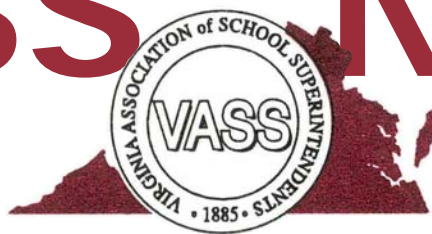


# VASS NEWS

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## Understanding Retirement Rights 101

Craig Wood, Partner, McGuire Woods and VASS  
Business Affiliate Member

By: Craig Wood

Many superintendents are not aware that the Virginia Retirement System has changed its approach to defining and enforcing "creditable compensation" as that term is defined in the Virginia Code. Creditable compensation represents the earnings of a public employee that VRS considers the base for determining an employee's monthly retirement benefit. Creditable compensation can be more than just base salary, but to be considered "creditable" VRS is requiring proof of certain preconditions.

Superintendents for years have stated in VASS workshops things like "VRS counts my transportation allowance as creditable compensation" and "VRS counts my annuity payment as creditable compensation." The addition of these compensation components raises the amount of the employee and employer contribution to VRS, and eventually raises the retirement benefit payout to the superintendent. It has been a fair and rational process from the superintendent's perspective.

Recently, however, economic conditions have placed pension funds like VRS under considerable stress as their investment portfolios have suffered massive losses in the stock and bond markets. That creates an inevitable tension for those pension funds to cut expenses and to reduce payouts if possible. Reduction in payouts can occur by subtle changes such as

stricter enforcement of existing rules or changes in the way benefit entitlements must be documented.

It appears that VRS is accomplishing that goal by taking the position that "creditable compensation" really is just a synonym for "salary," and only W-2 reported income will be credited toward retirement benefits. An automobile allowance or a deferred compensation payment such as an annuity payment will not be considered as creditable compensation unless it is reported on the superintendent's W-2. Of course, that defeats one of the primary purposes of deferred compensation plans, which is to defer taxation on those payments, and puts the superintendent and his or her school board into a quandary.

VRS is also becoming very particular about the language used and structure of superintendent/board employment contracts in determining if compensation is "creditable." Language that has for many years not been a problem has recently been rejected by VRS.

VASS held a workshop on September 15 at the Richmond Marriott to make sure that superintendents and boards understand the current VRS requirements and other matters involving retirement benefits. Brian Goodman, VRS attorney, will speak, along with two attorneys from McGuireWoods, Craig Wood and Rob Cipolla. If you wait until you are near retirement to understand and accommodate these changes, it will be too late to legally maximize your VRS retirement benefit. Now is the time to learn the rules and to make necessary adjustments.

## Virginia's Tax System Is A Creaky Antique

By: John Knapp

How should Virginia's state and local government tax structure support the new economy in the years ahead? Most likely, we will muddle through as we always have. But a few adjustments could make a big difference.

State and local tax systems are not the product of a sweeping vision that is periodically attuned to changes in



John Knapp, Senior Economist at the University of Virginia's Center for Economic and Policy Studies at the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service

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the economy. Instead, they are the result of many changes over time -- some of them sweeping, such as the adoption of the Virginia individual income tax in 1926 and the sales and use tax in 1966, and many of them minor, such as the carving out of sales tax exemptions for particular groups.

Like all other states, Virginia has taken a severe hit from the recession.

In the fiscal year that just ended, the state finished with a \$300 million shortfall.

Revenue estimates keep falling, and even when the recession hits bottom, perhaps later this year, the recovery is likely to be slow.

The American Reinvestment and Recovery Act is funneling a huge amount of aid, \$5 billion, to Virginia's state and local governments to mitigate their fiscal problems. However, as the stimulus flow ends in fiscal year 2011, expenditure demands will re-emerge. Thus, the fiscal situation for Virginia state and local governments is dire both in the short and longer terms.

