VSBA Equity in Education Month
March 2020
March 2020 – VSBA EQUITY IN EDUCATION MONTH

Dear School Board Member/Superintendent:

In an effort to encourage equity in education, the VSBA Board of Directors has designated the month of March as VSBA Equity in Education Month.

Equity in education is a significant challenge nationwide. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2017 the majority of public-school students were students of color, and more than half of public school students qualify for subsidized meals due to low family income. Public education has struggled to serve these students both adequately and equitably. When inequity in education persists, there is a cost to all involved including missed opportunities for economic development, greater dependence on government supports, and fewer Americans ready to serve and lead.

School board members, superintendents, teachers, and families play a critical role in creating a climate and curriculum where all students receive the resources they need, so they graduate prepared for success after high school.

VSBA will publicize Equity in Education Month in our newsletter, on the VSBA website, through social media and will send out a statewide news release urging news organizations to provide coverage of local activities. School divisions are encouraged to issue their own news releases, and it would be helpful if divisions would apprise the VSBA of any related activities taking place in their division. Potential activities could include:

- Adopt a proclamation similar to the one adopted by the VSBA Board of Directors (see enclosed).
- Write a letter to the editor or contact a local reporter to see if they will do a story about educational equity initiatives taking place in the division.
- Hold school or division student contests (poster, video, writing, etc.) around the theme of “Equity in Education.”
- Conduct community workshops on equity, which could include the opportunity for community members to share information on their ethnicity and background, highlighting the similarity and diversity among members of the group.

This guide includes several resources to assist you in these efforts, including references to policies on equity adopted by boards in Virginia, a sample news release, and a proclamation adopted by the VSBA Board of Directors.

We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to spread awareness, examine and discuss strategies, and review current trends and best practices that will positively impact the educational outcomes for all students.

Sincerely,

Rodney A. Jordan
VSBA President

Gina G. Patterson
Executive Director
SAMPLE EQUITY POLICIES

The divisions below have adopted a policy that addresses educational equity. Please review the policies below, and follow the link to view the policy in its entirety.

Mathews County Public Schools
File: DAB EQUITY POLICY

A. Purpose

The Mathews County School Board has adopted this policy to ensure equitable and fair educational opportunities for all students by allocating resources fairly and equitably, providing diverse learning opportunities, and demonstrating the commitment of equity and fairness across the school division...

Full policy available here.

Norfolk City Public Schools
DAB. EQUITY POLICY

I. PURPOSE
With the aim of being the cornerstone of a proudly diverse community, the School Board of the City of Norfolk believes that all students, regardless of their background, deserve a high quality and respectful learning environment where diversity is valued and used toward achieving...

Full policy available here.

Roanoke City Public Schools
Code: DAB EQUITY POLICY

I. Purpose
The School Board has adopted this policy to ensure equitable and fair educational opportunities for all students by allocating resources fairly and equitably, providing diverse learning opportunities, and demonstrating the commitment of equity and fairness across the...

Full policy available here.

Additional information from the United States Department of Education and the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) is available by visiting:
https://www.ed.gov/equity,
https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look.pdf,
WHEREAS, inequities in schools have become an increasingly significant challenge in the United States and Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the majority of school-aged students are children of color and over fifty percent of public-school students qualify for subsidized meals; and

WHEREAS, we recognize that factors including, but not limited to, disability, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status have a demonstrated history of impacting the educational opportunities provided to a student; and

WHEREAS, the promise of public education is for every child to be successful in school and life; and

WHEREAS, it is important for Virginia families, students, teachers, and school administrators to be aware of the diverse needs of learners, and to encourage discussion of the challenges as a school community; and

WHEREAS, the VSBA has established a Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments to make recommendations and to stay at the forefront of discussions on equity in Virginia schools;

WHEREAS, we recognize that inequities in resources, including educational settings, supplies, technology, and building, impedes student learning;

Now, THEREFORE, Be it Resolved, the Virginia School Boards Association recognizes the month of March 2020 as VSBA Equity in Education Month, with the intention that educational equity, best practices, and programming be discussed in Virginia’s schools, communities and classrooms during that time.
SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release
[DATE]

Contact
[NAME]
[PHONE]

March Is VSBA Equity in Education Month

[CITY/COUNTY], VA -- School board members, superintendents, teachers, and families can play a critical role in creating a climate and curriculum where all students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for success after high school. This is why the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) has declared March to be VSBA Equity in Education Month.

Equity in education is a significant problem nationwide. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2017 the majority of public-school students were students of color, and more than half of public schools’ students qualify for subsidized meals due to low family income. Public education has struggled to serve these students both adequately and equitably. When inequity in education persists, there is a cost to all involved including missed opportunities for economic development, greater dependence on government supports, and fewer Americans ready to serve and lead.

[INSERT QUOTE FROM BOARD MEMBER AND/OR SUPERINTENDENT]

Local activities include [INSERT LIST OF ACTIVITIES]

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