

MANASSAS CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



2020

**LEGISLATIVE
PRIORITIES**

2021

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Manassas City Public Schools (MCPS), located in Northern Virginia, is a diverse, urban school division serving 7,600 students in nine schools for the 2020-2021 school year. MCPS takes pride in its economic, ethnic, and racial diversity. Forty-seven percent of its students are economically disadvantaged, and Spanish is the first or second language for almost 61.28% of the student population. Sixty-five percent of our students are eligible free or reduced lunches, which is a significant increase from twenty-eight percent in 2008.

FAST FACTS

Demographics:

American Indian.....	0.3%
Asian.....	3.58%
Black.....	9.5%
Hispanic.....	68%
White.....	13.2%
Hawaiian.....	0.09%
2 or more races.....	5.1%
Special Education.....	12.2%
English Learners.....	47%

Enrollment (PreK-12) as of
9/30/20

MCPS is the employer of approximately 1,100 employees and must compete at a national level to attract and retain the “best and brightest” employees. State funding reductions such as the support cost caps, elimination of costs of competing funding, and other adjustments to the funding formula have reduced state funding for our schools, while mandated VRS rate increases and ever-increasing expectations continue to drive up our costs. These changes have shifted approximately \$7 million per year in costs to the locality requiring reductions in services, and increased class sizes.

Over the next five years, enrollment is expected to exceed 8,000 students. Additionally, the School Division plans to rebuild Jennie Dean Elementary School while maintaining and renovating existing facilities at a cost of \$65 million.

Our Mission

Manassas City Public Schools, in collaboration with families, employees, and community members will provide a safe and innovative learning environment that inspires, engages, and challenges all students.

Our Vision

Each student becomes a positive, contributing member of society by maximizing their potential.

Our Beliefs

- We believe students must have access to high-quality instruction to develop skills to support their success and on-time graduation.
- We believe student learning must include opportunities for critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, and citizenship.
- We believe in open, proactive communication as one community in support of student success.
- We believe financial decisions should be based on an inclusive and open process that supports student learning.
- We believe in an innovative, safe and orderly environment that maximizes student performance.

Statements of Support/Opposition

CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

Support and advocate for all bills that support school divisions when conducting required criminal fingerprint checks, requiring the state police to not only provide the location, arrest date, and municipality of the offense, but also additional information on the offense and any adjudication.

FINANCE/PURCHASING/FOOD SERVICE

Support and advocate for all bills that would prohibit the use of lottery funds to supplant general funding for Virginia school divisions and restore the application of all lottery funds to K-12 education.

Oppose all bills that usurp the authority of local school boards to properly allocate funding between instructional and support expenditures.

Oppose all bills that would establish uniform minimum standards for the erection of new, or renovation of existing, school buildings.

Oppose all bills that would require funding to “follow the student” in situations in which the home school division offers a complete virtual school program but the student elects to enroll in one offered by another school division.

Support all bills that eliminate the local school division budgetary match currently required to receive Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) funding, allowing school divisions to expand preschool opportunities without negatively impacting funding for other programs and services.

Support and advocate for all bills that provide increased and targeted funding for educational technology infrastructure and increased bandwidth.

Oppose all bills that are unfunded mandates.

INSTRUCTION & STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Support and advocate for all bills directing the state to define comparable verified units for graduation purposes for students transferring to Virginia school divisions from other states.

Support and advocate for all bills that provide increased and targeted funding for the necessary resources and expertise to provide professional development and support collaboration so that all school division employees (teachers, support staff, and administrators) are better able to support classroom instruction and student learning.

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Support legislation that would require the Commonwealth to provide funding for every household in the Commonwealth to have access to fixed broadband or wireless broadband connection service with unlimited data allowances and speeds of at least 10 Mbps download and 3 Mbps upload.

SCHOOL BOARD GOVERNANCE

Oppose all bills that would divest (limit) local school boards of their authority over the formation and operation of charter schools within their school divisions.

Oppose any legislation that would place authority over collective bargaining issues relating to school board employees with any governing body other than the local school board.

COVID-19 RELIEF

Support all bills that provide relief to statutorily required in-person learning requirements (such as parent/student driver education component) through 2021 and funding relief for school divisions for increased costs incurred as a result of COVID-19 operational changes and impacts.

DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Support changes to Virginia law and regulations to allow for students with disabilities or medical conditions who cannot access regular or adaptive Physical Education to receive the same Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma as students who can fulfill the Physical Education requirements.

AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP (ADM)

Support the use of the larger 2019-2020 ADM in the FY21 Basic Aid Calculation, if the 2019-2020 ADM is larger than the 2020-2021 ADM.

RETAIN UNSPENT APPROPRIATIONS

Support legislative changes allowing local school boards to retain any unspent appropriations in a School Board's operating budget from one fiscal year to the operating budget of the following fiscal year.

2021 MCPS Legislative Priorities

PROVIDE ADDITIONAL IN-CLASSROOM SUPPORTS FOR TEACHERS

Virginia needs to increase funding for in-classroom instructional support positions and provide teachers with additional resources to meet the needs of students with challenging behavior needs. Virginia should look at removing support positions from underneath the cap that provides direct services to students. These positions should include school psychologists and other positions that support the behavioral health needs of students, technology instructions, and support positions.

SOQ AND ACCREDITATION FLEXIBILITY

In order for schools to become accredited, they must meet certain standards and benchmarks. However, schools are also required to meet specific staffing ratios through the SOQs. These requirements do not always translate into better test scores, or college and career readiness. Virginia should set the standards allowing flexibility for school divisions to meet those standards based upon individual students' needs. The General Assembly should not hamstring student achievement by controlling the inputs as well as the outputs.

FULL FUNDING FOR THE STANDARDS OF QUALITY (SOQ)

Manassas City Public Schools urges the Virginia legislature to consider and provide for the actual cost of meeting SOQ requirements, not just the minimum assumed necessary by the state.

Therefore, the Manassas City School Board supports legislation that would provide full funding for implementing the SOQ, including the cost of support

personnel, and not divert public resources away from public education.

REMOVE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCREDITATION

The Manassas City School Board supports legislation that removes attendance under 8VAC20-131-380 as a measurement of School Quality for Accreditation. Establishing absent students as a measure of accreditation as defined as “those who are enrolled in a given school who miss 10 percent or more of the school year, regardless of reason” unfairly discriminates against schools with high transient minority populations, at-risk students, and working students. This places an unfunded mandate on schools who must utilize resources for attendance compliances tracking.

RESTORE EDUCATION FUNDING TO PRE-ECONOMIC RECESSION LEVELS

Funding of public education is a shared responsibility. While state and local authorities work in partnership to ensure a quality education for students in the Commonwealth, past changes to Virginia’s funding for public education widened the gap between the true local-level cost of providing programs and services and the amount reimbursed by the state.

Our Goals

1

Optimize academic performance and student success

2

Cultivate a culture of excellence and service

3

Forge relationships to support and maximize success

4

Operate effectively and efficiently

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