The state's options are limited in a balanced-budget regime: Borrowing can be substituted for tax revenue to finance capital outlays; funds can be shifted from one purpose to another; the state can use its rainy-day fund.

Even so, there will be spending cuts, tuition increases, postponed pay increases, deferred maintenance, and other painful adjustments. The damage being done now will cast a long shadow over public finance for the next several years.

Nonetheless, Virginia's state and local tax structure is unlikely to change radically. Three major components of the tax structure account for about \$7 out of every \$10 of revenue: the state individual income tax (30 percent of state and local tax revenue), the state and local sales and use tax (14 percent) and the local real property tax (25 percent).

Individual income tax: The income tax rate structure for individuals is an anachronism. The 2 percent rate on the first \$3,000 of taxable income was adopted in 1948 when that threshold was equivalent to \$26,478 today.

Now, more than 96 percent of income tax revenue comes from the two top brackets (5 percent on taxable income from \$5,001 to \$17,000 and 5.75 percent on income over \$17,000).

Moving to two broad brackets and allowing progressivity to be the result of credits and exemptions are possible changes that could be combined with higher rates. A short-term policy to increase revenue during the fiscal crisis would be a temporary surtax on the income tax.

Some recent changes in the economy will have a strong bearing on tax collections in future years. The stock market plummet that began in late 2007 means that future net capital gains will represent a smaller proportion of taxable income.

Another consideration is the Obama administration's health care reform agenda. One idea being floated is to make employer-paid health insurance premiums taxable on personal income tax returns. Since Virginia maintains modified conformity with federal income tax provisions, the state would have the option of following the same policy, perhaps earmarking the additional revenue for its Medicaid obligations.

Virginia sales and use tax: Over the years, the General Assembly has decreased the sales-tax base by exempting nonprescription drugs, lowering the tax on store-bought food, and establishing "tax holidays" for hurricane preparation and back-to-school purchases. Today, it is very difficult politically to subject more goods and services to a sales tax.

A solution to this problem would be the replacement of the sales tax with a value-added tax, or VAT, a form of taxation popular in Europe but not used in the United States. The VAT taxes an item at each stage of its manufacture or distribution based on the value being added to it. This avoids pyramiding taxation of goods and services that have already been taxed.

State governments have been concerned about the migration of retail sales to the Internet because such transactions are mostly exempt from state and local sales tax. If Virginia had started taxing electronic commerce, it would have collected an additional \$423 million in fiscal year 2008.

The local real property tax is the most important source of revenue for local governments and a mainstay in their

financing of public education. The tax base grew rapidly during this decade until the meltdown of the residential real estate market that began in 2006.

In the boom years, tax rates were lowered to partially offset the rise in market values. As a result, Virginia local government tax revenue from this source rose 101 percent from fiscal years 2000 to 2008, while all other tax revenue rose by 40 percent.

Once the housing market stabilizes, housing prices will rise and new construction will resume, but it is unlikely that we will see the strong growth that benefited local governments in the recent past.

That may lead local governments to rekindle their interest in a local income tax, which must be granted by state legislation. The best way to implement the tax would be to follow Maryland's example of allowing localities to piggyback local income taxes on the state tax.

Transportation issues: Virginia's transportation funding is in very bad condition, with the six-year improvement plan for 2010-2015 anticipating \$3.2 billion less for highway construction than the 2008-2013 program.

Two sources of transportation revenue -- the general sales and use tax earmarked for transportation and the 3 percent motor vehicle sales and use tax -- should recover with an upturn in the economy. But the 17.5-cents-per-gallon motor fuels tax is unlikely to make a strong comeback.

Higher fuel prices and more fuel-inefficient vehicles will be a drag on revenue for the foreseeable future.

As a temporary fix, the cents-per-gallon rate should be increased and then indexed with a highway construction price index. The current rate has been unchanged since 1986, when construction and maintenance costs were much lower. A longer-term solution would be to convert the tax to one based on vehicle miles traveled.

