

Government Relations Report
VBODA Executive Board,
June 24, 2015

Please refer to my Spring VMEA "NOTES" article for details on the status of 2015 General Assembly legislation.

In a recent development, VHSL has resolved a lawsuit by Liberty Christian Academy that will have implications for all VHSL activities. Private schools may now play public schools in all VHSL activities and receive the appropriate points to enable the private schools to be eligible to participate in VHSL playoffs.

In order to be eligible the private schools must apply for membership and agree to abide by VHSL regulations regarding enrollment classifications, academic requirements, attendance zones, etc.

The question arises concerning the homeschool legislation we have been fighting for some time. The difference here is that the legislation pertains to individual students representing a school. This does not preclude those supporting this legislation using the VHSL situation as a wedge to secure approval of the legislation. I believe it highly likely that the homeschool participation legislation will be offered once again next year. Recall the legislation passed both houses of the GA but was vetoed by the Governor. Passage by both houses this year could be related to the election year influences.

A new announcement from the Department of Education concerns the Virtual High School. Up to 100 students will be allowed to enroll in the Virginia Virtual High School. Please see the announcement in the Superintendents memo provided below.

Legislation:

Senator John Miller will very likely offer the annual physical activity bill again.

Virginia now has two state songs. Despite our efforts to have the legislation delayed there was nearly full support by the General Assembly and Governor McAuliffe for the final legislation. The bill signed by the Governor included two state songs – "our Great Virginia" the adaption of "O' Shenandoah", the official "traditional song" and "Sweet Virginia Breeze", the official "popular" song. Following the Senate General Laws and Technology Committee meeting Senator Ebbin of Alexandria (30th Senatorial District) approached me. He indicated that since the committee had adopted the two state songs, if VMEA supported another song, he would be willing to sponsor a bill promoting the song. Something for VMEA to consider for the future.

Teachers no longer required to take courses for college credit as a requirement for certificate renewal.

The Virginia Coalition for Fine Arts Education has diligently worked for Fine Arts education at the General Assembly, the Virginia Board of Education and to other groups. The Coalition has worked with the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and Virginians for the Arts to promote Fine Arts education. The Coalition has been Virginia's advocate for Fine Arts Education. I strongly encourage your continued support and participation with the Coalition. The funding VMEA has provided to allow for work in Richmond and to have VMEA representatives attend the VCFAE meetings has been money well spent. Often individual members have indicated to me, and I suspect many of you, the importance of having a voice, particularly a unified voice working to advocate for Fine Arts education across all spectrums. NAFME clearly recognizes the importance of a strong voice as indicated by its commitment to advocacy.

Thank you for the continuing support of our efforts on your behalf. It has been a privilege to represent you these past five years.

Steve King
Government Relations Chair

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Virginia Department of Education to Pilot Virtual Virginia Full-Time High School

The Virginia Department of Education's Virtual Virginia program will pilot a full-time, online high school for the 2015-2016 school year. The pilot — available to as many as 100 students on a first-come, first-served basis — will offer all required core academic courses and electives necessary to earn a Standard or Advanced Studies diploma.

"We are excited to offer this opportunity to high school students, especially those with the potential for thriving in a non-traditional instructional setting," Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples said. "This expansion of the nationally recognized Virtual Virginia program provides more choice and flexibility to students seeking a high school diploma."

Students in the full-time pilot will be enrolled in their local public school but will receive instruction through Virtual Virginia. As with all Virtual Virginia courses, instruction will be provided by teachers with Virginia certification. Local schools will ensure that students in the pilot have access to technology, textbooks, special services and other necessary materials at no cost.

"Virtual Virginia has a track record of providing rigorous online instructional alternatives to students in the commonwealth," Chief Academic Officer/Assistant Superintendent for Instruction John W. Haun said. "That will continue with the addition of 14 courses covering everything a student would need to earn a diploma through Virtual Virginia."

Courses are delivered through Virtual Virginia's secure, web-based environment, and, like traditional classroom instruction, will include readings, discussion forums, written assignments, media, student presentations and projects, case studies, simulations, lab assignments, models and opportunities for student collaboration.

Local schools will award letter grades and credit for courses completed based on percentage grades — provided by Virtual Virginia instructors — that reflect coursework done in the online program.

Students will be required to register for Virtual Virginia through their local school and have approval of their parents and school administration. The students will matriculate through their local school and will receive credit toward graduation requirements — including Standards of Learning assessments — and upon completion will be awarded a diploma by their local school.

Students interested in participating in the pilot must register through their local public school counselor.

Virtual Virginia will continue to offer more than 54 Advanced Placement (AP), academic electives and world language courses to students who may not have access to these courses within their schools due to low enrollments, scheduling conflicts or lack of highly qualified teachers.

Since 2002, Virtual Virginia has provided access to high quality and rigorous courses to more than 40,000 students.

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