



ABOUT OUR CAMPAIGN

The Virginia Education Association and the Virginia Parent-Teacher Association believe that the Commonwealth has no more precious resource than its children.

We further believe that the Commonwealth has the capacity and knowledge to truly transform the lives of Virginia's children by ensuring that every single child has access to a high-quality public education, from preschool to graduation.

What we've lacked, quite simply, is the will.

Despite the lip service paid to children's needs, Virginia's leaders have failed to support our public schools. The Commonwealth ranks as the 10th wealthiest state. But the state's investment in our children falls short:

- Virginia ranks a lowly 39th among all states in per-pupil state funding.
- Sixty-six percent of Virginia 3- and 4-year-olds in low-income households are not enrolled in a preschool program.
- The difference in per-student funding between school systems in King George (\$8,586) and Arlington (\$19,825) is a whopping \$11,239.
- Virginia teacher pay trails the national average by \$7,456.

Investing now in the education of Virginia's students will:

- Help every child reach his or her full potential
- Increase the number of graduates ready to begin high-skill careers in Virginia's new economy
- Reduce the human and financial costs associated with school failure and dropouts

Aren't those goals worth fighting for?

It's time to end the excuses.

Our campaign will mobilize thousands of Virginians to demand that Virginia's elected leaders place the needs of Virginia's children and public schools first.

Use the other side of this sheet to promote the campaign website.



JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN AND SHARE YOUR STORY ONLINE

www.GoodforVirginia.org/PutKidsFirst

www.tinyurl.com/PutKidsFirst



Take these steps to strengthen our campaign and improve the odds for Virginia students:

Sign up for campaign updates

Use the simple web form and we will be sure to send you campaign updates and link you with other advocates from your area.

Share your story

To build support for our cause, we need to hear your story about what happens when our elected leaders fail to Put Kids First. How does underfunding affect the schools you work in, or the schools your children attend? What is being sacrificed? And, what are some examples of how you Put Kids First? Use your most descriptive, vivid language to make clear the importance of investing in our young people. Share your story on the website and encourage your colleagues to do the same.





CAMPAIGN ISSUE—CLASS SIZE

Class size matters. Educators have always known this: it's just common sense. But for those who remain unconvinced, here are some facts that might help:

- Students in smaller classes in the early grades do better in every way they're measured, including grades, test scores and attendance, according to a well-known Tennessee study and other research from Wisconsin and elsewhere.
- The U.S. Department of Education says class size, when studied using the highest standards of research practice, is one of only four evidence-based reforms proven to increase student achievement.
- Reducing class size in the early grades is estimated to reduce achievement gaps by about 38 percent, according to the Brookings Institution. Another estimate, this one from the Council on Economic Advisers, is that every dollar spent in reducing class size pays off in about \$2 in benefits.
- The payoff from reducing class sizes is even greater for low-income and minority children, according to research done at Northwestern University.

Smaller classes help students by allowing teachers to better meet their individual learning needs.



Back to the common sense for a moment: Every teacher wants to meet the needs of every student in his or her classroom. To do so, they need to know each child's capabilities and struggles, something they learn by working with students individually and in small groups.

"You have to be able to spot a child in trouble and step in right away," says Joanne Yatvin, former president of the National Council of Teachers of English. "You just can't do that with 35 in a class."

Use the other side of this sheet to localize this issue for your community.



MAKE IT LOCAL

Is class size an issue in your community's public schools? Jot down your thoughts below to help frame the issue in your area. Work with those who support your issue to develop these points into speeches, testimony, or letters to the editor of the local paper.

What facts about our school division and community underscore the importance of this issue?

What stories, examples, and anecdotes from our schools can we point to?

Who are our most effective local messengers? Whose story might compel others to join our cause?



CAMPAIGN ISSUE—THE COSTS OF UNDERFUNDING

We say we value children and our public schools, but does Virginia's commitment measure up? Consider these facts:

- Virginia's state government is currently spending 17 percent less, per student, on our public schools than it did in 2009 (in inflation-adjusted dollars), despite an increase in enrollment.
- We live in the 10th richest state, per-capita, in the nation. Yet we rank 39th in state funding for our public schools.
- Our teachers earn over \$7,000 less than the national average teacher salary.
- The state has withdrawn funding for new school buildings and the renovation of existing ones.

Virginia's state government is currently spending 17 percent **less**, per student, on our public schools than it did in 2009, despite an increase in enrollment.

Besides being inadequate, the funding of schools in Virginia creates wide disparities in the opportunities afforded children in different areas of the state. The difference in per-student funding between school systems in King George (\$8,586) and Arlington (\$19,825) is a whopping \$11,239! Some students attend newer facilities with the latest equipment; others use aging instructional materials or lack access to a well-rounded curriculum.

Does this sound like a state that's truly committed to public education? To our best future?

Virginia's public schools are already struggling to do our best for increased numbers of disadvantaged students and students with special needs, all the while being hit with more accountability and testing mandates.

It's time to put our money where our mouth is.

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Is underfunding an issue in your community's public schools? Jot down your thoughts below to help frame the issue in your area. Work with those who support your issue to develop these points into speeches, testimony, or letters to the editor of the local paper.

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CAMPAIGN ISSUE—QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early childhood education lays an essential foundation for future success: When children enter elementary school unprepared to learn, they sometimes never catch up. In addition, crucial brain development happens during the preschool years. Failure to teach children at that age represents a lost opportunity.

Here are some of the advantages children who receive quality early childhood education gain:

- They're more likely to graduate from high school.
- They develop longer attention spans and learn to retain information well.
- They have fewer behavioral problems during their school years and are less likely to end up in the criminal justice system later.
- They tend to get better grades, and are less likely to have to repeat grades.
- They're more likely to own homes and earn more money.
- They're less likely to need special education services.

Every dollar spent on early learning provides almost \$9 in benefits to society.



The news is good on all fronts: Early childhood education pays off financially, too. Every dollar spent on early learning provides almost \$9 in benefits to society, according to the President's Council of Economic Advisers. Those benefits include lower special education and criminal justice costs, increased earnings, and even a larger Gross Domestic Product.

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Is lack of quality early childhood education programs an issue in your community? Jot down your thoughts below to help frame the issue in your area. Work with those who support your issue to develop these points into speeches, testimony, or letters to the editor of the local paper.

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CAMPAIGN ISSUE—OUR OVER-TESTED KIDS

Students in Virginia's public schools now spend up to a *third* of their class time preparing for and taking state and federally mandated standardized tests. This can cost them weeks of irreplaceable instructional time every school year.

Is this what we want?

Wouldn't we rather devote most of that time to allow students to learn, ask questions, and acquire essential skills? How did "teach, learn, and test" become "test, blame, and punish"?

- With the testing burden and its high stakes currently facing educators and students, teachers find it increasingly difficult to avoid "teaching to the test."
- What often gets pushed aside in the rush for better test scores are critical and creative thinking skills and the needs of individual learners.
- Standardized testing is costing states nearly \$2 billion annually, according to The Brookings Institution. That money could go so much further in early childhood education programs, after-school activities, and education support services.
- Across the country, parents and educators are banding together to fight over-testing. In Texas, for example, more than 800 local school boards passed resolutions calling for reductions in federally-mandated testing.

Students in Virginia's public schools now spend up to a **third** of their class time preparing for and taking state and federally mandated standardized tests.



No one disputes that standards and tests are important, but they should *support* learning, not *dictate* it.

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