By national standards, Virginia does not impose a heavy tax burden. In 2006, state and local taxes accounted for 10.5 percent of income, ranking Virginia 43rd among the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

As the world changes, tax policies will be altered, but it is unlikely that the changes in Virginia's policies will be dramatic.

Most of the changes proposed here would be adjustments to existing taxes -- and would result in a higher level of taxation. Given the current poor state of the Virginia economy and the prospect of a slow recovery, such changes must be considered by the state's political leaders.

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*This column is based on Knapp's article, "Exploring Virginia's Tax Structure in a World of Change," which appears in the summer 2009 issue of Virginia Tech's publication, Virginia Issues & Answers, online at <http://www.via.vt.edu/>*

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## Adequacy: Shortfalls To Funding SOQ Reform

*By: William Pruett, VASS Legislative Liaison*

The previous article by John Knapp of the Weldon Cooper Center traces the history of the current tax support system for public education in Virginia and shows its lack of adequacy to fund this major function of government. The potential for this long term problem becoming worse without Knapp's (or other) recommendations being enacted can be vividly seen in information and analysis recently released by government and private experts.

Local governments in Virginia currently spend \$3 billion more per year than the SOQ require (22% of all k-12 spending). Absent new revenue sources, the recession has reduced local revenue at least as much as the shortfall at the state level thus making it difficult for localities to continue to supplement at the local level. The most minimal of rebenchmarking will require major policy changes if school programs must operate on existing sources of support. Among the cuts that have been discussed to avoid bringing revenue up to adequate levels are increasing the federal deduct, cutting or delaying textbook appropriations, more lottery fund reductions for school construction, more reduction in the retirement system support, cease recognizing local salary supplements, and the cap on support positions.

The state does not currently pay real time salary support, fund all BOE enacted standards, or its own LWA formula, or have realistic class size support for at-risk students to meet SOL requirements further cuts can only mean even less adequate funding for a system already stressed but receiving national recognition for its quality.

The future does not look promising without a real look at revenue rather than Standards reform or reduction. With revenue short by ¾ of a billion dollars, no future federal bailout of \$962 million and state revenue already reduced by ten percent, current standards will be difficult to maintain at a true quality level to which parents are accustomed.

The recent past does not point to a legislature that has been concerned with tax adequacy but rather reduction. Examples are \$1.9 billion in car tax, estate tax relief of \$300 million, sales tax relief on food of \$380 million, shift in recordation and insurance premiums to transportation of \$350 million, a total of \$3.4 billion with only an increase of \$1.6 in the Warner sales tax relief, little of which helps local and some of which has been indirectly diverted to transportation.

As a longtime local government lobbyist pointed out while listening to the Governor on August 19<sup>th</sup>, our problem is no longer just disparity among school divisions but a lack of funding and funding sources to allow boards and superintendents to operate schools of a high quality as required by the Constitution. Virginia's schools need and deserve adequate funding to do the job for the children we serve. The question is how much longer can we produce quality without adequate funding.

*The information from which this article was developed came from Governor Kaine and Secretary of Finance Brown's presentations on August 19<sup>th</sup>, as well as presentations by Jim Regimbaugh to VACO and VML in addition to archives of JLARC.*

## Race To Top Raises Concerns



Dr. Patricia I. Wright—State Superintendent of Public Instruction

The \$4.35 billion for Race To The Top (RTTT) funds is only a small portion of the \$100 billion in federal stabilization money for education, however, the competitive funding has great leverage in forcing state education policy changes that would be required for their selection to receive the money. Some of the proposed selection criteria are controversial. Among them are: evaluating teachers and administrators based on student achievement data only; creating merit-pay plans; lifting restrictions on charter schools; and participating in consortia with other states to adopt common standards and assessments.

