



Ensuring that Every Child has Access to an Equitable, World-Class Education

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the glaring and growing disparities in all areas of our community. This has been especially true in our public education system, which for too long has been underfunded and plagued by racial, socioeconomic and geographic inequities, despite Virginia being one of the wealthiest states in the nation. These inequities have disproportionately left students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, and students in lower-income and rural communities behind. Virginia's students and families need and deserve bold leadership that will tackle these challenges head on and move our Commonwealth forward.

Education is rarely the first place leaders look to invest new dollars during a crisis, but Terry McAuliffe broke that trend as Virginia's 72nd Governor when he fought Republicans and made a record investment of \$1 billion in our K12 system, and he will do it again as our next Governor. Researchers estimate that by 2040, learning loss as a result of the pandemic for the current K-12 cohort will result in an earnings loss of \$110 billion per year and will reduce overall gross domestic product by \$173 billion to \$271 billion per year.¹

Terry recognizes that recovering from this pandemic and rebuilding an economy in which all Virginians can prosper will require immediate, unprecedented investments in our education system and our future workforce. With better schools and workforce-ready students, Virginia can build the nation's best workforce, and attract high paying jobs that boost our economy and our tax base. This effort will pay off in the form of a generational budget surplus for Virginia.

As the next Governor of Virginia, Terry will champion bold initiatives to reimagine our K12 education system by delivering the largest increase in education investment in the history of Virginia. For too long, we have talked the talk but have failed to deliver for students, families and educators. Terry's plan will eliminate achievement gaps before they begin by making sure that all 3 and 4- year olds in need have access to preschool, getting every Virginia student online, and finally give our educators and schools the resources they desperately need. That includes raising teacher salaries above the national average for the first time in Virginia's history. The

¹ Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J., & Viruleg, E. (2020, August 07). COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime. Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime>

time is now to position the Commonwealth to achieve educational equity for every student in every community.

With this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reimagine our education system with Democratic legislative majorities, Terry will go big, act boldly, and, at long last, fully fund a brighter future for all of our students.

Dramatically Raise Teacher Pay & Cultivate the Next Generation of Educators

The quality of teachers our students learn from is the single most important factor contributing to their success. Like many other states, Virginia is facing critical workforce shortages and has over 1,000 unfilled teacher positions.² Unfortunately, many of these shortages fall in the highest areas of need, including special education, elementary education, mathematics, and career and technical education. This shortage is compounded by turnover rates that cause us to lose 10% of our educators annually.³ In order to attract and retain the best educators, we have to tackle issues driving this shortage and turnover by addressing recruitment, pay, and retention head on. Terry's plan will:

- **Dramatically and immediately increase teacher pay.** Virginia is the 10th wealthiest state in the nation, yet we rank 33rd in teacher pay. The average teacher salary in Virginia is \$53,267, which is well below the national average of \$62,304.⁴ Moreover, Virginia is DEAD LAST - 50th out of 50 states - in average teacher pay versus average pay for other full-time employees.⁵ Teachers in Maryland, Pennsylvania and Delaware make between \$10,000-\$20,000 more than teachers in Virginia. That is unacceptable. Our hard-working teachers deserve better and in order to attract and retain the highest quality educators, Terry's plan will raise teacher salaries above the national average within four years for the first time in Virginia's history.
- **Cultivate the next generation of highly qualified and diverse educators through the Lucy Simms Educator program.** Building and sustaining a high-quality, diverse workforce of educators in Virginia means getting more young people into the teacher-training pipeline. We have to engage early with middle and high school students about the opportunity to become an educator in Virginia. Eliminating the future burden of student loan debt by requiring a five-year teaching commitment in our public schools will help attract the young people we need to enter the profession. This program will specifically target traditionally hard-to-staff positions and will support students from low-income backgrounds. Terry will also partner with our Historically Black Colleges and Universities because we know that having a diverse workforce of educators benefits all students, particularly students of color.

²Teacher Shortage is a Threat To Our Schools. (2019, August 08). <https://www.veanea.org/teacher-shortage-is-a-threat-to-our-schools/>

³Preliminary Report from the Advisory Committee on Teacher Shortages. (2017, October).

<https://www.education.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/secretary-of-education/pdf/final-acts-report.pdf>

⁴Rankings of the States 2019 and Estimates of School Statistics 2020. (2020, July). Retrieved from <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/2020%20Rankings%20and%20Estimates%20Report.pdf>

⁵Stevens, C. (2020, August 10). Best-Paying States for Teachers in 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.business.org/hr/employees/best-us-states-for-teachers/>

- **Ensure every young educator has access to high-quality mentorship programs.** Incentivizing more educators to enter the profession is a great start, but we have to invest in young teachers to keep them in our schools, especially during their first five years in the classroom. Studies have shown high-quality mentorship programs have demonstrated success in addressing retention issues. The Board of Education’s 2019 Prescribed Standards of Quality (SOQs) include funding for these programs and ensure that young educators are provided with time to consult with their mentors during the school day. Terry’s plan will fund the SOQs and allow school divisions to invest in their youngest educators.

