



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

Leadership · Advocacy · Support

VSBA Public Education Initiative Toolkit

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Educate  Empower  Elevate 

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.

VSBA Public Education Initiative

We are excited to introduce the VSBA Public Education Initiative Toolkit – a resource designed to support you as we work together to champion public education across the Commonwealth of Virginia. This toolkit has been crafted to empower you with creative ways to engage your communities, communicate the vital role of public education, and amplify the voices that make our schools a place of growth and opportunity for all students.

What's Inside the Toolkit?

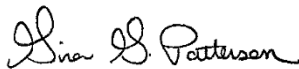
The toolkit provides essential tools for launching and sustaining meaningful community engagement, including:

- **Creative Engagement Ideas:** Ways to connect with and inspire your audience, both virtually and in person.
- **Key Benefits and Talking Points:** Highlight the powerful impacts of public education and how it prepares students for success beyond the classroom.
- **Sample Email:** A ready-to-use message to introduce the initiative to stakeholders, parents, and community members.
- **Sample News Release:** A press release template to inform local media and the community about your efforts.
- **Social Media Templates and Images:** Posts for Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram, along with VSBA-provided images for you to share on social platforms.

We encourage you to use these resources to inform, engage, and encourage support within your communities, emphasizing how quality public education benefits every child and strengthens our society. Together, we can foster a greater appreciation for the investments and innovations within our schools.

Thank you for your continued dedication to public education in Virginia. Let's make a lasting impact by promoting and protecting the value of our public schools!

Sincerely,



Gina Patterson
Executive Director

Creative ways to engage in this initiative

Why it Matters

Public schools are the heart of Virginia's communities, fostering growth, collaboration, and success for future generations. The VSBA Public Education Initiative provides an opportunity for schools, divisions, and communities across the Commonwealth to come together, celebrate, promote, and strengthen the value of public education. Below are some creative and meaningful ways that Virginia's schools and divisions can engage with their communities, businesses, and organizations to support and promote public education across the Commonwealth.

1. School-Based Activities

Encourage schools to participate in a variety of fun, educational, and engaging activities that unite students, staff, and families in celebrating Virginia's public education.

- **Student-Led Public Relations:** Empower students to create videos, podcasts, or blogs sharing positive stories about their school experiences. These stories can be shared on school websites or social media platforms using the #VSBA4PublicEd and #EducateEmpowerElevate hashtags and the VSBA website.
- **Art & Essay Contests:** Organize contests where students create artwork or write essays on the theme "What Public Education Means to Me." Display the winning entries at schools, division offices, or community centers.
- **Public Education Spirit Day:** Host a spirit day where students and staff wear clothing representing their school or division. Partner with local businesses to offer discounts to participants showing school spirit.

2. Engage Parents & Families

Involve parents and families to amplify the message of public education and help reach a broader audience.

- **Family Engagement Nights:** Host events at school such as "Public School Pep Rally," parent workshops on supporting student success, or a community talent show.
- **Letters of Support:** Encourage parents to write letters to local newspapers or post on social media about the positive impact Virginia's public schools have had on their children.

3. Community Partnerships

Build lasting connections with local businesses and community centers to engage the broader community in supporting public education.

- **Business & Organization Sponsorships:** Partner with local businesses to sponsor events or public displays promoting education. Display "Proud Supporter of Public Education" posters in storefronts or community spaces.
- **Community Ambassador Program:** Create a network of community leaders who serve as ambassadors for the initiative, helping spread the message and host campaign-related events in their communities.

4. Connect with Local Leaders

Involve local government and influential figures that can further spread the message and show the importance of public education.

- **Proclamation Day:** Work with city or county officials to declare a “Support Public Education Day.” Hold a ceremony at city hall with students, community leaders, and local officials.
- **School Tours for Officials:** Invite local leaders, including city council members and business owners, to tour schools, observe programs, and participate in a roundtable discussion on how the community can further support public schools.

5. Media & Storytelling

Utilize local media and school channels to promote the positive impact of public education in Virginia.

- **Storytelling Campaign:** Collect and share stories from alumni, teachers, and staff who are making a difference. Feature these stories on social media, in school newsletters, and with local media outlets.
- **Media Partnerships:** Partner with local radio and television stations to air segments featuring school success stories, interviews with students and parents, or discussions with school leaders.

