Roanoke County Public Schools
Mandate Relief for K-12 Education

Governor McDonnell recently created a Task Force for Local Government Mandate Review to review state mandates imposed on localities and school systems and to recommend temporary suspension or permanent repeal of such mandates. He has asked local governments and public schools to provide specific feedback on state mandates that should be modified or eliminated to reduce the local burden and/or improve efficiencies at the local level. To that end, the Roanoke County School Board would like to propose the modification or elimination of state mandates in the following areas:

1. Instruction Standards for K-3 (p 103) – This mandate was implemented when SOL's began and is outdated and redundant. Teachers and school staff are reviewing student's mastery of SOL skills daily and conducting data meetings weekly. Local education agencies (LEA's) should have an internal monitoring system in place to assess student performance, growth, and action necessary to reach successful performance without the need for this required state mandate.
2. Special Education Annual Plan (pg. 109) – Eliminate the annual plan in the existing format. The annual plan submission is essentially repetitive data submitted each year. It includes policies that rarely change and programs that are essentially ongoing from one year to the next. We recommend that the Department of Education develop an assurance statement with a checklist of requirements for the Superintendent to certify. Annual local audits and external federal monitoring reviews provide oversight that the LEA is complying with special education regulations.
3. Special Education State Performance plan (pg. 110) – This is another report in which it appears that duplicate information is requested. Often DOE staff will call requesting information that has already been provided within this report.
4. Special Education Program Standards for interpreters (pg. 110)–The level of endorsement required for interpreters is too rigid. It is very difficult to find individuals with these qualifications and limits opportunities to utilize available interpretive assistance.
5. Career & Technical Advisory Council (pg. 108) and other required advisory councils – Eliminate all requirements for separate advisory councils at the LEA. Our School System works with a Comprehensive Plan Committee for development of the Annual Comprehensive Plan. This committee is composed of stakeholders from all areas and provides advisory input on every functional area of school operations, including career & technical education, gifted education, special education, and technology. The state requires that we have independent advisory councils for these different areas. It would seem that a Comprehensive Committee would provide for a more integrated advisory role while ensuring that the Annual Comprehensive Plan which sets annual goals for the school system is developed and implemented accordingly.
6. The Virginia Department of Education should be required to review every mandated state report and identify how and what the reported data is used for rather than expect the LEA to identify which ones should not be required. In some cases, there may be no

alternative source of information but we question if all of the data that is currently being requested is used for a legitimate purpose or merely put on a shelf. Past attempts by the General Assembly to require the elimination of duplicate reporting from the LEA have resulted in a laughable reduction yet evidence is not available to support the purpose of the data required.

7. Home Instruction (pg. 115) – Why is the LEA required to report information on home schooled children? The LEA is not receiving funding for these students and is not providing educational services.
8. Title II-D State Report – We submit duplicate information to the state for this grant and others. Every reimbursement request is submitted through the state Omega system. Why is it then necessary to submit a separate report outlining how we spent the Title II-D funds when that is what was used in the monthly reimbursement reports submitted to the state?
9. Superintendent Certifications – Every Superintendent takes an oath to faithfully discharge all the duties of the office before assuming their role as a School Superintendent. We recommend that Superintendents be required to certify that they are meeting all required state standards by virtue of their signature and not with voluminous reporting requirements. LEA's should be expected to impose internal monitoring systems and respond accordingly to areas of weakness as evidenced by student performance but the excessive reporting at the state level is onerous and a burden to school systems.
10. Class sizes and per pupil minimums (pg. 94) – School Systems are in the best position to know what program and staffing modifications are needed to accomplish their goals for student success. Generic class size calculations and minimum staffing levels do not guarantee student performance. The state should hold schools accountable for student performance and let the LEA dictate the best way to meet those goals. This varies from division to division and even within schools in a single division. The old one-size-fits-all method does not work.
11. Delete state mandates that exceed federal requirements. Virginia imposes an excessive amount of mandates above and beyond the federal requirements. The burden on LEA's to satisfy all of the federal and state mandates take valuable time away from the core mission of every school system to provide a full spectrum of educational opportunities for all students to learn and grow.
12. Administration of Assessment Instruments (pg. 107) – Delete the requirement for reporting of the Stanford 9. It is anachronistic with most divisions no longer administering the test.
13. Remediation Programs Evaluation (pg. 118) – Eliminate this requirement. Programs are so varied across the state that the data is likely meaningless, out of context, and not comparable from division to division. It would be impossible to use this data in any statistically meaningful way at the state level.

Roanoke County Public Schools prides itself on producing high performing schools and students and have been recognized accordingly. It would seem both appropriate and reasonable that the School System be allowed to implement, design, monitor, and modify instructional

programs in ways that respond to student performance goals and realities without the incessant burden of imposed state mandates that only serve to further strain and deplete the limited local, state, and federal resources for education. Virginia should set the standards, allow School Boards the autonomy and flexibility to provide appropriate programming, and hold school systems accountable for reaching those student goals without imposing one-size-fits-all mandates. How that is accomplished should be the responsibility of the local School Boards.

Signed by:

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Lorraine Lange, Superintendent

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Penny Hodge, Assistant Superintendent of Finance

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Roanoke County School Board Chairman

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Date