

Governor's "Opportunity to Learn" Legislative Agenda



**The Honorable Laura Fornash
Secretary of Education**



“Opportunity to Learn” Background

- On February 10, 2010, Governor McDonnell, along with Republican and Democratic legislators, announced his “Opportunity to Learn” agenda.
- This legislation included:
 - Allowing for the establishment of virtual school programs
 - Allowing for the establishment of college partnership laboratory schools
 - Strengthened Virginia’s public charter school law
- In January 2012, Governor McDonnell unveiled the second phase of his “Opportunity to Learn” agenda.
- This agenda focuses on four themes:
 - Raise Standards- College and Workforce Readiness
 - Reduce Mandates on Local School Divisions
 - Expand Educational Options for Virginia Students
 - Enhance Teacher Quality



Raise Standards – College and Workforce Readiness

- **College and Workforce Readiness:**

- **Diplomas** – Consolidate the diplomas from 7 to 3 more rigorous and meaningful requirements

1. **Advanced Diploma** – will require successful completion of one virtual course (may be non-credit bearing). This will be the recommended track
2. **Standard Diploma** – the modified diploma will be folded into this diploma (accommodations will be provided). Additionally, students pursuing this degree will be required to obtain an industry certification. (minimum – Virginia workplace readiness skills) along with successful completion of one virtual course (may be non-credit bearing).
3. **Special Diploma** - Available to students with disabilities who complete the requirements of their IEP and who do not meet the requirements for other diplomas.

- **Dual Enrollment-**

- Local schools boards shall develop written articulation agreement for postsecondary degree attainment with a Virginia community colleges on pathways to achieve an Associates degree or a one-year Uniform Certificate of General Studies concurrent with a high school diploma.

Raise Standards – College and Workforce Readiness

- **Advancing Literacy:**
 - Revise SOQ to ensure local school divisions create reading intervention services to students in grades 3 and 4 who demonstrate deficiencies based on the SOL reading test or any reading diagnostic test that meets criteria established by the Department of Education. These intervention services must be provided prior to promoting a student from grade 3 to 4 or grade 4 to 5
- **Earning by Learning:**
 - A public private partnership that will provide young people an incentive to engage in the reading process while expanding their financial literacy.



Raise Standards – College and Workforce Readiness

- **Adult Education:**

- Expand the PluggedInVA model to all 8 superintendents' regions in the Commonwealth which involves enrolling adults in GED programs and industry certification programs through community colleges

- **College Ready:**

- Provide funding for 10th graders to take the PSAT and partner with College Board to conduct statewide workshops on using the results to increase AP participation and SAT scores

Raise Standards – College and Workforce Readiness

- **Youth Development:**
 - Positive youth development academy will focus on life skills such as civics, financial literacy, community service, leadership skills, and character education for approximately 50 rising 9th and 10th graders in selected regions of the Commonwealth
- **Communities in Schools:**
 - This will expand CIS network in areas of need to continue with its core mission of creating structures to increase graduation rates while decreasing dropouts

Reducing Mandates on Local School Divisions

- **School Calendar:**
 - This legislation will repeal the requirement that school divisions must begin their school term after Labor Day unless they have a waiver from the Board of Education
 - Currently, 77 of the 132 school divisions have waivers to begin before Labor Day
 - The decision of the school start date will rest in the hands of the local school board

Expanding Educational Options for Virginia Students

- **Innovative Options Technical Advisory Group:**
 - Establish an Innovative Options Technical Advisory Group to review and give guidance to potential applicants during the planning process for charter schools, college partnership laboratory schools and virtual school programs
- **Charter Schools:**
 - Local school board must allow public charter schools to lease or purchase vacant or unused properties
 - Allow for autonomy for charter schools in regards to staffing, curriculum, and school calendar
 - 90% of funding to follow the student

Expanding Educational Options for Virginia Students

- **Virtual Schools:**
 - Establish new regulations for accrediting virtual schools
 - Establish alternative licensure for virtual school teachers
 - Provides a funding model for full time virtual students
- **College Lab Schools:**
 - Allow for and acknowledge a partnership between local school boards and institutions of higher education amending the College Lab Legislation to permit any institution of higher education the ability to partner with a local school division

Expanding Educational Options for Virginia Students

- **Educational Improvement Scholarship:**
 - Provide tax credits to companies that contribute to the educational improvement scholarship fund for low-income students
- **Governor's Health Science Academies:**
 - Provide planning and first year start-up funding in FY13 for Health Sciences academies in each superintendent region

Enhancing Teacher Quality

- **Strengthening Teacher and Administrator Contracts:**
 - Establish an annual contract and evaluation process to replace the continuing contract practice for teachers and principals.
 - Require probationary teachers to be evaluated twice annually
 - Change contract notification deadline to June 15 (currently April 15) to reflect availability of student data

Enhancing Teacher Quality

- **Attract Qualified STEM Teachers:**
 - Issue an RFP to partner with an education post-secondary program to develop:
 1. An elementary education prek-6 approved program with a major in mathematics, sciences, or integrated sciences and mathematics
 2. A middle/secondary approved program focusing on the preparation of mathematics and science teachers
 - Incentive Awards for New Teachers in STEM areas - A new teacher with an endorsement in mathematics, physics, or technology education assigned to a teaching position in a corresponding STEM subject area is eligible to receive a \$5,000 initial incentive award after the completion of the first year of teaching with a satisfactory performance evaluation and a signed contract for the following school year