Notable Alumni Recognition: Sample Award Outline

To further celebrate the impact of public education, school divisions across Virginia can create a Notable Alumni Award to recognize distinguished graduates who have gone on to achieve great success in their fields. This award will honor alumni who exemplify the values and success of Virginia’s public education system.

Award Criteria:

- Nominees must be graduates of a Virginia public school.
- Alumni must demonstrate significant achievement in their profession or community.
- The nominee’s accomplishments should align with the value of public education, such as promoting equity, contributing to their community, or advancing knowledge in their field.

Nomination Process:

- Schools or community members may submit nominations through an online form or written submission.
- A selection committee comprising school board members, educators, and community leaders will review the nominations.
- The award can be presented annually at a community event, school board meeting, or school-wide celebration.

Recognition:

- Award recipients can be honored with a plaque or trophy, and their story can be featured on the school’s website, newsletter, and social media.
- Host an event or ceremony to honor the recipient, involving students and community members.
- Share the alumni’s story with local media to inspire current students and further promote the value of public education.

By implementing a Notable Alumni Award, school divisions can celebrate the long-term success of their graduates and highlight the lasting benefits of public education in Virginia.

Key Benefits and Talking Points

At the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA), we recognize the essential role public education plays in shaping the future of our students, communities, and the Commonwealth as a whole. Virginia's public schools serve as the foundation of opportunity, fostering academic achievement, personal growth, and civic engagement. As part of our ongoing efforts to promote public education, we provide valuable tools to highlight the positive impact of public schools across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The following talking points are designed to help school division and community leaders communicate the importance of public education, emphasizing its benefits to all stakeholders. By consistently reinforcing these messages, we can strengthen support for public schools, showcase their achievements, and advocate for the resources necessary to continue providing high-quality education to every student in the Commonwealth.

How to use these talking points:

- **Public Speeches and Presentations:** Bring these points into your speeches at community events, school board meetings, and public forums to reinforce the value of public education
- **Media Engagement:** Refer to these talking points to maintain consistent, positive, messaging about public education when interacting with the media.
- **Communications Materials:** Feature these messages in newsletters, social media posts, and other communications with parents and the wider community.
- **Advocacy Efforts:** Draw on these points in conversations with legislators and policymakers to advocate for continued support and funding for public education.

By sharing these key messages, school division leaders can effectively promote the value and impact of public education in Virginia, fostering positive narratives and building support from communities and stakeholders.

Key Benefits of Public Education in Virginia

Fostering Equity and Inclusivity

Public Education in Virginia ensures that every child, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or background, has access to high-quality learning. This inclusivity helps bridge gaps, and allows for all students to succeed. Virginia's schools are melting pots where students from diverse backgrounds learn to appreciate differences, setting the foundation for a more inclusive community.

Promoting Economic Growth

Investing in public education is an investment in Virginia's future workforce. A well-educated population drives innovation, productivity, and economic growth. Public schools in Virginia prepare students with the necessary skills for them to enter the job market, helping to build a strong and adaptable economy.

Reducing Crime and Enhancing Public Safety

Education and reduced crime rates go hand in hand. By providing quality education, Virginia's public schools help reduce the likelihood of criminal behavior, leading to safer communities. Schools provide values, opportunities, and discipline that steer youth toward productive futures.

Supporting Social Mobility

Public education offers students from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty. In Virginia, public schools empower students to aspire for success, equipping them with the tools necessary to achieve upward mobility and improve their quality of life.

Nurturing Talent and Creativity

Virginia's public schools provide the necessary resources for students to develop their unique talents. Whether in the arts, sciences, athletics, or vocational skills, public schools nurture creativity, fostering a vibrant, diverse society.

Building Community and Social Cohesion

Public schools are integral to Virginia's communities. They serve as hubs of social interaction, bringing students, parents, and community members together through events, extracurricular activities, and school projects that strengthen bonds and foster unity.

Ensuring Accountability and Standards

Virginia's public schools are held to high standards and accountability measures, which ensures students receive high-quality education. The oversight of the public ensures that schools adhere to educational standards and continuously strive for improvement, maintaining trust and support from the community.

