

The RPS Legislative Advocacy Priorities include state legislative proposals that will most benefit RPS students, staff, and our community. Equity informs each of these priorities because the state's public education funding formulas have historically not supported school divisions and students that need the most resources.

According to a report by EdBuild in 2019, [high-poverty nonwhite school districts in Virginia receive \\$10,796 in state funding per student, whereas low poverty white school districts have \\$11,001 per student](#); that's [\\$205 less](#)- our students need [25-40% more funding to counter the effects of poverty and systemic racism](#). COVID-19 has further exacerbated these inequities in our schools and communities, reinforcing that now is time for new equity-based policies and funding.

Standards of Quality and The Equity Fund

In 2019, the Virginia Board of Education prescribed new staffing and funding recommendations, the Virginia Standards of Quality, that would start to fix over a decade of disinvestment and widening disparities in education funding. The equity-based recommendations, also known as the **School Equity & Staffing Act** call for more English Learner teachers, more counselors and other support staff, and investments in teacher leader and mentor programs. The first of the recommendations, **The Equity Fund**, combines two existing funding streams under an equity-based formula and implements additional equity-based provisions to flexibly use funds to create new programs and recruit new staff. The Equity Fund would begin to modernize our education funding formulas by recognizing that each child and each school are not the same and that funding should equitably reflect their needs.

- **Get Involved!** Support **SB 1257 (McClellan), HB 1929 (Aird)**, known as the School Equity and Staffing Act, and support **Senator McClellan's budget amendment (145 #12s)** to create the Equity Fund!

Remove the Support Staff Cap

In 2009, the General Assembly placed a cap on on the number of support staff that the state will fund. This includes many school-based staff like nurses, social workers, and psychologists, and the cost-savings policy disproportionately impacts high-poverty school divisions because it is these school divisions that have greater support staff needs. The time is long overdue for the General Assembly to reform the way support staff are funded and remove this cap.

- **Get Involved!** Support budget amendments from **Delegate Aird (145 #18h) & Senator McClellan (145 #9s)** to remove the Support Staff Cap.

Implement Proficiency-Based EL Teacher Ratios

A more equitable approach to supporting English Learner (EL) students is to ensure they have enough support from EL teachers through proficiency-based student to teacher ratios. The current flat ratio of 1 EL teacher to 50 EL students does not recognize the varied needs of EL students and stretches EL teachers thin. The Board of Education recommended changing the ratios to a proficiency-based scale, where less English proficient students would have a ratio of 1:25 and more proficient students would have ratios ranging from 30-58 students per teacher. This policy would equitably distribute EL teachers to the EL students who need the most support.

- **Get Involved!** Support **budget amendments from Delegate Carr (145 #8h) and Senator Hashmi (145 #4s)** to implement proficiency-based ratios for EL students and teachers.

Support Our Teachers

Teacher salaries have also suffered since the Great Recession. According to the Economic Policy Institute, Virginia has one of the least competitive teacher salaries in the country. In 2020, the legislature approved two 2% raises in 2020 & 2021. Due to COVID-19, the 2020 state raise was eliminated (RPS still approved a locally-funded 2% raise for 2020). Now, the legislature is considering restoring the 2% state raise for 2021. The state will need to continue to make meaningful investments in teachers in the coming years and raise our teacher salaries to the national average. HB 1915 would require that teachers be compensated at or above the national average by 2026.

- **Get Involved!** Support **HB 1915 (Mugler)** to bring Virginia teacher pay to the national average and support the **budget amendment from Delegate Ayala (145 #29h)** to ensure teachers receive a 2% raise for 2021!



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