

TO: VMEA Executive Board, Council of Review and Council Chairs

FROM: Steve King, Government Relations and Moe Turrentine, State Manager

SUBJECT: Proposed legislation in 2011 General Assembly pertaining to the Economics and Personal Finance Graduation Requirement

DATE: December 12, 2010

Attached we are providing information pertaining to proposed legislation in the 2011 General Assembly. Our intent is to help shape the outcome of legislation proposed to influence changes to the new graduation requirement for Economics and Personal Finance established by the Virginia Board of Education. Implementation of the new Economics and Personal Finance requirement was delayed a year through legislation passed in the 2010 session of the General Assembly. The Economics and Personal Finance requirement is now scheduled to take effect July 1, 2011. Immediate action is required if we are to help shape the outcome of this legislation.

Participation is necessary by all interested in helping to keep music programs and all electives available to students. Please share this information with your colleagues in music and the other arts, parents, and interested community members. All district chairs, representatives and section presidents are requested to contact their respective memberships and provide them with the contact link for the VMEA Government Relations webpage:
www.vmea.com/govrelationsgeninfo.htm

We are also requesting each section to place a link to the VMEA Government Relations webpage on the sections web site. Hopefully, this link will expedite consistent communications with our members as important issues arise.

It is our intent that members may copy all information directly from the VMEA Government Relations webpage for their use. Posted on the VMEA Government Relations webpage will be: talking points, information on how to use the General Assembly website, information about the proposed bill, a sample letter for delegates and senators, and House and Senate Education Committee contact information. Please use the talking points as written to compose a letter. It is MOST important for members of the General Assembly to hear consistent language and message.

We must share our position before the legislation makes its way through the House Education Committee and, if approved by the House Education Committee, on to the floor of the House, followed by the Senate. Our colleagues in the other professional art education associations will be asked to do the same through our cooperative effort with the Virginia Leadership Coalition for Fine Arts in Education.

The General Assembly convenes January 12, 2011 for the shorter 45-day session. Please write a letter, by January 12, to your delegate and senator sharing your thoughts. Your legislators do want to hear from you.

VMEA/VLCFAE Legislative Talking Points for General Assembly Session 2010

Please use the talking points below as a starting point in making the case for why House Bill 622 is supported, as noted, by the Virginia Music Educators Association and the Virginia Leadership Coalition for Fine Arts in Education (VLCFAE). The stress in comments must be on the new credit as an unfunded mandate and the potential inability of students to access sequential music and arts instruction in the high schools, particularly those planning a career in the arts. The new graduation requirements appear to somewhat contradict the intent of the new Virginia Board of Education requirement for development of a Career Pathway for all students, beginning with 7th graders.

Please act now to contact your delegate, senator and the house and senate education committees. If you have questions, please see VMEA/VLCFAE contact information below.

How to contact your delegate or senator:

Go to the Legislative Information System area CONTACTING MY LEGISLATOR. Cut and paste the following address in your browser:

http://legis.virginia.gov/1_cit_guide/contacting_my.html

The site provides excellent information. You may also explore additional information concerning the General Assembly, track bills, and much more information. You may also find your legislator and their contact information. Go to:

<http://conview.state.va.us/whosmy.nsf/main?openform>

How to contact the House and Senate Education Committees:

A listing of the House and Senate Education Committee members is provided as part of this information. E-mail local and in-session mailing contact information is provided.

How to track a bill:

From the CONTACTING MY LEGISLATOR website, below the header, click on LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION SYSTEM (LIS). At LIS site click on CUMULATIVE INDEX. Scroll down to EDUCATION. Click on EDUCATION and scroll down to review submitted bills, including House bill 622.

Bill currently offered for consideration:

VLCFAE believes this to be a viable alternative. **Supports:**

HB 622 Economics education and financial literacy. Patron – Robert Orrock

Adds the following language to the original bill: *Local school boards may implement this requirement through relevant Standards of Learning and career and technical education programs or through other educational programs that comply with Board objectives for economics education and financial literacy.*

Items to consider in communication to legislators:

Please note that loss of jobs should be avoided. Rather, the focus must be on students and what they will lose if these bills are not passed.

Do not threaten.

Be concise and to the point, while making your case.

Use the talking points provided to send a CONSISTENT message.

The important issues are: the Economics and Personal Finance requirement is an unfunded mandate which will have negative implications for local education agency budgets; the graduation credit will impact ALL fine arts disciplines and other elective classes; and, the new graduation requirement will have the unintended consequence of limiting student opportunities to prepare themselves for careers and post-secondary education.