Virginia's State Superintendent of Public Instruction Pat Wright is already weighing in with her concerns, which she has shared with the Chief State School Officers to help develop their

positions on the RTTT criteria, which will be made final by the U.S. Department of Education in October. She has stated her concern about using student achievement as the only criteria for teacher and principal performance evaluation ratings and has asked that states be given more flexibility in determining teacher and principal effectiveness than the narrow definition used by the feds which is based on individual student growth. The proposed RTTT application requires states to develop a plan and set annual targets to increase the number and percentage of "effective" and "highly effective" teacher and principals in high-poverty schools based on individual student academic improvement.

She has also stated that the competitive priority in the RTTT application requiring states to "adopt common standards" by June 2010 and commit to joining a consortia of states to develop state assessments could put states, like Virginia, that have been proactive in developing college and career-readiness standards and assessments at a competitive disadvantage. She further stated the need for the new standards and assessments to be customized to fit within each state's context. In addition, she expressed her concern that the federal government's use of state adoption of "voluntary" standards as a priority condition for receiving the RTTT funds actually made the

standards mandatory rather than "voluntary."

Currently 47 states have signed onto a federal grant-funded plan led by the National Governor's Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to develop common national standards in math and reading, which would become part of the common "voluntary" standards in the fed's application requirements. Education organizations, parents and practitioners have criticized the standard development process as being "closed," while NGA officials have given assurances that once the first draft has been completed, the process will be open for public input. The draft will be out soon and NGA and CCSSO have already showed signs of broaden the participation of education groups in the development of the standards.

VASS has invited Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, CCSSO Executive Director Gene Wilhoit, and Dane Linn, Director of NGA's Education Division of the Center for Best Practices to the VASS Annual Conference May 3-5, 2010 to discuss the national standards as well as other important education issues such as RTTT and the reauthorization of ESEA. More information will be forthcoming on the topics and speakers at the annual conference, which will deal with federal education policies.



## Observations About U.S. Education by VASS's Indian Partners

This summer, the VASS-UVA India As a Global Partner Program contributed to funding the participation of two teachers from Delhi's Mira Model School in an education conference in Charlottesville that was organized by Albemarle County Schools, the University of Virginia School-University Partnership and SchoolNet. The Mira Model School (MMS) is one of the schools that VASS members visited in India last March and with whom they are developing international school partnerships through their participation in the program.

MMS political science teacher Meenakshi Sant and technology in-

structor Raj Kumar traveled to the United States for their first time to participate in the three-day conference. While they were at the conference, they had discussions with superintendents, administrators and teachers from several Virginia school divisions about developing partnerships with their schools. VASS members Melody Hackney, Superintendent of Charlotte County Schools, and Brenda Tanner, Superintendent of Madison County Schools, participated in the discussions. Melody, who will be traveling with Virginia Secretary of Education Thomas Morris and other VASS members to India this

fall, brought her technology staff members with her to discuss how communications would be established between teachers and students at the Mira Model School and schools in her district.

Meenakshi and Raj had an interesting perspective on the United States and U.S. education in general, since this was their first trip to the U.S. Below, are excerpts from their reports about their experiences in the U.S. and at the conference:

## Meenakshi Sant

I was part of a two member delegation sent for to conference "Reimagine Education" from the 19<sup>th</sup> of July to 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, under the aegis of a special partnership between VASS, the University of Virginia and Mira Model School, the initiative which was undertaken by Mr. J. Andrew Stamp.

In his famous collection of poems "Geetanjali", the Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, spoke of a world "[which] ...has not been broken into fragments by narrow domestic walls", and opposed the narrow Nationalism of the early Twentieth Century that led to devastating world wars, death and destruction. Indeed his ideas can be considered precursors to the idea of Globalization in the late Twentieth Century-a global movement of people ideas and capital, to and from different parts of the world. Living in a "Global Village", the enormous influence of the west especially the United States, in every aspect of our lives today is a given reality. As I boarded the flight along with my colleague Mr. Raj Kumar from New Delhi on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, 2009 for Charlottesville, USA, to "Reimagine Education" I felt I was becoming a part of the process of globalization of education. I would acquire a global perspective to my thought processes as an educator.

