

SOL's, AMO's, and Waivers. OMG!

Daryl Chesley, VASCD President

In this era of high's - high stakes testing, high expectation, high anxiety! - we in the Virginia education community are facing new challenges in meeting the demands placed upon us by external entities. It is incumbent upon each of us to decipher the implications of "The Waiver" in an effort to best serve our students. With that said, it could be easy to be overwhelmed with a feeling that there is so much to do.

In times such as these, I find it helpful to pause and reflect upon where we *are* before stressing over where we need to *be*. We have come a long way since Madeline Hunter showed that effective teachers use a methodology when they are planning and presenting a lesson. How many of you remember using – or still use - her Lesson Plan Format?

I vividly remember attending a meeting early in my administrative career when the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction for the division I worked in unveiled "SOLs" to an awestruck roomful of administrators. Immediately after delivering the punch line "and oh, by the way, 100% of the students must pass these tests by 2014" he followed up by saying (very tongue in cheek) "that will be your problem, because I'll be long retired by then".

Well here we are, all of us trying to decipher and internalize the implications of "The Waiver". Differentiated cut scores, Gap Groups, and FAMOs are the language we speak now. Gone are AYP, Subgroup and 100%. What still remains is the need for quality teaching and quality leadership.

During the pre-Waiver days, a good friend and colleague Charlie O suggested I read an article entitled "Campfires in Cyberspace". I was intrigued by the title, and was glad I followed up on his suggestion to read it. The author, David Thornburg, does a great job of drawing parallels between the current web-based reality to the basal existence of mankind. On the surface, this may sound like a stretch, but the clarity of the matter is that communication skills are the essence

of our existence. We need opportunities to communicate, collaborate, create, and be critical thinkers! If you think these ideas sound familiar, they are! These notions have been the cornerstone of what we are now calling “21st Century Skills”. The bottom line is that quality teaching coupled with quality leadership will yield positive results.

I encourage all of you to read this story and reflect upon how you are going about your day to day business. Teacher, administrator, or parent, we owe it to our children, and we owe it to ourselves to recognize the qualities that are necessary to develop young learners.

We at Virginia ASCD stand ready to provide top quality professional development wherever and whenever it is needed. As the newly appointed president of this great organization I am appreciate of all of the members, my fellow board members, and the presidents that have served before me. This is truly the premier professional education organization in Virginia – so put us to work for you! I encourage each of you explore the Virginia ASCD website, identify who your Regional Representative is, and send them an email. Let them know what your needs are. We are all in this together.

I wish each of you continued success and a positive and productive school year.

Jaws, Politics, and Education

Phyllis Milne

On June 20, 1975, the joys of summer vacations at the ocean were forever compromised with the release of Steven Speilberg’s classic film, Jaws. Terror was heightened in this frightening adventure film with two repeating notes announcing the approach of giant man-eating sharks.

In the summer of 2012, danger is announced to television viewers with the words, *‘I’m..... , and I approve this message.’* Christopher J. LaCivita, a Republican strategist from Virginia warned, “It’s already not safe to turn on your TV. In a month, it’s not going to be safe to turn on your computer. And by October, it won’t be safe to answer your phone. (Lewis, 2012. para. 4).”

In 2008, Virginia was ranked No. 1 in the nation for the most money spent per electoral vote, but the volume of political advertising in 2012 is expected to be double the 2008 record setting cost. Following a Supreme Court decision to strike down a federal campaign finance law (Jan. 2010), corporations and super political action committees (PACs) can spend without limit and without disclosing their benefactors. For example, these independent, non-candidate groups have contributed more than \$6.3 million of the \$14 million (spent before August 8, 2012) for the Senate race between Tim Kaine and George Allen. Luke Rosiak (Washington Times, Aug 15, 2012) reveals that Independent groups, including Carl Rove's Crossroads GPS, have spent more than \$2.3 million for television ads opposing Tim Kaine and a total of over \$15 million in Virginia. The Washington Times reports this is record spending for one congressional candidate.

