

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS PRESS CONFERENCE

Remarks by Pam Moran Superintendent of Albemarle County Schools

As superintendent, I am in the people business and Albemarle County Public Schools' budget is a people budget. 82% of our budget goes to people each year, mainly those who serve young people in classrooms. I would like to share with you some of the ways that educators who serve the young people of Albemarle County will be affected by the proposed reductions in Governor Kaine's budget request, and there is no doubt in my mind that classroom instruction and school leadership will suffer as a result of these reductions.

The Governor's Budget will roll back public funding for SOQ support positions to pre-1973 levels while providing no relief from our public schools' overflowing plate of 2009 tests, reports, regulations, communications and requirements associated with Standards of Accreditation, Standards of Quality, the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and state law.

For example, we are faced with a new requirement beginning in 2009-10 for each 7th grader to develop an academic and career plan will add hours of staff time- a great concept but no new guidance staff to support this – now this is a 4th grade SOL math question- if a counselor does this new initiative right, he or she would add one hour per each child on their case load to their work- now a guidance counselor in an Albemarle middle school has a case load of 239 students- the easy part is figuring out that their new requirement adds the equivalent of 33 additional days of time with students for a new initiative being put in place by the state. So, my math question is: what do I remove from their load to assume this new responsibility since no additional staffing will be forthcoming from either the state or the locality? We know that counseling support positions are slated for funding cuts in the Governor's proposal.

Our educators in the classrooms and support staff have lived in a cycle of increased monitoring and reporting requirements. The support staff members who the governor proposes to cut by adjusting the ratio for each school division are the very people who take on the work associated with the:

- **193** state superintendent's memos we have received this year just since July 1 and are expected to address locally- that's more than 1 memo per day by the way since school began,
- the **88** data reports we are required to file and verify (an increase of 26 since 2004-05 or 1 every 4 days year-round), and
- the **33** SOL assessments (an increase of 8 new tests since 2004-05) we administer to students in grades 3-12.

This represents the worst kind of trickle-down economics - significantly increasing both the work load and the support staffing needs in Albemarle County and other divisions. In the proposed Governor's budget, the caps on Basic Aid support positions will result in

cuts in state funding for **133** support positions currently in place for Albemarle- from 365 in the current year to funding for only 232 positions in FY10 – in total, schools and divisions across Virginia will receive funding for 13,000 less support positions than in 2009 under the Governor’s proposed cap for funding support positions. This affects funding for not just central support positions but also school staff - especially clerical and technology help that we count on to assist with both student learning and instructional needs in our schools. In Albemarle County alone in FY10, we will have to fully fund 22 school-based clerical positions that have been partially funded by the state for years. To do so, means we are making cuts in other priority areas such as technology support specialists.

Reports

While I have several examples of the work load increases in Albemarle associated with new reports or more detailed reports- I would like to highlight one of three examples that I have included:

1) The On-Time Graduation report which was new this year requires tracking students who have left the division or who have transferred to other in state school divisions. It also assumes and requires other school divisions to correctly assign State Testing ID numbers to transfer students. This past year, central support staff spent about 40 hours to prepare this report, and high school staff spent about 80 hours in follow-up work to get registration mistakes corrected made when students registered in other divisions. It took over 4 hours of time to address a correction for 1 student transferred to a high school in another district, was miscoded as a second grader, and showed up as a dropout affecting our high school’s on-time grad rate- this example can be multiplied over and over just for follow-up- not the time verifying each student record one by one. **Total new hours spent = 120**

2) The Virginia School Safety report, a report that did not exist 5 years ago takes about an hour per principal and about 3 hours from a central support director to verify. **Total new hours spent= 30**

3) The Discipline Crime and Violence Report reporting requirements have significantly increased in the last 2 years. Support staff who work with SASI- student information management- in schools and who are partially funded by the state revenues currently now spend about 257 hours on this report now- more than double what it took to complete this report 3 years ago. **Total new hours = 128**

I have seen NO proposals to remove any of these requirements from the plates of local educators just the money that funds support staff who accomplish this work and much more. Albemarle County Public Schools is significantly decreasing central support staff in 2008-09 as a result of the loss in state and local revenues – permanent reductions in state funding for support staff will lead to a shift in the burden of monitoring, reporting and communicating work to the very people that we protect from these requirements so that they can do the increasingly difficult work of educating young people to graduate workforce ready, college ready, and citizenship ready.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

Albemarle County Public Schools participated in a study in 2004 done by the DOE at the request of the General Assembly to evaluate the costs of NCLB to local school divisions. Albemarle participated in this study and determined that the cost of implementing NCLB locally would escalate to \$138 per child in 2007-08. The cost of implementing NCLB requirements now exceeds the federal program funding we receive as a division- which is about 1.8% of our total division funding. NCLB is costing us more as division than we receive from the federal government: an unfunded mandate that removes funds from our local revenues that could be redirected towards those intervention services we know are making a difference to help eliminate achievement gaps. As another example of why support positions are important – central support staff now devotes over 600 hours just to the administration and scoring of required alternative assessments associated with NCLB, and this does not include the production time used by teachers in the schools. Total new hours = 600

So- I add my voice to those of other superintendents who respectfully request that the General Assembly keep the Main Thing the Main Thing by:

- 1) use rainy day funds to maintain support to local school divisions in this worst of times,
- 2) make no permanent reductions occur that will create a crisis for localities now and into the future similar to what has occurred as a result of the transportation fund reductions our local government has experienced from the state
- 3) work with the Board of Education to insist that work must be taken off the plates of local educators and that we have maximal flexibility from current regulations and SOQ requirements so we can make the best decisions to serve our young people through this tough time.

We have added weeks of time devoted to "administrivia" work to our plates in the last decade. The impact of reducing support staff funding with no additional reduction in requirements will simply shift administrative monitoring and reporting requirements to the people we all want to protect- our teachers in classrooms and principals in schools