The intensive work and planning that goes into the teaching learning process



Charlotte County Superintendent Melody Hackney (2nd from left) and her staff members met this summer with Raj Kumar (4th from left) and Meenakshi Sant (5th from left) to discuss developing international partnerships between schools in Charlotte and the Mira Model School in Delhi.

in the U.S. is indeed very commendable. Though the "Reimagine Education" sessions were aimed primarily at school districts in the U.S., I found that a lot of sessions on the agenda could be adapted in the Indian context as well. According to Jay McTighe, first keynote speaker and author of the book "Schooling by Design", the teacher should apply "Backward Design" whereby the teacher first starts with classroom out-

comes and then plans the curriculum, choosing activities and materials that determine student ability and foster student learning. This, I thought was very relevant to us in India, where we are mindlessly trying to "cover" syllabi without any real learning taking place. Also important were the "Big Ideas" and essential questions, about which the teachers must tell the students, along with the performance requirements and evaluative criteria at the beginning of every course. This is a useful technique that we will be using at Mira Model School for our future teaching.

On the second day keynote speaker Tony Wagner spoke about "The Global Achievement Gap", which according to him is the "gap between what even our best schools are teaching and learning versus, the skills all students will need for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". Though Mr. Wagner holds Chinese and Indian students in high esteem, I feel in India our students experience a heavy dose of rote learning, and they really need the seven "Survival Skills" that Mr. Wagner advocates. He rightly says that the "Net" generation is differently motivated, is constantly connected, creating and multi-tasking, in a multimedia world everywhere except in school. It is here that we as educators need to



J. Andrew Stamp, Associate Executive Director of VASS, Meenakshi Sant, and Raj Kumar.

encourage them to use this connectivity for their learning.

In India, learning is geared more towards theory rather than real and practical knowledge, and more often than not there is a disconnect between the school and University curriculum, which is totally out of sync with the skills required in the job market. So, if India has to take advantage of her "Demographic Dividend", then Indian students must learn the seven survival skills that Mr. Wagner advocates, or get left behind in the global competition.

I found a great commitment towards improving learning standards, among all educators with whom I spoke in between the sessions at the conference. A lot of time, planning and money seem to go towards the educational process. I learned that the educational system in the U.S. allows a lot of flexibility in terms of choosing subjects and levels of learning. This is unlike the highly regimented system of learning in India, dominated by education boards such as CBSE, ICSE etc.

Indian schools need to emulate and draw upon this flexibility in our school systems, where students can learn at

their own pace and choice. However I was surprised to know that all major evaluation takes place in the U.S. mainly through multiple choice questions. As I shared this with my colleagues back home we wondered how students could be tested on analytical, critical, or thinking skills in the social sciences or higher order thinking skills in sciences or information technology?

### Raj Kumar

In the conference "Re-imagine Education" technology played a key role in each speaker's presentation. Technology has a multi-folded use in the field of education, whether it is in instruction delivery, administration, evidence backup, assessment, simulating applications on various course contents etc. In the U.S. technology is an important part of education. The administrative and academic data of each school is maintained by it and the users (administrators, teachers, parents and the students) make the best use of it to produce quality education.

Surprisingly, the issues American educators are concerned about are more or less the same as those we are

facing in India. American educators are mainly focused on the reform of curriculum and the skills that 21<sup>st</sup> generation learners demand. To develop an understanding-based curriculum and reduce the global achievement gap, the use of technology is critical.

In India, the availability of technology is less than in the U.S. as far as infrastructure. But with the extremely rich delivery skill and excellent innovative ideas, Indians are able to improvise more in producing quality education. What we are lacking is collaborative learning and I am sure we can achieve this with the help of global projects. That can happen with the help of partnerships.

According to Mr. Tony Wagner, author of the Global Achievement Gap, we need time to reform our teaching methodology and meet the requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. Key components of changing instructional strategies include: peer to peer learning; promoting multi-tasking environments; using web-based activities; using various technological instruments wherever possible; and most importantly, the promotion of collaborative learning.

