

**LWV-VA Standards and Approval Criteria for (non-Public) School Choice Options
School Choice Options in Virginia: Charter, Vouchers, Tuition Tax Credits, Virtual
[Funding and Operation Parameters for K-12 Options]**

[Also See Appendix B.]

I. Charter and Virtual Schools

NOTE: All Virginia Charter Schools ARE Public Schools.

A. Require (the elected) Local School Board Authorization for establishing a Charter School
Include methods for public input.

B. Require local monitoring of administration and management as in current (2017) VA law.

II. All School Choice Option Requirements

A. Fair and legal funding [No Public funds shall go to sectarian schools.]

1. Require Separation of church and state (See U.S. and VA Constitutions)

2. Oppose unconstitutional ESAs aka Vouchers that would allow public funds for private sectarian schools. (*See VA Constitution Article VIII, Section 10*)

[See The Century Foundation: <https://tcf.org/topics/education/k-12/>]

3. Prohibit for-profit operations and profiteering.

B. Nondiscrimination

1. Uphold Federal civil rights law

2. Uphold Virginia non-discrimination law: *Shall not discriminate against any individual on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services: Virginia Charter School Law*

3. Ensure equity in choices, e.g. *Transportation problems can limit participation by low-income students.*

4. Require a non-biased student selection process; such as lottery, or by criteria for the special purpose of a school option, such as by need, or ability, or at or below a certain FPL percentage.

5. Prevent re-segregation (analysis available; see “Controlled choice” (*Brookings, TCI.2*)

Brookings: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2017/06/23/integrating-charter-schools-and-choice-based-education-systems/>

C. Standards for School Climate

1. Require proper and effective student retention process

(Prevent easy removal of problem students that would return a student to public school.)

2. Require proper and fair discipline policy (e.g. “Classroom not Courtroom”)

3. Provide health and safety measures; follow laws

4. Provide “positive”, “proactive” role in meeting needs of children.

D. Accountability/oversight/transparency (See NCSL National Conference of State Legislatures.)

1. Require proof of well-maintained, monitored financial/fiscal management system.

Show proof of fiscal soundness and budget accountability:

a. Annual audit by independent licensed accounting firm with no personnel from receiving agency/individual.

b. Tracking in the budget of designated gifts

c. Tracking of public money in the budget by line item

d. Require Board of Directors of agency receiving funds to be legally responsible for ensuring that all funds are used as designated.

2. Require open meetings and public access to records

3. Evaluate periodically with minimum frequency established

4. Report attendance often, track students’ participation and completion of program

5. Assess student achievement in all schools and report to Virginia DOE

6. Establish method and parameters for closing, discontinuing or denying recertification

7. Comply with Federal requirements (e.g., Titles.... IDEA, ESSA)
 8. Notify parents, prior to enrollment, of any loss of rights protection (e.g. for students with disabilities; see [GAO report.](#))
- E. Credentialed and qualified teachers; Personnel support
1. Maintain adequate number of personnel (Both Brick-and-Mortar and Virtual)
 2. Provide Human Resource quality (employee pay, benefits, grievance process)
 3. Provide a fair pay scale; Incentives to succeed not based on monetary bonus.
 4. Require continuing professional education and re-certification
 5. Require substantial initial mentoring of teachers.
 6. Require background checks

III. Virtual Schools – Public, charter, and private

- A. Require robust VDOE oversight, accreditation, and accountability
[Multidivision Online Provider ([MOP](#)) Guidelines at VDOE]
- B. Require best student/teacher ratio (Need to define “best” that is effective; standard 150:1 or better)
- C. Require in-person monitoring of testing (for validation, accountability, reporting)
- D. Require method to determine actual time at computer, to prevent signing-in and leaving.
- E. Assure integrity and purpose of providers – motive must not be for profit.
[Note that private MOP lobbyists and private companies have donated to members of Virginia Education Committee members.]
- F. Require counseling that meets the Virginia Standards for Academic, Career, and Personal/social School Counseling
 1. Academic counseling, that assists students and their parents to acquire knowledge of the curricula choices available to students, to plan a program of studies, to arrange and interpret academic testing, and to seek post-secondary academic opportunities;
 2. Career counseling, that helps students to acquire information and plan action about work, jobs, apprenticeships, and post-secondary educational, and career opportunities;
 3. Personal/social counseling, that assists students to develop an understanding of themselves, the rights and needs of others, how to resolve conflict and to define individual goals, reflecting their interests, abilities and aptitudes.
- G. Require records and reports of amount of teacher’s instruction and assessment time.
- H. Assure fair funding statewide
(Payment to MOP based on per pupil SOQ of student’s resident jurisdiction; not the current practice that pays the MOP based on the school jurisdiction where the MOP establishes itself.)
[Also see Appendix C.]

IV. Non-Public schools that receive specific public funds

- A. Assure that a Tuition Tax Credit program is well-managed.
(Virginia currently has a tax credit scholarship program: [EISTC](#))
LWVUS opposes Tuition Tax Credits.
- B. Assure that a Tuition Tax Credit program is not a fiscal detriment to public schools
- C. Limit or oppose the VA EISTCP (Education Improvement Scholarship Tax Credit Program)
- D. Consider lowering EISTC annual donation cap and/or lowering the per cent credit allowed.
- E. Prohibit private schools receiving public funds from using the funds for religious training.
- F. Prohibit establishing ESAs (Educational Savings Accounts)
 1. Vouchers, voucher-like funding for individuals cause local school loss of state funds.
 2. LWVUS opposes vouchers.
(See opposition statements by NCPE and The Commonwealth Institute (TCI))