



**VSBA**

Virginia School Boards Association

# Equity in Education Month Guide

March 2024



*Participation in VSBA initiatives and observances is optional. School boards in Virginia have the discretion on whether to participate locally. Any related materials from the Association are shared as suggested ideas for implementation for any member board that may choose to do so.*

# March 2024 – VSBA Equity in Education Month

Dear School Board Members and Superintendents:

School systems exist to deliver positive student outcomes. Public schools in Virginia drive our Commonwealth's economic, social, and quality of life excellence through their commitment to preparing our students for success in college, career, military, and other productive pathways our students pursue. To increase awareness of and support for each and every student in Virginia, the VSBA Board of Directors has designated the month of March as VSBA Equity in Education Month.

The VSBA Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments was established by the Board of Directors in 2013 to educate state and local policy makers how VSBA can partner to help challenged students and 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. As a result of listening to board members and superintendents, interacting with parents and students, conducting extensive data analyses, and engaging with public and private sector leaders, the Task Force determined that every school division in Virginia serves students who can benefit from this month-long focus combined with year-round action.

The Task Force has played a key role in providing federal, state, and local school boards with best practices for educating students in challenged schools and students who may face unique challenges no matter which school they attend. As part of this, the Task Force developed five areas of best practice to help improve the equity in education. We must work together to ensure that all students, regardless of their zip code, area of the state they reside in, or size of their school division, receive the support necessary to achieve positive academic outcomes. From NOVA to Southside, the Urban Crescent to the Rural Backbone, when inequities persist, there are costs to all involved including missed opportunities for economic development, greater dependence on government supports, and fewer Virginians 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, and through social media. 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 like 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, highlight the similarity and diversity among members of the group.


This guide includes several resources to assist you in these efforts, including references to the five areas of focus, 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,



Dr. Cardell Patillo  
VSBA President



Gina G. Patterson  
Executive Director

## Areas of Focus & Best Practices

In October 2014, the Virginia School Boards Association adopted a comprehensive and aspirational report from the Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments. The Task Force named this report 1.0 with an emphasis on following up with future work. The Task Force, after considerable deliberation and attention to best practices and research, prioritized five domains in the 1.0 report, which were each addressed individually:

- Community & Family Engagement
- Funding & Resources
- Specialized Training
- Student Learning
- Teacher Quality

The Task Force targeted the following groups and aligned practices with advocacy of these groups:

- School Board/Governance Leadership Teams
- Community Groups
- Internal/External Stakeholders (e.g., faculty, parents, business, community, local government)
- General Assembly, including the governor and state officials
- VSBA

In the Spring and Summer of 2018, the VSBA asked the Students and Schools in Challenging Environments Task Force to review the impact of the report. Surveys were completed by school divisions across the Commonwealth indicating that there was a profound impact from the Task Force Report, even with still much work to be done.

# VSBA Board of Directors Proclamation

**WHEREAS**, the Commonwealth of Virginia believes each child in our public education system deserves to receive what they need, when they need it to advance student outcomes; and

**WHEREAS**, inequities in schools have become an increasingly significant challenge in the United States and Virginia; and

**WHEREAS**, unfinished learning exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic impacted every school division in Virginia; and

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

**WHEREAS**, it is important for Virginia families, school boards, 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 academic excellence in Virginia schools; and

**WHEREAS**, the Task Force has published three reports including *The State of Students and Schools in Challenging Environments in Virginia – “The Global Health Crisis & Its Impact on Student Performance;”* and

**WHEREAS**, we recognize that inequities in resources, including educational settings, supplies, technology, and buildings impede student learning;

Now, **THEREFORE**, Be it Resolved, that the Virginia School Boards Association recognizes the month of March 2024 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.

## News Release

For Immediate Release

[DATE]

### Contact

[NAME]

[EMAIL, 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 as VSBA Equity in Education Month.

Equity in education is a significant challenge nationwide. According to the National Center for Education statistics, most public-school students are students of color, and more than half of public-school students qualify for subsidized meals due to low family income. Analysis of student performance data since the COVID-19 pandemic indicates students from every part of our Commonwealth are striving to reach pre-pandemic academic levels. Additionally, large numbers of Virginia’s students are facing heightened mental health conditions.

We must ensure that all students, no matter their zip code, area of the state they reside in, or size of their school division, receive the support necessary to achieve positive academic outcomes and well-being. When inequity in education persists, there is a cost to all involved, including missed opportunities for economic development, greater dependence on government support, and fewer Virginians ready to serve and lead.

[INSERT QUOTE FROM BOARD MEMBER AND/OR SUPERINTENDENT]

Local activities include [INSERT LIST OF ACTIVITIES]

### About the Virginia School Boards Association

The Virginia School Boards Association, a voluntary, nonpartisan organization of Virginia school boards, promotes excellence in public education through advocacy, training and services. The Association offers conferences, information, training, and counseling designed to meet the needs of the Commonwealth’s educational leaders.

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