Key Talking Points – Areas of Emphasis

Student Achievement and Growth

- **Academic Success:** Share stories of students excelling academically, from high standardized test scores to awards in academic competitions.
- **Graduation Rates:** Highlight the rising graduation rates in Virginia's public schools, showcasing how schools are preparing students for success beyond high school.
- **College and Career Readiness:** Promote how Virginia's public schools equip students for college and the workforce, offering advanced placement, dual enrollment, and career and technical education (CTE) programs.
- **Innovative Programs:** Showcase the innovative learning approaches and programs designed to engage diverse learners and cater to individual student needs.

Comprehensive Education

- **Whole Child Approach:** Virginia's public schools address academic, social, emotional, and physical well-being through comprehensive services for all students.
- **Extracurricular Opportunities:** Promote the variety of extracurricular programs – from sports to the arts – that contribute to students' holistic development.
- **Health and Wellness Programs:** Share how Virginia's schools implement health and wellness initiatives that support healthy lifestyles and student well-being.
- **Community Service and Civic Engagement:** Highlight how students are encouraged to give back through community service and civic engagement, fostering responsibility and involvement.

Community and Economic Impact

- **Community Hubs:** Virginia's public schools serve as community hubs, offering essential services, fostering engagement, and promoting volunteerism.
- **Economic Drivers:** Emphasize the role of public schools in driving Virginia's economy by preparing a skilled workforce and attracting businesses.
- **Local Partnerships:** Showcase the partnerships between schools and local businesses, non-profits, and organizations that enrich educational opportunities.
- **Public Events:** Publicize the events and activities hosted by schools that bring the community together and celebrate local culture and traditions.

Equity and Access

- **Inclusive Education:** Public schools in Virginia are committed to providing equitable access to quality education for all students, regardless of background.
- **Special Education Services:** Highlight the robust support systems for students with special needs, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to succeed.
- **Language Support Programs:** Share the resources available for English language learners, helping them achieve academic success.
- **Diverse Learning Environments:** Promote efforts to create inclusive environments that respect and celebrate cultural differences.

Supporting public education in Virginia is not just a moral imperative – it's a strategic investment in the future of our Commonwealth. When we champion public education, we commit to a prosperous, fair, and unified society. The benefits of this commitment extend far beyond the classroom, impacting every aspect of life in Virginia. We all – policymakers, educators, parents, and citizens – have a role to play in ensuring public education remains a strong and vibrant pillar of our communities.

Sample Email

Subject: Join Us in Supporting Public Education in X County/City

Hello Teachers, Parents, and Community Members,

We are excited to share an opportunity to promote public education and celebrate the positive stories from our schools! As part of a **Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA)** initiative, we are joining the effort to highlight the incredible impact of public education in our communities through the statewide campaign, **“Educate, Empower, Elevate.”**

Public education in Virginia is the foundation of our state's success, with 1.2 million students enrolled in public schools. Every child deserves an equitable and excellent education, and it is up to us to ensure they have the support they need to thrive. Together, we can elevate the recognition and appreciation of public schools across [INSERT COUNTY/CITY] and the Commonwealth.

Our goal is to increase community engagement, improve the perception of, and build support for public education. To achieve this, we invite you to join us in a dynamic social media campaign by sharing the positive stories and successes from your schools. Please use the hashtags **#SupportPublicEducation**, **#VSBA4PublicEd**, and **#ChampionsForImpact** to showcase the difference public education is making in students' lives.

Let's work together to **Educate, Empower, and Elevate** public schools and the amazing work happening every day in classrooms across Virginia.

Thank you for your dedication to our students and your continued support in this important campaign.

Sincerely,
[Organization/School Division]

Sample News Release

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

[DATE]

Contact

[NAME]

[PHONE]

[SCHOOL DIVISION] Shows Support for Public Education Through the VSBA Public Education Initiative

[CITY/COUNTY], VA – [SCHOOL DIVISION] is proud to join the Virginia Schools Boards Association (VSBA) in its mission to elevate public education across the Commonwealth. Through the VSBA Public Education Initiative, our school division is committed to spotlighting the impact and importance of public schools in preparing students for bright futures and building strong communities.

As part of this initiative, [SCHOOL DIVISION] will be participating in various outreach efforts, including community events, social media campaigns, and engagement with local stakeholders. These efforts are designed to celebrate the achievements within our schools, share stories of student and staff success, and highlight the many ways public education enriches our community.

