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News Release

For Immediate Release

May 12, 2026

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Three School Divisions Complete VSBA's 2026 Fiscal Governance Cohort Program

Charlottesville, VA – The Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) has successfully completed its fourth annual Fiscal Governance Cohort Program, an intensive professional learning experience designed to strengthen leadership and align governance, finance, and student success. This year's cohort brought together school board members and staff from Craig County, Prince Edward County, and Westmoreland County Public Schools.

Facilitated by Dr. Michael Thornton, retired Superintendent of Surry County Public Schools, the program featured four in-depth sessions focused on the critical connection between fiscal responsibility, instructional priorities, and effective governance. Through real-world case studies, collaborative dialogue, and strategic planning exercises, participants deepened their leadership capacity and gained practical tools to drive meaningful outcomes in their divisions.

"Participating in the VSBA Fiscal Governance Cohort as a unified leadership team was an incredibly valuable experience for our division," said Ralph Fallin, School Board Chair of Westmoreland County Public Schools. "Having board members and central office staff engaged in this work together strengthened our shared understanding of how financial decisions, instructional priorities, and governance responsibilities intersect. This experience not only deepened our collaboration, but also reinforced a clear, collective vision for how we will continue to make thoughtful, student-centered decisions that best serve the Westmoreland County school division."

"Being part of the Fiscal Governance Cohort as a full leadership team has been incredibly meaningful for our division," said Cainan Townsend, Chair of the Prince Edward County School Board. "It gave us the space to learn together, ask hard questions together, and strengthen the partnership between the board and our staff. This work is helping us tie every budgeting decision more directly to student outcomes and the priorities our community cares about. We're coming out of this experience more aligned, more focused, and United in Excellence as we make informed, student-centered decisions for Prince Edward County Public Schools."

The cohort emphasized peer learning, drawing on the diverse experiences of participating divisions and fostering relationships that will continue beyond the training.

VSBA Executive Director Gina Patterson praised the cohort's commitment: "This program is about more than finance—it's about leadership, vision, and impact. When school boards and division leaders are aligned in their approach, it creates stronger systems that ultimately benefit every student we serve."

As VSBA looks ahead, the next Fiscal Governance Cohort is scheduled for 2027. School divisions interested in strengthening their governance teams and advancing student success are encouraged to stay tuned for more information.

About the Virginia School Boards Association

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

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