

COMMENTS TO POLICY REVISION SUGGESTED BY DR. DAWN MARIE BRITTINGHAM
Policy Section 3-1.1

Current Policy

Section 3-1.1. Administrative Responsibilities Generally. — A. The chief administrative officer for Suffolk Public Schools is the superintendent of schools. The superintendent is responsible for the direction, leadership and coordination of students and staff in their efforts to reach educational goals adopted by the School Board. The administration must be based upon positive human relationships in order to serve as the keystone to the effective operation of the entire educational system. Without such a base, Suffolk Public Schools will lack that uniting force which makes everybody in the organization feel important, regardless of the tasks or duties which he or she is discharging, be they professional or support services.

B. The School Board expects the administration to specialize in:

1. The processes of decision-making and communication.
2. Planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating educational programs.
3. The coordination of various centers of power within Suffolk Public Schools so as to enable people to do the things together for education that they might never be able to do separately.
4. The demonstration of leadership.
5. The development and maintenance of close working relationships and channels of communication within the school system and community.
6. The prevention of misunderstandings and development of cooperation toward attaining the educational goals adopted by the School Board.

Suggested Policy Revision

Section 3-1.1. Administrative Superintendent Responsibilities Generally. — A. The superintendent serves as the chief administrative officer for Suffolk Public Schools is the superintendent of schools and is responsible for the day-to-day administration and implementation of policies, directives, and actions adopted by the school board. The superintendent shall provide leadership and coordination necessary to carry out the educational goals established by the school board. ~~The superintendent is responsible for the direction, leadership and coordination of students and staff in their efforts to reach educational goals adopted by the School Board. The administration must be based upon positive human relationships in order to serve as the keystone to the effective operation of the entire educational system. Without such a base, Suffolk Public Schools will lack that uniting force which makes everybody in the organization feel important, regardless of the tasks or duties which he or she is discharging, be they professional or support services.~~

The superintendent's authority is administrative in nature and derives from the Code of Virginia and from policies adopted by the school board. Nothing in this section shall be construed to grant the superintendent independent authority to establish policy, obligate school board funds, commit the school board to contractual, legislative, or financial positions, or represent the school board on matters of fiscal or legislative policy without prior authorization by the school board.

All actions involving financial commitments, formal external representations on behalf of the school board, or matters that may reasonably be construed as expressing school board policy positions shall be subject to prior school board approval or subsequent ratification as provided by policy or law.

~~B. The School Board expects the administration to specialize in:~~

- ~~1. The processes of decision-making and communication.~~
- ~~2. Planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating educational programs.~~
- ~~3. The coordination of various centers of power within Suffolk Public Schools so as to enable people to do the things together for education that they might never be able to do separately.~~
- ~~4. The demonstration of leadership.~~

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- ~~5. The development and maintenance of close working relationships and channels of communication within the school system and community.~~
~~6. The prevention of misunderstandings and development of cooperation toward attaining the educational goals adopted by the School Board.~~

Rationale for Revision

The revisions explicitly affirm that the superintendent's authority is administrative and derived from the School Board and Virginia law. Importantly, the superintendent is not granted independent authority to establish policy, obligate funds, or represent the Board on fiscal or legislative matters without prior authorization. This ensures that all policy direction and major commitments remain under Board control.

Attorney Comments

The proposed revision provides that the superintendent's authority is derived from the Code of Virginia and from policies adopted by the school board. There is no mention of regulations promulgated by the VDOE. Section 4.1 of the Superintendent's Term Contract also provides that his authority to act is derived from regulations of the VDOE.

The proposed revision deletes language regarding the superintendent's ability to supervise teachers and other school personnel, which is provided for by VDOE Regulations 8VAC20-390-90 and 8VAC20-390-110.

Language that restricts the superintendent's ability to explain the school system and give information about school division may also violate VDOE Regulation 8VAC20-390-70.

Language that all actions involving financial commitments, formal external representations on behalf of the school board, or matters that may *reasonably be construed* as expressing school board policy positions shall be subject to prior school board approval or subsequent ratification as provided by policy or law, is vague and could violate the superintendent's exercise of First Amendment Rights.

Current policies of the School Board restrict the superintendent's authority to establish policy or obligate school board funds. See Policy Section 2-1.2 and 3-1.2.C.6.b.

The deletion of subsection B in the current policy are responsibilities that a superintendent is expected to do as part of the day-to-day operations. All of which are within the control of the superintendent.