## The Principal's Checklist

By John Walker

**"The problem with communication is ... the illusion that it has been accomplished." George Bernard Shaw.**

It happens to us all. We have a meeting with administrative staff and spend much of the meeting addressing administrative details. Important division goals are discussed. A month later we realize that nothing has changed. We *thought* the message was perfectly clear. What happened?

Shortly after I became superintendent with Amherst County Public Schools, we concluded that making sure school leaders receive the same message, have the appropriate focus, and effectively follow through would take **sustained communication** on priority issues.

To that end, we established the principal's checklist to provide multiple opportunities to communicate about division priorities constructed upon ACPS' mission, vision, and goals. We



John Walker, VASS Member and Assistant Professor, Lynchburg College

wanted the principal's checklist to improve communication, bring focus to professional development for administrators, and increase accountability.

The principal's checklist began with the administrative staff and principals determining our professional development needs for the upcoming year. Next, a schedule of meeting dates and topics for monthly

administrators' meetings was disseminated in July for the upcoming year for planning and scheduling purposes.

Each administrators' meeting was devoted solely to professional development tied to our mission, vision and goals. We discarded the mind-numbing practice of the meeting's format being multiple individuals presenting their lists of agenda items. Instead, to address administrative issues, emails pertaining to such routine matters were sent whenever appropriate, allowing for matters be addressed in a more timely fashion. Questions, suggestions, and or clarifications were sent to the originator of the email, and the answer was copied to all administrators.

Now administrators' meetings focused on professional development linked to our mutually-developed

priorities. At the conclusion of each administrators' meeting, minutes were written (typically I did this) and then were shared electronically within a week with all stakeholders: school board members and all colleagues and advisory groups. To further improve communication, minutes of all division meetings were emailed to the above groups. By making meeting minutes available to everyone, those who wished to be informed of the important committee work were able to read that information. This helped to foster openness and transparency among all of our constituents.

Within two weeks of the administrators' meeting, a list of questions related to the topic of the administrators' meeting was created and sent to all the attendees. I selected the person responsible for writing the questions. I did this based on the meeting topic and which colleague had the greatest expertise regarding the meeting topic.

Some examples of questions are

- What are the implications of the topic and how will you

use the information at your school?

- What questions do you have?
- What resources do you need to implement the strategies from the meeting?
- What ideas you have for using/implementing the strategies shared?

Often a question or two from a prior meeting was included to further monitor and stress the importance of previous professional development.

The assignment for the principals was to answer the questions and be prepared to discuss the questions and their answers during the principals' checklist meeting.

About two weeks after the questions were distributed, teams of central office administrators went to assigned schools to discuss the questions and answers. This allowed us to clarify questions, increase the presence of central office staff in the buildings they might not visit routinely, and gather feedback to share with all our

administrators. Additionally, these meetings were an opportunity for the principals to offer suggestions, ask questions, and share concerns that they wished to have addressed not related to the professional development topic.

One representative from each visiting team was assigned the task of being the recorder, and following the school visits, I would meet with the recorders to compile and distribute electronically answers to questions, suggestions, and any other pertinent information. This helped clarify matters and keep the professional development efforts at the forefront and utilized within each school.

This principals' checklist process was seen as by colleagues as an effective process in enhancing communication and keeping professional development from being a "one-and-done" affair as is so often the case. While communication is never perfect, the principals' checklist helped lessen the occurrence of the famous quote from Paul Newman's movie, *Cool Hand Luke*, "What we've got here is failure to communicate!"

## Meet The New Superintendents



Bobbi Johnson, Superintendent of Culpeper County Schools

### **Bobbi Johnson, Superintendent of Culpeper County Schools**

#### **Previous two positions, locations, and number of years in each:**

Ten years as Assistant Superintendent in Bedford County and two years as Director of Instruction, Bedford County

#### **What did you do on your first official day?**

Read every document I could get my

hands on. I met with the current leadership team and asked lots of questions.

