

## Good News about Public Schools in Virginia

- \* Virginia public schools are making some of the biggest gains in the latest exams from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP):
- \* Virginia 8th-grade students are among the top in the country in writing. The proportion of 8th-grade students scoring at the highest two levels of writing achievement is the 6th highest in the nation. [NCES, NAEP 1998 Writing: Report Card for the Nation and the States. September 1999.](#)
- \* The proportion of Virginia public school 4th graders who scored at the highest two levels in math increased by 32% between 1992 and 2000. [NCES, Nation's Report Card: Mathematics 2000. August 2001.](#)
- \* The proportion of Virginia public school 8th graders who scored at the highest two levels in math increased by 53% between 1990 and 2000. [NCES, Nation's Report Card: Mathematics 2000. August 2001.](#)
- \* Virginia ranks 10th in the nation for having the highest percentage of public school 4th graders scoring at the highest two levels in science. [NCES, Nation's Report Card: States Science 2000 Reports. November 2001.](#)
- \* The proportion of Virginia public school 8th graders scoring at the highest two levels in science increased by 15% between 1996 and 2000. [NCES, Nation's Report Card: States Science 2000 Reports. November 2001.](#)
- \* More Virginia students are getting high scores on their SAT college entrance examinations. The proportion of graduating seniors getting high scores on the Verbal SAT has increased by 18% since 1994; the proportion of graduating seniors getting high scores on the Math SAT has increased by 10% since 1995. (A high score is defined as 600 or above.) [College Board, 2002 SAT State Results.](#)
- \* Since 1990 Virginia's Verbal SAT college entrance examination scores have risen twice faster than the the national average. [College Board, College Bound Seniors 2002.](#)
- \* Virginia is one of the top 10 states in the nation in the proportion of public high schools offering Advanced Placement (AP) courses, through which students can earn college credit. Eighty-five percent (85%) of Virginia's public high schools offer AP courses. Just 50% of Virginia's private high schools offer these advanced courses. [College Board, 2001 AP State and National Summary Report.](#)
- \* On average Virginia public school students score higher than private and religious school students on their AP exams in the core subjects of computer science and economics. [College Board, 2001 AP State and National Summary Report.](#)
- \* Virginia public school students lead the nation in economics. Virginia students rank among the top two states on their economics AP exam scores. [College Board, 2001 AP State and National Summary Report.](#)
- \* The number of Virginia teachers being honored with certification from the prestigious National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has increased nearly four-fold since 1999. [NBPTS, State-by-State Listing. November 2001.](#)
- \* Virginia initiated comprehensive reform in public education five years ago when the Board of Education adopted rigorous, specific, grade-by-grade Standards of Learning (SOLs). Since that time, a testing program based on the SOLs has been implemented and new Standards of

Accreditation (SOA) adopted. By 2004, the high stakes program will require high school seniors to pass end-of-course tests in order to graduate. [VA DOE., Virginia's K-12 Education Reform: Raising Student Achievement in Virginia.](#)

\* The Fordham Foundation gave Virginia the highest possible grade for having high standards for students in history. [Fordham Foundation, The State of State Standards 2000.](#)

\* Most of the public schools in Virginia (93%) have Internet access. [Market Data Retrieval, Technology in Education 2001.](#)

\* There is one computer available for instruction for every 4 public school students in Virginia. [Market Data Retrieval, Technology in Education 2001.](#)

\* Virginia is one of the top eight states in the country in percentage of public school 8th graders attending schools without a classroom behavior problem. [Education Week, Quality Counts 2002.](#)

### **Challenges Facing Virginia's Public Schools**

\* Nationwide in the past 10 years, teacher salaries have increased in constant dollars. However, in Virginia, teacher salaries have actually declined by 4%. [NEA, Rankings and Estimates, 2002.](#)

\* Virginia faces a serious equity problem in its public school spending: the gap between the richest and poorest districts in spending on students is one of the worst in the country. *Education Week* gives Virginia a failing grade of "D+" for the level of equity in its public school spending. [Education Week, Quality Counts 2002.](#)

\* Parents in Virginia need to be more involved in their children's education. In Virginia, just 81% of 4th-grade parents and just 28% of 8th-grade parents participate in parent-teacher conferences — one of the lowest levels of participation in the country. [Education Week, Quality Counts 2002.](#)

\* Virginia school buildings need major improvements. Thirty-two percent (32%) of Virginia schools have crumbling roofs. Thirty-two percent (32%) have bad plumbing. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of Virginia schools need a building extensively repaired or replaced. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of all Virginia schools are in unsatisfactory environmental condition, and 22% have poor ventilation. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of Virginia schools lack adequate power outlets and wiring for classroom computers. [ASCE's 2001 Report Card for America's Infrastructure.](#)