executive director.

For more information, visit <http://www.nsba.org/NationalConnection>

YOU'RE INVITED

VSBA Breakfast at the NSBA Convention

Where: Hilton New Orleans Riverside

When: Saturday April 5, 2014 at 7:30 a.m.

Cost: FREE - thanks to generous donations from MB Kahn Construction and Moseley Architects

Speaker: Marie Bilik, NSBA chief operating officer

You must preregister to attend. The deadline for reservations is March 14, 2014. Call VSBA for information at 800-446-8722 or e-mail Kim Hodges at khodges@vsba.org



Designing The Future ...
One School at a Time.



106 Virginia School Boards Pass Resolutions Supporting Lawsuit Challenging OEI Legislation

Eighty percent of Virginia's school boards have passed resolutions in support of the August lawsuit filed by the Virginia School Boards Association and Norfolk City School Board to invalidate the 2013 legislation creating the Opportunity Educational Institution (OEI) and Opportunity Educational Institution Board. Additionally, two city councils (Alexandria City and Norfolk City), one board of supervisors (Madison County), and the Virginia Chapter of NAACP have passed resolutions in support of the suit.

If your division has passed a resolution in support of the OEI lawsuit and you are not on this list, please e-mail Peter J. Sengenberger, assistant executive director, at peter@vsba.org.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| Albemarle County | Fredericksburg City | Martinsville City | Roanoke County |
| Alleghany County | Giles County | Mathews County | Rockbridge County |
| Amelia County | Gloucester County | Middlesex County | Rockingham County |
| Appomattox County | Goochland County | Montgomery County | Russell County |
| Augusta County | Grayson County | Nelson County | Salem City |
| Alexandria City | Greensville County | New Kent County | Scott County |
| Bath County | Hampton City | Newport News City | Shenandoah County |
| Bedford County | Harrisonburg City | Northampton County | Smyth County |
| Bland County | Halifax County | Norton City | Spotsylvania County |
| Botetourt County | Henry County | Nottoway County | Staunton City |
| Bristol City | Highland County | Orange County | Suffolk City |
| Buchanan County | Hopewell City | Page County | Surry County |
| Buckingham County | Isle of Wight County | Petersburg City | Tazewell County |
| Campbell County | King George County | Pittsylvania County | Virginia Beach City |
| Caroline County | King William County | Portsmouth City | Washington County |
| Carroll County | Lancaster County | Powhatan County | Waynesboro City |
| Charles City County | Lee County | Prince Edward County | West Point Town |
| Charlotte County | Loudoun County | Prince William County | Westmoreland County |
| Charlottesville City | Lunenburg County | Pulaski County | Williamsburg/James City County |
| Chesapeake City | Lynchburg City | Radford City | Wise County |
| Clarke County | Madison County | Rappahannock County | Wythe County |
| Colonial Heights City | Manassas City | Richmond City | York County |
| Covington City | Manassas Park City | Roanoke City | |
| Craig County | | | |
| Culpeper County | | | |
| Cumberland County | | | |
| Danville City | | | |
| Dickenson County | | | |
| Dinwiddie County | | | |
| Essex County | | | |
| Fairfax City | | | |
| Fairfax County | | | |
| Falls Church City | | | |
| Fauquier County | | | |
| Floyd County | | | |
| Fluvanna County | | | |
| Franklin City | | | |
| Franklin County | | | |

FACEBOOK FACTS

Teens ↓

The number of teens (13-17) on Facebook has declined -25.3% over the last 3 years.

Folks ↑

Over the same period of time, the number of users 55+ has exploded with +80.4% growth in the last 3 years.

If your division is using Facebook as one method to communicate with stakeholders, make sure you know what groups you are reaching!

SEE THE FULL REPORT



February 17-21 is School Board Clerk Appreciation Week

THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR HARD WORK!



VSBA is partnering with checXchange to provide an efficient method of electronically recovering NSF checks that are passed through school division accounts every day. There is no division cost to participate in this service. The division pays no upfront retainer or annual renewal fee for this protection.

For more information, **click here to download a PDF flier**



Student Art Contest

The VSBA student art contest is held in conjunction with the VSBA Regional Spring Network Forums. For detailed information, please download the following: <http://www.vaschoolboards.org/images/uploads/2014ArtContestInformation.pdf>

2014 VSBA Regional Spring Network Forum Schedule

- TIDEWATER** – Wednesday, March 12
- CENTRAL** – Monday, March 17
- NORTHEASTERN** – Thursday, March 20
- EASTERN** – Monday, March 24
- SOUTHSIDE** – Wednesday, April 9
- VALLEY** – Wednesday, April 23
- SOUTHERN** – Wednesday, April 30
- BLUE RIDGE** – Wednesday, May 7
- SOUTHWEST** – Thursday, May 8

VSBA Board of Directors

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Gina G. Patterson, executive director

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assistant executive director



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

MISSION STATEMENT

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

VISION STATEMENT

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