Money spent for Political Advertising by August 6, 2012 (Open Secrets, 2012)

	TOTALS	Republicans / Democrats
Presidential Campaign	\$ 485,484,756	\$ 212,380,087 (R) \$ 270,926,806 (D)
US Senatorial Campaign (Kaine vs. Allen)	\$ 14,113,189	
US House (District 7: Kantor vs. Powell)	\$ 5,289,508	
TOTAL (Aug. 6, 2012)	\$ 504,887,453	

So let's put this in perspective.

Virginia may be first in the nation for political spending in 2012 as well as seventh in the nation for per-capita personal income. However, the per-pupil spending for education from state sources ranks 35th in the nation, and the average teacher salary lags \$4,510 below the national average (Morgan, Morgan & Boba, 2011)

The **Richmond**-area TV market ranks 50th in the nation in population served, but political spending has consistently been ranked among the top 10 most saturated

political advertising markets in the nation, occasionally reaching the top spot, according to MSNBC. For the 2013 school year, Richmond City Public Schools faced a \$24 million deficit (www.richmond.k12.va.us), but political spending in Richmond was more than \$7.5 million in August and could reach \$18 million by Election Day (Hester, 2012).

Roanoke-Lynchburg ranks 66th in population served and Norfolk-Portsmouth ranks 43rd in population served, but political spending in both the Roanoke and Norfolk Portsmouth market has been consistently in the top ten in the nation (Hester, 2012). Roanoke City Schools cut more than \$8 million dollars from the 2012 budget (www.roanokecityschools.org). In Norfolk City Schools, a total of 683 positions have been eliminated in fiscal years 2011, 2012, and 2013 due to a 3-year shortfall of \$60 million (www.npsk12.va.us).

How many of these unemployed educators would prefer that money spent on annoying TV ads had been used to save their jobs? Few educators have received cost of living raises for four years, and some teachers and administrators have taken pay cuts.

Whether or not you tuned in to the Republican National Convention (Aug. 27 – 30) and the Democratic National Convention (Sept. 2 – 6), US taxpayers provided \$100m for security costs for both conventions plus another \$18M to cover convention costs for each party (Smith, 2012). Extensive coverage of the conventions will be followed by the debates (followed by the after-debates on the debates) plus endless news coverage of foolish misspeaks that are also fodder for late night TV hosts.

Citizens in Greece and Spain are surely puzzled by vast amounts of money spent on US politics as these struggling countries face national deficits. Jolly Old England may still be blushing over Prince Harry's foibles, but no Great Britain super PAC is spending millions to dethrone the Queen. Of course, political parties in the UK spend 'tens of millions' during the approximately one month before elections for prime minister and Parliament (History Learning Site, 2012). Compare this to the possible billions spent in the US beginning ten months before the actual election.

What is the return on the record breaking spending to win votes? Are the contents of the messages critical for voters' consideration? Paul Freedman (Cannon, 2008) blogged that negative political ads actually help to educate and engage voters. Frank Luntz (2010), however, reported only a handful of the 10,000 political ads on television for the 2010 election cycle actually moved voters. Instead the messages increased fear or anger for voters who have already determined their allegiance to a party or a candidate. How many TV viewers are consulting www.factcheck.org to determine the truth of the shared information? Few of these messages are rated 'true'; many are rated 'partly true' or 'false;' and some messages are identified "Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire!"

Would it be appropriate to add Jaws' two-note warning to alert you to yet another scorching political ad? To accompany Mitt Romney's hand reaching for a teacher's money? To accompany the threats that Obamacare is destroying Medicare? Would \$504.8 million make a difference if redirected from name calling and fact bending and invested instead in the students and teachers of Virginia?