Tackle Education Inequities Head-On

Under Terry’s leadership, Virginia made tremendous progress rethinking the accreditation process, eliminating five Standards of Learning tests, and redesigning the high school experience. However, COVID-19 has highlighted the inequities that remain embedded in our education system. Rooting out and eliminating these racial, economic and geographic disparities is critical to the economic vitality of the Commonwealth. We must fundamentally rethink the way we fund and approach the K12 system and ensure that every student is provided the unique support they need to thrive in and out of the classroom. Terry’s plan will:

- **Address Modern-Day Segregation in our Schools.** While we have worked hard to improve equitable access to education in Virginia, the numbers are clear and racial segregation in our schools is getting worse not better. In fact, nearly 17% of Black students in Virginia attended schools where at least 90% of their classmates were students of color in 2018-2019, a 4% increase from 2003-2004.⁶ Students of color are also more likely to attend schools with high poverty rates and with little access to challenging coursework. We must tackle this issue head on by examining the factors leading to segregation and aggressively implement policies that will promote integration. That includes creating a school integration officer within the Virginia Department of Education, reviewing how diversity factors into school accreditation standards, incentivizing localities to implement integration strategies and working with developers to drastically improve access to affordable housing so that families can locate in areas with high-performing schools.
- **Create an Education Equity and Innovation Commission and Fund.** While COVID-19 has ravaged our Commonwealth and the nation, this time has forced innovation and out-of-the-box thinking. We must leverage this opportunity to fundamentally reimagine our early childhood and K12 systems. The Commission will be charged with working with local school divisions to examine their student demographic data, curricula, academic outcomes, and disciplinary data to identify the most pressing racial and socioeconomic gaps their students face. It will also look at how we fund our schools and develop recommendations so that Terry’s first biennial budget will work to ensure every child has equitable access to a world-class education. In the meantime, the dollars in this

⁶Mendes, K., & Duncombe, C. (2020, November 12). Modern-Day School Segregation: Addressing the Lasting Impacts of Racist Choices on Virginia’s Education System. Retrieved from <https://www.thecommonwealthinstitute.org/2020/11/12/modern-day-school-segregation-addressing-the-lasting-impacts-of-racist-choices-on-virginias-education-system/>

scalable fund will allow school divisions to immediately address gaps with the goal of achieving long-term educational equity.

Eliminate Achievement Gaps Before they Begin

At the start of the 2019-2020 school year, 44% of Virginia students arrived in Kindergarten without the skills they needed in one or more critical areas. Even more staggering is that 56% students from economically disadvantaged families and 66% of students with a disability entered kindergarten not fully ready.⁷ The COVID-19 pandemic has only further exacerbated educational disparities and has prevented families from taking advantage of early learning programs. Jumpstarting our post-COVID economy requires a substantial investment in our youngest learners and future workforce. Terry's plan will:

- **Expand the Virginia Preschool Initiative to include all 3- and 4-year olds in need.** Quality preschool programs offer the greatest possible return on investment for state education funds, yielding between \$4 and \$9 per \$1 invested.⁸ Studies estimate that within nine years, the benefits of these programs would outweigh the costs and the Commonwealth would begin to see a greater return on its investment.⁹ Nevertheless, Virginia falls in the bottom third of all states with investment in early-childhood education, ranking 31st in access and funding for its publicly funded preschool programs.¹⁰ Moreover, the Virginia Preschool Initiative currently serves mostly at-risk 4-year olds, meaning that at-risk 3-year olds largely do not have access to public preschool programs. Research is clear that two years in a high-quality program has a profound impact in closing gaps before kindergarten for our most vulnerable students. There are 41,500 3- and 4-year olds who are unserved and in need of preschool.¹¹ That is why this program needs to be drastically expanded to include all three- and four-year olds who are in need.
- **Put unprecedented resources toward critical supports for our schools.** We must adopt and fully fund the Virginia Board of Education's 2019 Prescribed Standards of Quality (SOQs). Crafted with equity at the forefront and steeped in research on effective tactics to close achievement gaps, the 2019 SOQs address staffing needs and other critical issues facing our schools. Our schools and students rely on support staff positions so that students can access the resources they need and teachers can focus on their main job, which is educating our children. The new SOQs include new ratios of school counselors and support positions, establishment of a teacher leader program, and a new equity fund to serve students in poverty in targeted ways, including incentivizing highly effective teachers to be deployed to high-need schools.

