

State Legislative Advocacy

Update for Richmond City Council

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Venue: City Council Education and Human Services Committee

Date: October 1, 2020

2020 Accomplishments & COVID-19 Impacts

Priority	End of Regular Session Outcome	COVID-19 Impacts
Equity-Based Funding	Approved \$148.5 million for the At-Risk Add-On, an increase over the Governor's proposal of \$139.4 million. The Equity Fund was not advanced.	\$61,338,275 of new At-Risk Add-On funding was unallocated and eliminated.
Early Childhood Education	Approved \$105 million to expand access for 3-year-olds, increase access to mixed-delivery models, and increase per-pupil funding.	All new funding was unallocated and eliminated.
Teacher Compensation	Approved a 2% teacher salary increase in each year of the state budget (\$290.5 million).	All new funding was unallocated and eliminated.
Support Staff - School Counselors	Approved \$46.1 million to lower the school counselor ratio from 1:387 to 1:325.	All new funding was unallocated and eliminated.
Student Discipline	HB 256 / SB 3 passed, eliminating the charge of disorderly conduct for students. HB 257 / SB 729 passed, eliminating the requirement that principals must report all crimes to law enforcement.	No budgetary impacts. Laws enacted July 1, 2020.
English Language Learners	Decreased the ratio of ESL teachers from 1:59 students to 1:50 students (\$21 million). Proficiency-based ratios not approved.	No impact, new funding and ratios enacted July 1, 2020.
School Construction	SB 888 passed, creating the Commission on School Construction and Modernization. Governor also amended gaming legislation to allocate future tax revenue from new casinos to "programs established to address public school construction, renovations, or upgrades."	No impacts. Commission has been created.

Special Session Overview

Overview

The Governor called the Virginia General Assembly into a special session that convened in mid-August. The only legislation allowed during this session included legislation related to:

- police reform and criminal and social justice reforms;
- impacts on health, education, state and local government operations, business, and the Commonwealth's economy from COVID-19;
- Budget Bills; and
- Resolutions related to rules, appointments, and recognitions.

Virtual Learning

While several education-related bills were introduced during the Special Session, very few have advanced. There has been minimal impact to RPS.

Budget

The primary issue of concern for RPS during the Special Session has been adjustments to the state's budget:

- Sales Tax Revenue
- Childcare Stabilization
- Enrollment Loss

FY 21 Special Session Action and Proposals

Topic/Provision	Prior Action	House Proposal	Senate Proposal
Sales Tax Revenue Hold Harmless	N/A	\$95.2 million (NGF from gray machines)	\$95.2 million (NGF from gray machines)
COVID-19 Relief	\$214 million (ESSER)	\$200 million / \$159 per pupil (CRF)	\$200 million / \$159 per pupil (CRF)
Enrollment Loss	N/A	Language directing DOE to not adjust payments in January, allowing General Assembly to review scope of ADM changes during 2021 Session.	No action
Childcare Stabilization Fund (grants to providers)	\$70.8 million (CARES Act)	Additional \$60 million (CRF Funds)	Additional \$20 million (CRF Funds)
Emergency Childcare Programs (partnerships)	\$16.6 million (Governor's Special Session Proposed Budget)	Additional \$16.6 million (CRF Funds)	No action

The House has also proposed 3 provisions that address additional concerns (no action by the Senate).

1. Waiver of pupil/teacher ratios for school counselors and EL teachers for FY21.
2. Delayed implementation of new requirement to reserve 30% of Infrastructure & Operations Per Pupil Funds for non-recurring costs.
3. Permit textbook funds to be used for remote learning or reopening costs and removes local match requirement for FY21.

2021 Priority Development

Much progress was made in education funding during the 2020 Regular Session before the true impact of COVID-19 was realized and reductions made due to decreasing state revenues. The 2021 session will likely be focused on restoring frozen funding and continuing to mitigate the ongoing impact of COVID-19. The RPS School Board will be reviewing these priorities and adopting the RPS 2021 Legislative Priorities in October and November.

Priority	Draft Objectives
Equity-Based Funding	Restore At-Risk Add-On funding approved in 2020 using the Equity Fund model.
Early Childhood Education	Restore early childhood investments approved in 2020 including expansion of access to 3 year olds and mixed delivery settings. Continue childcare stabilization efforts.
Teacher Compensation	Restore full 4% biennial teacher salary raise.
Support Staff	Restore funding for more school counselors and fund additional reduction of ratio to 1:250. Provide increased funding for school nurses.
EL Teachers	Implement the Board of Education's recommendation to base EL pupil/teacher ratios by English language proficiency of students.
School Construction & Infrastructure	Work with new Commission on School Construction and Modernization to begin work of creating further funding and procurement recommendations for the 2022 General Assembly.

Advocacy Plans

Advocacy at RPS is embedded across the district to support students, families, and community partners to advocate for our legislative priorities. Below are some of the advocacy activities that we will be coordinating in the coming months.

Advocacy Hub

RPS will soon be launching a new Advocacy Hub 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.

Family Academy Trainings & Community Hubs

As we re-launch our Family Academy in virtual and socially-distanced in person settings, new trainings and toolkits are being created to train partners and families on how to successfully advocate virtually as we approach the 2021 General Assembly session. Our new Community Hubs across RVA will be empowering advocates regionally to create a community-centered model for advocacy, allowing more direct connections to the legislators that represent their neighborhoods.

Student Advisory Council

The RPS Student Advisory Council will again focus on advocacy projects this year, using their voices and talents to participate in many different advocacy experiences.

- Individual Advocacy Projects
- Civic Voice Town Halls - www.rvaschools.net/townhall
- Mikva Challenge - www.mikvachallenge.org
- Advocacy Art Design Contest