



Rivanna Ridge Professional Building  
200 Hansen Road, Suite 2  
Charlottesville, VA 22911

# News Release

## For Immediate Release

March 14, 2024

### Contact

Gina Patterson, executive director  
434-295-8722 or [gina@vsba.org](mailto:gina@vsba.org)

### Virginia School Boards Association Hosts Screening of Documentary: *The Right to Read*

**Charlottesville, VA** – This evening marked a pivotal occasion as the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) hosted an exclusive screening of the documentary, *The Right to Read*. This carefully curated event brought together a diverse audience comprising school board members, superintendents, legislators, educators, and community leaders, united by a shared commitment to the vital topic of literacy.

The documentary, *The Right to Read*, weaves together narratives of activism, teaching, and the struggles faced by two American families in their quest to equip the youngest generation with a crucial life skill—the ability to read. Experts featured in the film explore into the current state of literacy in the United States, emphasizing the urgency of incorporating the science of reading into classrooms nationwide.

The evening unfolded into a thought-provoking panel discussion featuring Virginia State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Lisa Coons, alongside VSBA Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments Co-Chairs, Rodney Jordan, school board member in Norfolk City and Dr. Jason Van Heukelum, superintendent of Winchester City Public Schools. The panel engaged in a dynamic conversation, exploring the profound implications of the documentary, and outlining strategies to advance literacy initiatives in Virginia schools through the Virginia Literacy Act.

Rodney Jordan, Chair of the VSBA Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments, expressed enthusiasm about the event's success, stating, "The positive response to the screening of *The Right to Read* exceeded our expectations. The turnout and engagement showcased a collective dedication to prioritizing literacy education and to a renewed commitment by school boards to govern continuous improvement systems that are student outcomes focused on driving reading excellence for each student."

Attendees were vocal in their appreciation for the opportunity to partake in meaningful dialogue, collaboratively exploring solutions to enhance literacy outcomes for all students. The event left many inspired, ready to take proactive measures in their communities and advocate for policies that place literacy education at the forefront.

For those unable to attend the screening, the Virginia School Boards Association is committed to ensuring continued access to the documentary and related resources. Member school boards will have the opportunity to engage with this valuable content, furthering the conversation and fostering positive change in literacy initiatives across the state. The VSBA remains dedicated to championing literacy reform, recognizing it as a cornerstone for unlocking the full potential of the students in the Commonwealth.



**Virginia School Boards Association**

Rivanna Ridge Professional Building  
200 Hansen Road, Suite 2  
Charlottesville, VA 22911

### **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.

### **About The Right to Read**

*The Right to Read*, directed by Jenny Mackenzie and Executive Produced by LeVar Burton is a documentary and social impact campaign that strives to bring awareness to the crucial importance of literacy as a civil right and advance the growing movement to utilize evidence-based approaches to literacy instruction in classrooms across the US. The documentary shares the stories of an activist, a teacher, and two American families who fight to provide our youngest generation with the ability to read, underscoring the importance of literacy as a civil rights issue.

**###**