

# 2021 Legislative Priorities

Update and Recommendations for the Richmond City School Board

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Venue: Richmond City School Board Meeting

Date: December 7, 2020

## 2020 Special Session Recap

Provision	Newly Adopted FY21 Funding Provisions
Sales Tax Revenue Hold Harmless	\$95.2 million (NGF from gray machines)
COVID-19 Relief	\$220.8 million / \$175 per pupil (CRF)
Enrollment Loss	Delays any reduction in state aid due to enrollment declines until end of school year.
Childcare Stabilization Fund (grants to providers)	\$60 million (CRF)
Emergency Childcare Programs (partnerships)	\$16.6 million (CRF)
Short-Term Technology Needs	\$8.9 million (CARES Act GEER)
Textbook Funding Flexibility	Permits textbook funds to be used for COVID-19 related costs and removes local match in FY21.

### FY22 Restorations

The revised budget also restores funding approved in the 2020 regular session for the expansion of early childhood education (\$37.3 million) and further investment in the At-Risk Add-On program (\$35.2 million) in FY22. Budget language also directs the Governor to include FY22 salary increases (2%) for school staff in the introduced budget for the 2021 Session, provided revenue projections are sufficient.

## 2019 Board of Education SOQ Recommendations

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In 2019, the Board of Education prescribed new Standards of Quality (SOQ) for the Commonwealth's public schools. The new standards are aligned with the Board of Education's goals of promoting educational equity, supporting educator recruitment and retention, and helping students and schools achieve the board's graduation and accreditation requirements.

- **Comprehensive Policy and Funding Reforms** - The SOQ recommendations covered specific policy changes requiring both statutory and budget changes and investments. Some examples include the following topics:
  - The Equity Fund
  - Teacher Leader and Teacher Mentor Programs
  - English Language Learners
- **2020 Activity** - The SOQ were transmitted to the General Assembly to review and revise during the 2020 legislative session. Senator McClellan and Delegate Aird patroned the legislation in the Senate and House. The 2020 General Assembly did not ultimately adopt any legislation codifying the changes or providing adequate funding.
- **2021 Consideration** - On September 17, 2020, the Board unanimously re-prescribed the SOQ from 2019. Legislation is being prepared for introduction again in the 2021 session.
- **RPS Advocacy Priority** - It is recommended that RPS support the SOQ revisions and funding as a core advocacy priority for 2021, with a specific goal of advancing equity-based funding per the following slide.

## The Equity Fund

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The most significant of the BOE's 2019 proposals is the consolidation of the At-Risk Add-On (ARAO) and the Prevention, Intervention, and Remediation (PIR) funds into a single, expanded program known as the Equity Fund.

- **Revised Formula for More Equitable Funding** - The consolidated fund would distribute resources the same as the ARAO - based on the divisionwide free lunch rate. This eliminates the academic outcome factor used in the Prevention, Intervention, and Remediation program, maximizing funding to those school divisions with the most concentrated poverty.
- **Flexible but Targeted Funding to Support Students and Teachers** - This proposal allocates 10% to 65% percent additional SOQ positions based upon free lunch rates. School divisions would be able to use this funding flexibly, subject to these conditions:
  - Up to 70% of the funds may be used to support programs for students who are educationally at-risk or need prevention, intervention, and remediation.
  - All of the funds may be used to provide targeted compensation adjustments to assist with recruiting and retaining experienced teachers in high poverty schools.
- **Funding Provisions & Status** - Additional funding was also recommended; for FY20, the BOE called for \$131 million to be added to the existing ARAO and PIR accounts. For FY21, the legislature did approve \$61.3 million of new ARAO funding but it was unallocated and eliminated due to COVID-19 impacts. For FY22, the legislature has approved \$35.2 million of ARAO funding pending sufficient economic resources.
- **RPS Advocacy Goal** - The conversion of the ARAO and PIR programs into the Equity Fund and/or further state investment in equity-based funding policies is recommended to be the primary advocacy goal for 2021.

## Additional 2021 State Legislative Advocacy Priorities

Priority Area	Recommended Action
Alternative Education	Provide state funding for school division alternative education programs.
Teacher Compensation	Restore staff raises originally passed in 2020 session and ensure maximum flexibility in state match requirements.
Support Staff	Eliminate the Support Staff Cap that arbitrarily limits the number of state-funded support positions such as nurses and social workers.
English Language Learners	Implement the 2019 BOE recommendation to amend the staffing requirements for English Learner teachers to differentiate the distribution of positions based upon the proficiency level of students (ratios vary from 1:25 to 1:58 (teacher to ESL students in the division).
School Construction	Given 2020 creation of the School Construction and Modernization Commission and the enactment of a clause in gaming legislation that directs future casino revenues to school construction, not much action is expected during the 2021 regular session. It is important that the Commission begin its work and begin advocating for further funding reforms and investments in 2022 as the legislature creates a new biennial budget.

## Advocacy Plans

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Advocacy at RPS is embedded across the district to support students, families, and community partners to advocate for our legislative priorities. Some of our current district-level activities include:

### Student-Led Advocacy

Upon approval of the RPS 2021 Legislative Priorities, the RPS Student Advisory Council will announce it to the public on December 17, 2020 in a virtual media press conference. They are also preparing to unveil a new advocacy art design that will be used in 2021 RPS advocacy materials, including postcards, posters, and apparel in the RPS Love Store.

### Advocacy Hub

The new Advocacy Hub has launched on our website to inform and empower the RPS community to advocate at the local, state, and federal levels. The hub will be a living advocacy portal with the RPS advocacy toolkit and resources like form letters and advocacy opportunities from partner organizations. Visit the Hub at [www.rvaschools.net/advocacy](http://www.rvaschools.net/advocacy)

### Family Academy Trainings

Advocacy trainings are scheduled through our Family Academy for families and partners on how to successfully advocate virtually as we approach the 2021 General Assembly session. Register at [www.rvaschools.net/familyacademy](http://www.rvaschools.net/familyacademy)

- December 14, 2020
- December 17, 2020 - Spanish interpretation available
- January 5, 2021
- January 11, 2021 - Spanish interpretation available