[Insert quote from Superintendent, e.g. 'Public education is the foundation of our community, offering every student the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed. We are committed to supporting this initiative and continuing to showcase the extraordinary value of public education in [SCHOOL DIVISION],' said Superintendent [NAME].]

Through this initiative, [SCHOOL DIVISION] aims to engage with parents, local leaders, and community members to strengthen the support for public schools. We encourage everyone in our community to follow our social media channels and share their own stories of how public education has made a difference in their lives, using the hashtag #VSBA4PublicEd.

For more information on the VSBA Public Education Initiative or to learn more about how [SCHOOL DIVISION] is participating, please visit [School Division's Website or Contact Information].

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Sample Social Media Posts - #VSBA4PublicEd

This section of the toolkit provides you with ready-made social media posts and images to help amplify the message of the VSBA Public Education Initiative across your platforms. Crafted for Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram, these templates make it easy to share the importance of public education in a consistent and impactful way. All images can be downloaded from the linked SharePoint folder, where new images will be added throughout the year to keep your content fresh and engaging. Don't forget to use the hashtag #VSBA4PublicEd in your posts to connect with the larger community supporting Virginia's public schools. Use these resources to engage with your community, celebrate our public schools, and inspire ongoing support for public education across Virginia.

Sample Facebook/Instagram/X Posts:

Educate, Empower, Elevate! ✨ Public education opens doors to success and lifelong learning. Let's continue to invest in our students' futures. #VSBA4PublicEd #EducateEmpowerElevate

Our students are the leaders of tomorrow. 🌟 Through public education, we can empower every child to reach their full potential! #VSBA4PublicEd #PublicEducationMatters #FutureLeaders #EducateEmpowerElevate

Did you know? Public education provides a solid foundation for every student, preparing them for careers, college, and beyond. 🏠 #VSBA4PublicEd #EducationForAll #InvestInOurStudents #PublicSchools

The return on investment in public education is priceless—stronger communities, brighter futures! 🏠 Let's continue to support our local schools. #VSBA4PublicEd #ChampionsForImpact

Public schools don't just educate—they empower. 💡 Together, we elevate every student, teacher, and community! #VSBA4PublicEd #ElevateEducation #EmpowerStudents

From career & technical education to STEM, our public schools are shaping the future. 🌐 Let's continue to support and celebrate these opportunities! #VSBA4PublicEd #STEMEducation #CareerTech #EmpowerStudents

Every student deserves the chance to succeed! 🏠 Public education provides a path forward for all. Let's continue to invest in our future leaders. #VSBA4PublicEd #PublicEducation #EducationForAll #SupportPublicSchools

Public education is a cornerstone of strong communities. 🏠 Support your local schools and watch your community thrive! #VSBA4PublicEd #EducateEmpowerElevate

Today's students, tomorrow's innovators! 🚀 Public education is key to creating future problem-solvers and leaders. #VSBA4PublicEd

A well-rounded education empowers students for life. 🏠 Together, we can continue to elevate public education for all. #VSBA4PublicEd #EducateEmpowerElevate #SupportOurSchools #PublicEducation

Shoutout to all the amazing teachers in our public schools! 🍎 Your dedication shapes the future. Let's show our appreciation today and every day. #VSBA4PublicEd #TeachersMatter #ThankATeacher #EducateEmpowerElevate

Public schools are the heart of our communities. ♥ When we invest in education, we invest in our future. Support public education and watch our communities grow! #VSBA4PublicEd #PublicEducation #CommunityStrong #SupportOurSchools

[Click here to access the SharePoint folder with all the images shown below.](#)

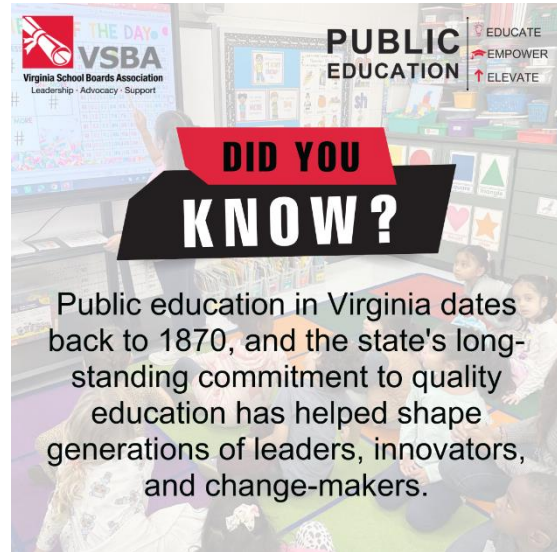


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DID YOU KNOW?