⁷ Lane, J. (2020, July 10). Changes to Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) Fall Term and Testing Windows. Retrieved from https://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2020/167-20.docx

⁸ Early Childhood: High Return on Investment - Center for High Impact Philanthropy. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.impact.upenn.edu/early-childhood-toolkit/why-invest/what-is-the-return-on-investment/>

⁹ Vaghul, K., & Lynch, R. (2015, December 2). A snapshot of the long-term impacts of universal pre-k in Virginia. Retrieved from <https://equitablegrowth.org/state-page-va/>

¹⁰ The State of Preschool 2019. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Virginia_YB2019.pdf

¹¹ 2020 Children's Budget Report. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.vecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/VECF_ChildrensBudgetReport4_Full.pdf

- **Create the Beyond the Classroom Fund.** More and more, we are reminded that our schools are an optimal location to connect our students with the resources they need. We also have to be able to provide these services without interrupting the school day and letting our students get further behind. COVID-19 has shown us that when the safety net of our schools is removed, our students pay the price. As we get this pandemic behind us, we need to make sure that our students have access to the specific wraparound supports they need before and after the school day to succeed in the classroom and in life. Terry will create a fund that will allow school divisions to apply for flexible grants to meet their individual needs for providing extended school day services. That could include bolstering before- and after-school-transportation, providing mental health or behavioral services, ensuring students are receiving meals, offering remediation programs, and more.
- **Expand access to federal child nutrition programs.** Children can't be hungry for knowledge if they are just plain hungry. Despite Virginia's success in expanding access to school meal programs, the Commonwealth is still leaving critical federal dollars on the table each year which could be generating economic activity and young minds. Schools are one of the most practical and sustainable places to nourish young people with the food they need to thrive. As Virginia's 72nd Governor, Terry's administration vastly expanded school nutrition programs, providing nearly 13 million more meals every year to Virginia students. As our next Governor, Terry will continue Virginia's progress and work in partnership with school divisions, localities and nonprofits to promote best practices and ensure every child comes to school well-fed and ready to learn. He will also work to build meal programs into Virginia's SOQs so that every student in need has access to regular, nutritious meals.

Create Equitable Access to Education in Rural Communities

Too often, leaders fail to recognize the regional inequities and need to invest in rural communities. Our rural communities in Virginia are rich with talent and opportunity, but COVID-19 has highlighted the regional disparities affecting our students. Lack of access to broadband is repeatedly highlighted as one of the biggest issues facing our rural communities, and it further drives the economic divide when businesses are looking for new locations and students are acquiring the skills they need to step into the jobs of tomorrow. It's time to address this inequity. Terry's plan will:

- **Get every Virginia student online.** COVID-19 has further demonstrated the need to get every student online with access to affordable internet in their homes. We know that without access to the internet in their homes, students experience negative outcomes related to test scores and overall success in higher education or technical training programs. This is an even greater issue for our rural communities. Preparing our students to enter the workforce and attracting businesses to locate in all areas of the Commonwealth requires affordable, universal broadband access. Terry's plan will get every student in Virginia online by expanding infrastructure and helping families in need cover the costs of the service.

- **Partner with the business sector to engage students early and create virtual internships and apprenticeships.** A key part of reimagining our K12 education system and making sure every student has equitable access to a quality education is making sure we are equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. Virginia has taken important steps to engage students as early as 7th and 8th grade about academic and career planning as part of Terry's high school redesign, but we have to continue to invest in high-quality internships and apprenticeships. Virginia must leverage the innovative virtual learning opportunities that have emerged during this pandemic and proceed with equity at the forefront. There is no reason that a student in Bristol or on the Eastern Shore cannot partner with an emerging technology company or another growing sector through a virtual internship or other program. Now is the time to think big and create a pipeline of workers for high-demand jobs.

Invest in the Best Workforce in the Nation

During Governor McAuliffe's term as the 72nd Governor of Virginia, his administration successfully redesigned the education and workforce systems in order to make workplace skills and workforce preparedness the driving principles and ultimate goals of the systems. This workforce-ready focus has resulted in the transformation of the high school experience; and the development of clear and affordable pathways into key sectors of the economy. The results are clear. Young adults are more prepared to succeed in the workplace and our local economies have benefitted as a result. As our next Governor, Terry will build on these successes and further embed workforce readiness into our curricula and K12 experience. Terry's plan will:

- **Establish Career and Technical Education certificate programs in Virginia.** Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs serve more than half a million students each year and play a critical role in helping Virginia's students build career pathways, develop essential skills and step into countless high-paying jobs. Despite the clear benefits of CTE programs, Virginia continues to experience shortages in teachers who are certified to teach in these critical programs. As Governor, Terry will work to ensure that industry professionals who want them can get the skills and credentials they need to teach CTE courses in high-demand fields, increasing the opportunities for Virginia's students to participate in these important programs.
- **Build internship and apprenticeship opportunities into the K12 experience.** As a result of Terry's leadership as Governor, Virginia's students are more workforce ready than ever before. However, some businesses around the Commonwealth continue to report that students are ill-prepared to step into high-demand jobs. Now that our workforce readiness principles have been embedded into our K12 experience, we must build on that foundation by ensuring that our students have access to meaningful internship and apprenticeship opportunities that will provide critical on-the-job training and experience. These programs will not only build the workforce of our future, but they will also establish strong relationships between our schools and the business community and ensure that our students are learning the skills they need to meet the demands of the workforce. The Board of Education's 2019 Prescribed SOQs include work-based learning coordinators that can facilitate this effort.