#### **What are your immediate goals?**

My immediate goals include implementing a process for community input on the Six Year Plan, working with principals on their School Improvement Plans, and seeking ways to do more with less.

#### **Who has been your mentor either prior to your appointment or after?**

Prior to my appointment, I've had lots of colleagues offering support. Retired Amherst County School Superintendent John Walker and current Amherst Superintendent Brian Ratliff and Roger Jones. It's too soon to name a mentor since coming to Culpeper ..... There are so many good possibilities.

#### **What professional books or journals have you read recently?**

I continue to read Ed. Leadership religiously. Because I want to keep an instructional focus, I try to read the ASCD publications. I always return to The Human Side of Change by Robert Evans.

#### **What have you read for leisure?**

I'm reading all of Ken Follett these days. I just finished The Man from St. Petersburg.

#### **What are your hobbies?**

Reading, visiting historic places, and teaching

#### **What do you look forward to as a new member of VASS?**

Networking with other Superintendents and learning from their experience.



Ricky Leonard, Superintendent of Winchester City Schools

**Ricky Leonard, Superintendent of Winchester City Schools**

**Previous two positions, locations, and number of years in each:**

Nine years as Assistant Superintendent in Winchester and four years as Principal at John Handley High School in Winchester

**What did you do on your first official day?**

Since I have been a WPS employee for 29 years I am very familiar and knowledgeable of our community, culture,

and staff. For my first day, I organized my office, took the Oath of Office with my family in attendance, and taught a graduate class.

**What are your immediate goals?**

Seeking and creating efficiencies and greater effectiveness with fewer financial resources for the short term; challenging students to complete rigorous coursework while closing achievement gap.

**Who has been your mentor either prior to your appointment or after?**

Dennis Kellison, Retired Superintendent, Winchester Public Schools  
Glenn Burdick, Retired Superintendent, Winchester Public Schools

**What professional books or journals have you read recently?**

What School Boards Can Do – Reform Governance for Urban Schools  
The School Administrator

**What have you read for leisure?**

Digital Fortress by Dan Brown  
Always Looking Up – The Adventurist  
An Incurable Optimist by Michael J. Fox  
Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin

**What are your hobbies?**

Freshwater fishing, hiking reading, and tinkering on home improvement projects

**What do you look forward to as a new member of VASS?**

I have been a VASS Member for the last nine years. Looking for a continuation of personal and professional support that I have been the recipient of in the past

**Doug Schuch, Superintendent of Bedford County Schools**

**Previous two positions, locations, and number of years in each:**

Four years as Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Accountability in Stafford County Schools and one year as assistant principal of Brooke Point High School in Stafford

**What did you do on your first official day?**

Toured offices/facilities; met with staff

**What are your immediate goals?**

Transition planning and gathering input from school and community stakeholders in order to develop common vision

**Who has been your mentor either prior to your appointment or after?**



Doug Schuch, Superintendent of Bedford County Schools

Dr. David Sawyer and Dr. Wayne Harris

**What professional books or journals have you read recently?**

“Good to Great”, Collins  
“Leading with the Heart”, Kezyzewski

**What have you read for leisure?**

“The Purpose Driven Life”, Warren  
“The Kite Runner”, Hosseini

**What are your hobbies?**

Hiking, golf, walking/jogging, reading, board games, watching sports and playing with my children

**What do you look forward to as a new member of VASS?**

Learning from experienced superintendents



Anthony D. Jackson, Superintendent of Henry County Schools

**Anthony D. Jackson**, Superintendent of Henry County Schools

**Previous two positions, locations, and number of years in each:**

Two years as Executive Director of K-12 Instruction in Spotsylvania

County Schools and two years as Associate Superintendent in Orange County Schools

**What did you do on your first official day?**

Met with staff. Members of the school board individually and county administration

**What are your immediate goals?**

To get to know the community; building relationships and assess strengths and challenges of the division

**Who has been your mentor either prior to your appointment or after?**

Dr. Jerry Hill, Superintendent in Spotsylvania County has been extremely supportive.