Virginia public schools serve over 1.2 million students each year, preparing them for college, careers, and lifelong learning.

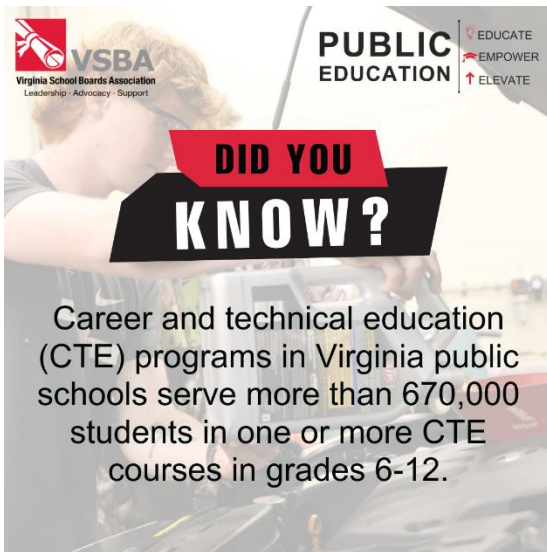


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DID YOU KNOW?

Public education in Virginia dates back to 1870, and the state's long-standing commitment to quality education has helped shape generations of leaders, innovators, and change-makers.

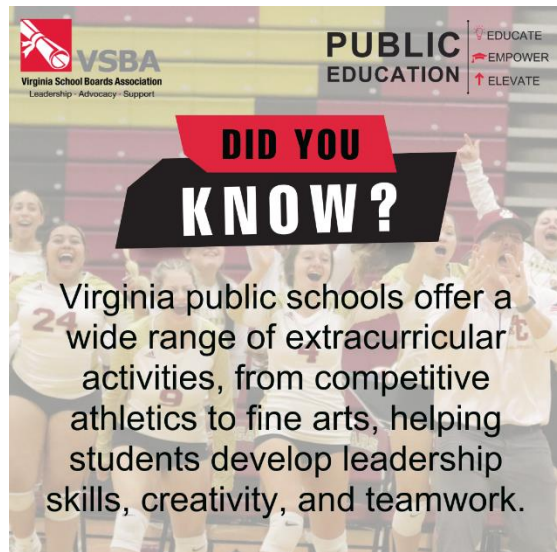


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DID YOU KNOW?

Career and technical education (CTE) programs in Virginia public schools serve more than 670,000 students in one or more CTE courses in grades 6-12.

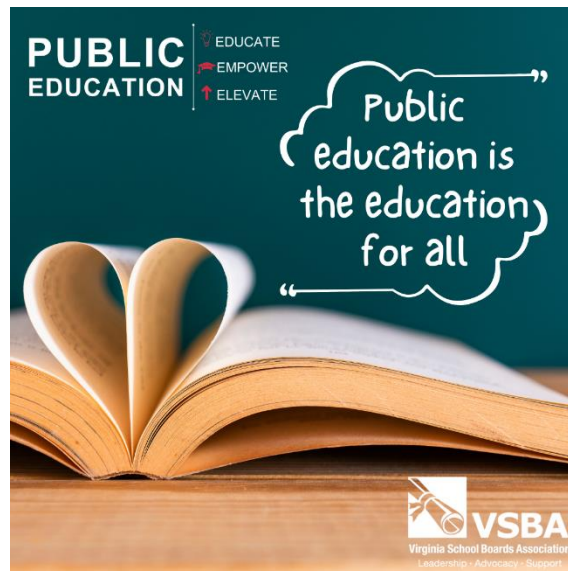


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DID YOU KNOW?

Virginia public schools offer a wide range of extracurricular activities, from competitive athletics to fine arts, helping students develop leadership skills, creativity, and teamwork.



PUBLIC EDUCATION | EDUCATE
EMPOWER
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Public education is the education for all

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