

### Consensus Questions

1. Standards for a high-quality education are established by the State Board of Education in the Standards of Quality, a document which is subject to periodic approval and funding by the General Assembly.

**Should the General Assembly fully fund the recommendations of the State Board of Education as stated in the Standards of Quality?**

Yes  No  No consensus      **Comments:**

2. While Virginia's wealth ranks in the top ten, it ranks in the bottom quartile—as low as 41<sup>st</sup> in 2019—for what it actually spends on PreK-12 education. Virginia localities invested \$4.4 billion in 2021 *above* what they spent to meet the Standards of Quality (SOQ) for schools in their communities. This lack of state funding exacerbates the disparity between the quality of educational programs and services offered by wealthy and poor school divisions.

**Should Virginia's funding of PreK-12 education be comparable to other similarly wealthy states?**

Yes  No  No consensus      **Comments:**

3. Virginia's education funding formulas do not adequately address the significant differences in the level and/or quality of programs and services available across the state's school divisions: Per pupil expenditure across the state varies as much as \$10,000 per student and over \$200,000 per classroom. To provide students with equal opportunities for a quality education, local tax rates would need to be four to five times higher in poor school divisions than in wealthier ones. Changing the formula for state funding for education in a way that examines the local capacity to raise taxes can address the inequities in educational programming between wealthy and poorer divisions.

**Should the General Assembly identify and adopt a school funding model or formula that—after adjusting for local cost factors—guarantees a funding stream that will allow all school divisions to offer programs and services at comparable levels, regardless of the local tax base?**

Yes  No  No consensus      **Comments:**

4. Average teacher salaries in Virginia trail the national average by nearly \$10,000, and average Virginia teacher salaries rank last in the nation when compared to other adults with bachelor's and master's degrees.

**Should Virginia increase teacher salaries and benefits, making them comparable to average teacher salaries across the nation and reducing the disparities between teacher salaries and salaries of other professionals with similar training and experience?**

Yes  No  No consensus      **Comments:**

5. Historically, Virginia has provided little or no state funding for school facilities. Many of Virginia’s public school facilities do not provide an environment that will support a high-quality educational program; an estimated \$25 billion is currently needed to rectify these problems. The cost of retiring construction debt in two schools of similar size, one in a wealthy and one a poor division, could take four times the tax effort in the poor division to fund a school over the same period of time.

**Should Virginia change its long-time position and accept that fiscal responsibility for the construction and maintenance of safe and up-to-date public school facilities for Virginia’s PreK-12 student population is a state obligation, not just a local obligation?**

Yes  No  No consensus      **Comments:**

6. The Standards of Quality do not include standards for facilities. All Virginia students do not attend school in buildings that are safe, healthy, handicapped accessible, and conducive to a 21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment.

**Should Virginia expand its Standards of Quality to set minimum standards for school construction, renovation, and maintenance?**

Yes  No  No consensus      **Comments:**

7. The Constitution of Virginia states that the General Assembly “shall *seek* [emphasis added] to ensure that educational programs of high quality are established and continually maintained.” It does not *require* the establishment or maintenance of a high-quality public education for all students.

**Should Virginia amend its Constitution to replace aspirational language with language that will legally require the General Assembly to provide a high-quality public education for all students?**

Yes  No  No consensus      **Comments:**

8. **Should the LWV-VA continue its efforts to educate the public about the benefits of high-quality public education, to develop partnerships with other interested state organizations, to advocate actively for improved and more equitable school funding, and to improve the narratives that are told about our schools?**

Yes  No  No consensus      **Comments:**