**What professional books or journals have you read recently?**

Powerful Conversations  
Good to Great

**What have you read for leisure?**

The Four Agreements

**What are your hobbies?**

Music-listening to Jazz, traveling, and working in the yard when I have time

**What do you look forward to as a new member of VASS?**

Networking and learning from experienced superintendents; being active in organizational activities.

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**Where Are They Now?**



**Al Armentrout**, Retired Superintendent of Wythe County Schools

Previous Administrative Positions:  
12/98 – 6/09 Supt. – Wythe Co.,  
8/95/-11/98 Supt. Charles City Co.,  
8/84

7/95 Supt. Norton City, 7/78 – 7/84  
Supt. Highland Co., 7/75 – 6/78 H.S.  
Princ. King George Co., 7/74 – 6/75  
H.S. Princ. Greene Co., 7/73 – 6/74  
Admin. Asst. Greene Co., 7/72 – 6/73  
Elem. Princ. Greene Co., 7/71 – 6/72  
Elem. Princ. Westmoreland Co.

**Current Hobbies & Interests:**

Golf, reading, and travel

**First Thing You Did When You Retired:**

Took my wife out to dinner and to the Barter Theater afterwards

**Favorite Moment in Professional Career:**

Walking the Lawn at UVA when I received my Doctoral Degree

**Most Memorable Moment VASS Event Or Experience:**

Completing my Doctoral Dissertation on VASS Membership Services

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**Roy Geiger**, Retired Superintendent of New Kent County Schools

Previous Administrative Positions:  
New Kent Superintendent, 1995 – 2009

**Current Hobbies & Interests:**

Grandchildren, Golf, and Softball

**First Thing You Did When You Retired:**

Started second career as a commercial realtor

**Favorite Moment in Professional Career:**

Opening our new 1400 Student capacity High School in Sept. 2009

**Most Memorable Moment VASS Event Or Experience:**

I was at the 2004 VASS Legislative Conference when I received news that my 2<sup>nd</sup> Grandchild had been born.



# MARK YOUR CALENDAR

## 2009 - 2010 VASS Calendar of Events

### September 15, 2009

VASS Drive-in Workshop  
"Designing your Contract to Maximize Your Retirement Income"  
Brian Goodman, VRS Attorney, and Craig Wood & Robert Cipolla, McGuireWoods LLP  
Richmond Downtown Marriott

### September 27 - 30, 2009

Superintendents Professional Conference  
Organized by Regional Superintendents' Groups  
Virginia Beach Quality Inn

### October 13 - 15, 2009

VASS Annual Legislative Conference  
The Kirkley Hotel Lynchburg

### October 30 - November 10, 2009

VASS India As A Global Partner Program  
Mumbai, Delhi, Jaipur, Agra - India

### November 18 - 20, 2009

VSBA Annual Convention  
Williamsburg Lodge  
VASS Meeting - November 19

### December 22, 2009 (subject to change)

Annual Budget Briefing  
Richmond Downtown Marriott

### January 19, 2010 (subject to change)

VASS Annual Press Conference  
Richmond Downtown Marriott

### February 2, 3, & 4, 2010

VASS Workshops with Dan Mulligan:  
"Ensuring Success by Helping Your Students Learn the New Math SOL"  
Hilton Hotel, Herndon

### February 23, 24, & 25, 2010

VASS Workshops with Dan Mulligan:  
"Ensuring Success by Helping Your Students Learn the New Math SOL"  
Hampton Roads Embassy Suites

### February 11 - 13, 2010

AASA Convention  
Phoenix, AZ  
VASS Reception - February 12

### May 2 - 5, 2010

VASS Annual Conference  
Hotel Roanoke and Convention Center

