



VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

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**News Release
For Immediate Release**

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Virginia School Boards Association Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments Responds to Release of 2020-21 SOL Test Scores

Charlottesville, VA – The results of Virginia’s 2020-2021 Standards of Learning tests affirm for many the ramifications of significant shifts the COVID-19 pandemic era has had on teaching and learning and student outcomes. Highlighted in Virginia and across the nation are the student outcomes that demonstrate "impacts across all student groups, especially African American students, Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and English learners." The VSBA award winning Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments believes it is critically important to remember that significant disparities in student outcomes existed prior to the onslaught of COVID-19.

During a 2019 presentation at the VSBA Conference on Education, the Task Force highlighted data from the Virginia Department of Education that showed only one school division in Virginia achieved above the benchmark Math pass rates for students with disabilities. In contrast, every school division except one achieved passing rates for white students in math. Prior to the pandemic, less than half of all school division’s achieved pass rates for African American students in math.

For many, the pandemic era 2020-21 SOL tests results are described as “unprecedented.” For far too many students and schools in challenging environments, COVID-19 worsened structural inequities that have long produced a pandemic of unfinished learning. We call on school boards, superintendents, legislators, the Virginia Department of Education, and the Virginia Board of Education to join us in refusing to allow national trends of the pandemic’s impact to continue the long-standing structural inequities that normalize the gross disparities in student outcomes. Pre-pandemic, equity was being described as providing students what they need and when they need it. Let us collectively prioritize equity in action and accelerate student outcomes by erasing the structures of inequity we have created and, far too often, tolerated. Let us start by placing the data of Students and Schools in Challenging Environments at the top of each of our agendas — figuratively and



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literally — and commit our time and energy to giving what these students and schools need, when they need it, no excuses dedicated to the areas of:

Student Learning

Leadership and Teacher Quality

Funding & Resources (Including Infrastructure)

Family, Parent, and Community Engagement & Outreach

Specialized Training

We are your partners and remain committed to providing leadership, advocacy, and support dedicated to our charge as a task force. #OurStudentsMatter

About the Virginia School Boards Association Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments

The VSBA Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments was created by the VSBA Board of Directors at its June 6, 2013, meeting to make recommendations to the Virginia Board of Education and the Virginia Department of Education on ways to help students and schools in challenging environments in Virginia. The task force was created because of requests for assistance and concerns among VSBA member boards related to school divisions struggling to reach their most challenged student populations. The task force is co-chaired by VSBA Past-President, Rodney A. Jordan, of Norfolk and Halifax County Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Mark Lineburg.

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