The following talking points have been developed by the VIRGINIA LEADERSHIP COALITION FOR FINE ARTS IN EDUCATION and are suggested for communication with General Assembly members:

- The Virginia Leadership Coalition for Fine Arts in Education (VLCFAE) supports HB 622.
- The VLCFAE represents 4000 plus members of organizations affiliated with VLCFAE. Members consist of music, art, theatre and dance teachers and administrators, on all levels of instruction from elementary to university, public and private.
- The new Economics and Personal Finance requirement imposes an unfunded mandate during a difficult budget situation for local education agencies. School divisions are facing choices to maintain existing programs while implementing new requirements. Resources required to procure textbooks and hire and train teachers will, without additional fiscal support from the state, require a reallocation of existing monies at a time when budgets are being cut and funding for localities is falling short of the amount needed to sustain current levels of programming
- VLCFAE does not in principle oppose economic literacy or education in personal finance. However, we believe that the imposition of a stand-alone course slated to be part of the high school graduation requirements, starting with the class of 2014, will have the unintended consequences of limiting students' ability to prepare themselves for careers and post-secondary education while placing additional strain on local education agencies' budgets.
- Increased graduation requirements, along with scheduling and testing issues, has made it increasingly difficult for students to access sequentially designed classes, such as those offered in music, visual arts, theatre and dance, along with other electives. This additional graduation requirement would adversely affect the elective options in high school making it even more difficult for a student to elect a four-year sequence in the

arts or any other career choice sequence requiring maintenance of skills and practice throughout high school.

- It is very difficult to provide continuity of instruction for classes designed for sequential instruction, when students are unable to access classes for a semester or a year. Of course, students are then less able to completely achieve the expectations of the higher-level fine arts SOL's, impacting their preparation for a career and/or post-secondary education.
- VLCFAE especially appreciates the current inclusion of the fine arts as an option for graduation.
- VLCFAE's concern is the potential increase in graduation requirements for the Advanced Diploma and the new requirement for Economics and Personal Finance. We are concerned that when these requirements are fully implemented students will have increased difficulty accessing sequential fine arts classes and other electives.
- VLCFAE believes study in the fine arts offers special benefits to students. Numerous research studies suggest that: schools with strong fine arts programs, are better schools; students involved with the arts are more successful academically; and, graduation rates increase as enrollment in arts classes increase. Other studies report:
 1. The College Board reports, students of the arts outperform their non-arts peers on the Scholastic Aptitude Test.
 2. Studies from The U. S. Conference Board suggest there is a decline in the creative preparedness of our students as they enter our competitive workforce.
 3. The theory of multiple intelligences developed by Howard Gardner of Harvard University suggests the arts play an important role in the improvement of students' learning ability as they utilize a range of intelligences and learning styles, not just the linguistic and mathematics/logical intelligences usually emphasized in American education.
 4. Data from Americans for the Arts indicates that student dropout rates are influenced negatively when the level of arts involvement is low.
- VLCFAE believes fine arts classes offer significant opportunities for students to acquire skills useful in employment, to enhance further education and life long learning. Opportunities to develop creativity, training in setting goals, teamwork, persistence in completing tasks, attention to detail and high expectations of performance are hallmarks of participation in fine arts classes.
- Former fine arts students frequently share how their band, orchestra, choir, visual arts, theatre and dance experiences prepared them with 21st century skills to be competitive and successful in our global community.
- In two or three years following implementation of the new graduation requirements, enrollment in arts programs will dwindle, likely causing reduced offerings in the fine arts. This will also have a negative impact upon students desiring to pursue a career in the

arts as a result of student's inability to select a career sequence to complete the Career Pathways requirement.

- The VLCFAE recommends the Economics and Personal Finance graduation requirement be withdrawn. However, if the requirement will be fully implemented, VLCFAE recommends flexibility for school divisions to meet the requirement. To ensure that students have fiscal and economic knowledge and understanding by graduation, statewide mathematics and social science Standards of Learning, which currently have aspects of the proposed additional course of study, could be expanded to include the additional economics and personal finance content. In addition, it would be well to note that a number of electives, including Career and Technical Education courses in business and entrepreneurship also currently address aspects of the proposed courses.
- Options the VLCFAE would offer for consideration include, but are not limited to, an extended school day and/or middle school and on-line options for meeting the requirement.

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Thank you for your participation.

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