For up to date information about SuperPAC spending, go to:

<http://www.vpap.org/updates/show/1046>

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From the Executive Director

Linda Hyslop

Many new initiatives are being implemented in Virginia and Virginia's affiliate, VASCD, is working hard to provide support and training in the key areas. New standards in mathematics are being tested this year and they are much more rigorous than those of the past. Next year, more rigorous standards in English and Science will be in place. There is a new teacher and principal evaluation system that has been put in place for next year and emphasis is on assessment of student growth. With these major changes, VASCD is focusing its conferences on assisting educators to meet the challenges.

The Southwest Conference, to be held in Abingdon, Virginia on September 20th, will have as its theme, "Moving Forward with Instructional Tools and Strategies that Work". Bruce Oliver, Senior Consultant with Just Ask Publications and Professional Development will focus on making assessment a learning experience. Christopher Gareis, Associate Dean for Teacher Education and Professional Services at the College of William and Mary, will focus on connecting curriculum, instruction and student learning, providing assessment literacy for every teacher.

The Annual Conference, to be held in Williamsburg, Virginia on November 28-30, has the theme of "Taking on Challenges in Teaching, Learning, and Leading". The preconference will be led by Heidi Hayes-Jacobs, President of Curriculum21. She will look at 21st century approaches to teaching and learning. The second day will have Seth Kahan, author of *Getting Change Right: How Leaders Transform Organizations from the Inside Out* and Anthony Muhammad, President of New Frontier 21 and co-author of *The Will to Lead, the Skill to Teach – Transforming Schools at Every Level*. On the last day, the key presenters will have Diana Laufenberg, a teacher at the Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia, one of the city's newer high schools, in partnership with the Franklin Institute, who will share her experiences in a project-based environment where the core values of inquiry, research, collaboration, presentation and reflection are emphasized. The conference will close with Andy Hargreaves, the Thomas More Brennan Chair in

the Lynch School of Education at Boston University. He is the co-author with Michael Fullan of a new book, Professional Capital, which takes apart the tired old stereotypes that are used to attack the teaching profession and sets out a vision for the future of the teaching profession. With these presenters, along with forty-five concurrent sessions, VASCD hopes to give educators the key tools and knowledge to move forward in their schools.

Supporting School Improvement and the Whole Child

Linda Hyslop, Executive Director

As the school year gets into full swing, many schools in Virginia are facing school improvement requirements set forth by the Virginia Department of Education. School improvement is firmly embedded in our division and state planning and accountability structures. Both federal and state mandates have created accountability challenges at an unprecedented level with testing directives and consequences for low performance. In this atmosphere of high demands, limited funding, and little time, our schools are increasingly under pressure to improve – and to do so quickly.

Whether facing School Improvement requirements or not, all educators want to provide a safe and loving environment that uses high quality instructional tools to promote instruction, school climate, leadership, family engagement, or any of the other issues we face on a daily basis. First, both division and school leaders need to create and instill a desire in its staff to examine their practices and make identified changes. Secondly, key stakeholders must be identified and invited to join in the process. Once these are in place, finding time for the process is the next key step – time to meet, to plan and to coordinate action steps.

Before making any changes, school improvement teams must determine the direction they must take. Hard data - test scores, attendance records, graduation rates, etc. are collected and analyzed, but a school needs to consider more. ASCD has created a tool to assist you in developing a clear picture of your needs, as well as professional development resources that can immediately be used to meet your identified challenges.

The *ASCD School Improvement Tool* identifies what steps are needed to get to the next level. Designed for use in schools and divisions, this free tool offers educators a comprehensive and completely online needs assessment, including a Whole Child survey that addresses school climate and culture; instruction and curriculum; leadership; family and community engagement; professional development and staff capacity; and assessment. Based on your unique results, the tool points you to professional development resources that can help immediately address your division and/or school-wide challenges. Go to <http://sitool.ascd.org> to learn more about this tool for school improvement. Improvement must become a permanent part of your school practice, not a one-time or occasional event.

Virginia ASCD is pleased to offer our annual conference focused on Challenges in Teaching, Learning, and Leading as well as our Southwest Conference and regional PDIs. Please join our efforts to address the Whole Child and school improvement in Virginia.