

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 498

Establishing the Commission on Educational Accountability.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 27, 1999
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 27, 1999

WHEREAS, described as a tripod whose three legs include clearly stated goals, information about progress toward them, and positive and negative consequences, accountability initiatives in public education are as varied and diverse as the states and school systems implementing them, and may include various "indicators" of pupil and teacher performance, revised evaluation and accreditation initiatives, or postgraduation tracking of students; and

WHEREAS, accountability initiatives may authorize state intervention in school operations and provide for financial incentives or penalties and other consequences; and

WHEREAS, the concept of educational accountability is not new to Virginia's public school system, as current constitutional and statutory provisions and regulations provide a plethora of mechanisms for the accountability of students, teachers, administrators, schools, and school divisions; and

WHEREAS, Virginia has made great progress in establishing educational accountability with the implementation of revised Standards of Learning for mathematics, English, science, and history and social science in 1995 and new Standards of Accreditation in 1997; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth's renewed commitment to strengthening accountability in public education is also evidenced in the work of a number of recent legislative and executive branch study committees, including the Commission on Accountability for Educational Excellence, House Joint Resolution No. 168 (1996) and the Commission on the Future of Public Education, House Joint Resolution No. 196 (1996); and

WHEREAS, to increase accountability for public education in Virginia, it is imperative to build on those existing and revised standards, programs, and initiatives that ensure the greatest educational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, school personnel, including teachers, school administrators, counselors, and instructional support staff, and parents should be active participants in the development of educational policies, and it is essential that school personnel and parents also share in the responsibility and accountability for achieving educational excellence; and

WHEREAS, further review of existing accountability initiatives addressing not only pupil performance but also instructional quality, school accreditation, safety and discipline, parental and community involvement, and administrative and fiscal issues is necessary to ensure continued progress in making our schools accountable for improved learning; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has been charged to address a myriad of issues related to and impacting the Standards of Quality, the Standards of Learning, and the Standards of Accreditation; and

WHEREAS, due to the complexity of the issues and the interaction of public policies affecting education, it is necessary that special task forces be established to assist the Commission in its work, and that the Commission collaborate and coordinate its work with other legislative study committees requested to examine related matters to avoid duplication; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Commission on Educational Accountability be established. The Commission shall be composed of 20 members, which shall include 11 legislative members, 6 nonlegislative members, and 3 ex officio members to be appointed as follows: five members of the Senate of whom two shall be appointed to serve on the special task force created pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 723 (1999) and one shall be appointed to serve on the special task force established pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 566 (1999), to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; six members of the House of Delegates, of whom two shall be appointed to serve on the special task force established pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 723 (1999) and two shall be appointed to serve on the special task force created pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 566 (1999), to be appointed by the Speaker of the House, in accordance with the principles of Rule 16 of the Rules of the House of Delegates; one parent of a child who is enrolled in the public schools of the Commonwealth, one public school teacher, and one school principal, to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections; one division superintendent, one representative of the Virginia School Boards Association, and one citizen at-large, to be appointed by the Speaker of the House; and the Secretary of Education, the President of the Board of Education, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, who shall serve ex officio with full voting privileges.

The Commission shall (i) review the Standards of Accreditation and the accountability mechanisms included therein; (ii) monitor the implementation of the Standards of Learning and revised assessments;

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(iii) consider the work and recommendations of other recent study committees, such as the Commission on the Future of Public Education, House Joint Resolution No. 196 (1996), the Joint Subcommittee on Remediation, House Joint Resolution No. 572 (1999), the Commission on Educational Infrastructure, House Joint Resolution No. 670 (1999), the Standing Joint Subcommittee on School Dropout Prevention, House Joint Resolution No. 241 (1996), and the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Efficacy and Appropriateness of Establishing a School Incentive Reward Program in the Commonwealth, House Joint Resolution No. 165 (1996); (iv) develop recommendations for ways to increase the capacity of schools, teachers, and students to meet increasingly rigorous academic standards; (v) examine issues raised in Senate Joint Resolution No. 344 (1999) regarding the effects on the Commonwealth's young people of failure to obtain a diploma pursuant to requirements of the Standards of Accreditation for Public Schools in Virginia; (vi) evaluate the efficacy, appropriateness, and application of the Commonwealth's statutes, regulations, and policies governing the academic assessment of students who transfer into Virginia's public schools, in accordance with Senate Joint Resolution No. 389 (1999); (vii) determine the feasibility and appropriateness of establishing a certificate of completion for certain vocational programs in public high schools, pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 593 (1999); (viii) determine the efficacy and appropriateness of the Commonwealth's system of funding the Standards of Quality for public schools, pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 657 (1999); (ix) study the instructional needs of students and teachers in the public schools of the Commonwealth, pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 691 (1999); (x) examine the impact of the Standards of Learning and the Standards of Accreditation on teachers, urban and small rural school divisions, and educationally at-risk students, giving particular attention to the preparation of teachers and time to instruct students to meet the Standards of Learning, the ability of urban and small rural school divisions to meet and maintain the requirements for accreditation, the effect of the Standards of Learning tests on grade promotion and retention of students and the awarding of high school diplomas, and the remediation of students who fail the Standards of Learning tests, in accordance with House Joint Resolution No. 721 (1999); (xi) confer with the joint subcommittee established pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution No. 447 (1999), regarding issues pertaining to overage students, adult students who are returning to school, and vocational-technical education; (xii) collaborate, coordinate, and receive regular reports of the Commission's special task force established pursuant to House Joint Resolution No. 566 (1999) studying the integration of the Standards of Learning with the secondary school level curricula and workforce development skills; (xiii) collaborate, coordinate, and receive regular reports of the Commission's special task force studying the impact of the Standards of Accreditation on local school division budgets, in accordance with House Joint Resolution No. 586 (1999) and House Joint Resolution No. 723 (1999); (xiv) collaborate and confer with the joint subcommittee established to examine the efficacy and appropriateness of adjusting Standards of Quality funding for certain small school divisions, pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution No. 481 (1999); (xv) confer and coordinate the work of the Commission with other legislative study committees which have been charged to examine related issues to avoid duplication; and (xvi) consider such other issues as it deems appropriate. The Commission shall endeavor to address the many issues raised by the aforementioned resolutions.

The Division of Legislative Services shall provide staff support for the study. The Department of Education and the staffs of the Senate Committee on Finance and the House Committee on Appropriations shall provide technical assistance for the study. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Commission, upon request.

The direct costs of this study shall not exceed \$21,500.

The Commission shall receive the interim reports of the special task forces by November 1, 2000, and include such reports in its interim report to the Governor and the 2000 Session of the General Assembly. The Commission shall complete its work in time to submit its final findings and recommendations, including the final reports of the special task forces, to the Governor and the 2001 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

Implementation of this resolution is subject to subsequent approval and certification by the Joint Rules Committee. The Committee may withhold expenditures or delay the period for the conduct of the study.