HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 236

Commending Virginia school boards that employ elementary and middle school Mathematics Specialists for the purpose of increasing student achievement by improving the quality of mathematics instruction.

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, January 27, 2012
Agreed to by the Senate, February 2, 2012

WHEREAS, for more than a decade, Virginia has been a leader among states in the preparation and deployment of Mathematics Specialists in elementary and middle schools; and

WHEREAS, Virginia has benefited and continues to benefit from National Science Foundation (NSF) grants supporting preparation and support programs for selected Mathematics Specialists in participating school divisions; and

WHEREAS, positive research findings from the initial grant are that (i) students in elementary schools with Mathematics Specialists for three years had statistically significant higher scores on the Virginia Standards of Learning mathematics assessments than did students in the control schools without Mathematics Specialists, and (ii) the significant, positive effects of Specialists on student achievement emerged as the knowledgeable Specialists and school instructional and administrative staffs learned and worked together; and

WHEREAS, building upon the success of the initial grant, a subsequent NSF grant is supporting an elementary school endeavor to adapt proven training and placement models for rural school divisions, which because of their small student populations and geographic characteristics are generally without central administration mathematics expertise and far from higher education centers; and

WHEREAS, thirteen divisions have been enthusiastic participants in this rural grant since 2009 and currently have Mathematics Specialists in place or are contributing to a research study on the impact of Mathematics Specialists; and

WHEREAS, a second subsequent NSF grant is supporting a middle school program focused on modifying proven training and placement models to address the markedly different mathematics competencies required of teachers in the middle grades, where students must lay foundations for future coursework and career plans, and where a Virginia Mathematics and Science Coalition survey revealed fewer than one-half of Virginia's mathematics middle school teachers had the equivalent of a major or minor in mathematics; and

WHEREAS, eleven divisions are keen participants in this middle school grant and will employ their first grant Mathematics Specialists in the fall of 2012 and will contribute to a research study on the impact of Mathematics Specialists in middle schools; and

WHEREAS, forty divisions—Albemarle, Alexandria, Amelia, Arlington, Buena Vista, Charlotte, Charlottesville, Chesterfield, Culpeper, Dickenson, Fairfax County, Fauquier, Frederick, Gloucester, Halifax, Hanover, Harrisonburg, Henrico, Hopewell, Lee, Louisa, Mecklenburg, Middlesex, Norfolk, Norton City, Orange, Pittsylvania, Portsmouth, Powhatan, Prince William, Richmond City, Roanoke City, Rockbridge, Scott, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Virginia Beach, Washington, Westmoreland, and Wise—have provided leadership for implementation programs by recruiting teachers to be prepared to be Mathematics Specialists, deploying them in the schools or, as requested, participating in various treatment/control research studies; and

WHEREAS, having recognized the value of Mathematics Specialists, additional Virginia school divisions around the Commonwealth also have taken the initiative to employ them with the goals of elevating both teacher and student performance; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the General Assembly hereby commend and congratulate Virginia school boards that employ elementary and middle school Mathematics Specialists in order to increase student achievement by increasing the quality of mathematics instruction; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Virginia Mathematics and Science Coalition, requesting that it further distribute copies of this resolution to the respective school boards as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration and support for their commendable initiatives directed at improving both instruction and achievement in mathematics.