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Virginia Association for Career & Technical Education

During the week of January 26–30, education policy emerged as a central focus of the 2026 Virginia General Assembly as committees began substantive consideration of legislation impacting K-12 schools, higher education, and workforce preparation. The House Education Committee and Senate Education and Health Committee heard a steady flow of bills addressing teacher recruitment and retention, student mental health supports, school accountability, and early childhood education. With crossover approaching in mid-February, committee chairs signaled that measures with clear fiscal pathways and administrative feasibility would be prioritized for advancement.

Budget discussions related to education intensified this week, particularly within the House Appropriations Committee's Elementary and Secondary Education and Higher Education subcommittees and the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee's Education and Health Subcommittee. Members received briefings from the Department of Education and public higher education institutions focused on staffing shortages, special education costs, and facility needs. Early conversations centered on targeted investments rather than broad formula changes, as lawmakers weigh new spending proposals against long-term sustainability in the 2026–2028 biennium budget.

A recurring theme in education committee hearings has been student well-being and learning recovery, with several proposals seeking to expand access to school-based mental health services and strengthen early intervention programs. Legislators also continued discussions around educator pipelines, including alternative pathways to licensure and incentives for hard-to-staff schools and subject areas. While there is bipartisan acknowledgment of workforce challenges in education, questions about funding mechanisms and oversight have shaped how quickly these bills are moving forward.

The Governor's administration has maintained a visible presence in education-related hearings, with senior officials from the Department of Education and the Secretary of Education's office engaging with legislators on both policy and budget matters. Administration testimony this week emphasized alignment between legislative proposals and the Governor's broader education agenda, particularly where new programs would require additional appropriations or regulatory changes. This coordination has helped frame education legislation within the broader budget context early in the session.

As January ends, education legislation is transitioning from conceptual discussion to committee action. The next two weeks will be critical as lawmakers work to move priority bills out of committees ahead of February 17 crossover. Bills that demonstrate clear implementation plans and fiscal discipline are best positioned to advance, while more complex proposals may be deferred for further study or folded into broader budget negotiations later in the session.

Bill	Catch line	Legislation Status	Chief Patron
HB53	Student bullying; adjusts definition, characteristics of victim.	In Committee	Cole, J.G.
HB132	Graduation with an advanced studies diploma; requirements, complet. of Int'l Baccalaureate diploma.	In Subcommittee	Simon
HB138	Public high schools; career coach required	In Committee	Simonds
HB171	Student instruction; internet safety, policy to include key modern digital safety topics.	In Committee	Askew



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HB178	Public schools; student support services, student personal information and data security, report.	In Subcommittee	Anthony
HB180	Work-Based Learning Coordinator Pilot Program; established, report, sunset.	In Subcommittee	Anthony
HB189	Certain student assessment requirements; calculation of final course grade.	In Committee	Convirs-Fowler
HB206	College partnership laboratory schools; transparency.	In Committee	Keys-Gamarra
HB279	Teachers; timeline and process for increasing salaries to at least national average.	In Committee	Clark
HB298	Public elementary or secondary school students; evidence-based restorative disciplinary practices.	In Committee	McQuinn
HB299	SOL assessments and related assessment methods; development, administration, scoring, and release.	In Committee	Helmer
HB332	Teacher licensure; three-year license to teach career and technical education, etc.	In House	Rasoul
HB412	Local governing bodies; school division budgets, funding levels.	In Subcommittee	Cole, N.T.
HB428	High school graduation requirements; alternative pathway to standard diploma established, report.	In Committee	LeVere Bolling
HB478	Diploma seal for excellence in fine arts; established, industry-recognized workforce credential.	In Subcommittee	Watts
HB551	Nondegree workforce training programs; accreditation.	In Subcommittee	Anderson
HB595	Advanced studies diploma; requirements for graduation, approval for certain credit requirements.	In Subcommittee	Simonds
HB643	School Performance and Support Framework; certain changes required.	In Subcommittee	Rasoul
HB647	Teaching Experience; regulations Governing Allowable Credit.	In Subcommittee	Kent
HB698	Virginia Workforce Development and Career Connection and Training Foundation and Fund; established,	In Committee	McAuliff
HB753	Public school funding; composite index of local ability-to-pay.	In Subcommittee	Runion
HB785	Teacher licensure; three-year license to teach career and technical education, etc.	Incorporated	Austin
HB786	School bds.; authority to prohibit sale of caffeinated beverages to students in public high schools.	In House	Austin
HB849	Public school employees; suspension, notice and opportunity for a hearing.	In Committee	Cousins
HB1023	Part-time or adjunct instructor in public schools; locally awarded subject matter expert credential.	In Committee	Walker
HB1039	College and Career Ready Virginia Program; advisory committee and work group composition.	In House	Carr
HB1283	High school graduation requirements; approved methods; consistency for cohorts of ninth grade students.	In Committee	McLaughlin
HB1383	Teacher licensure; technical professional license; curriculum and instruction coursework; comprehensive community colleges.	In Committee	Oates
HJ7	High school graduates; Dept. of Workforce Dev. & Advancement to study optional service year program.	In Committee	Helmer



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SB90	Equity in public school funding and staffing; at-risk Program established, standards of quality.	In Committee	Favola
SB102	School boards; high school courses or dual enrollment programs for certain certifications.	In Committee	Stanley
SB105	STEM+C Competition Team Grant Program; eligibility for grants.	Passed Senate	Stanley
SB108	School boards; student cell phone and smart device possession and use policies, prohibition.	Passed Senate	Pekarsky
SB117	Public school teachers; reemployment of teacher who has not received continuing contract status.	Passed Senate	Pekarsky
SB134	Public education; early childhood care and education, funding formula calculations, report.	In Committee	Locke
SB147	Alternative graduation pathways to earn Standard Diploma; development, approval, and implementation,	In Subcommittee	Pekarsky
SB151	Elementary school students; water safety instruction required, guidelines.	Passed Senate	Craig
SB203	Teacher licensure; career and technical education or dual enrollment; three-year licenses.	In Subcommittee	Suettlerlein
SB217	National Board Certification Incentive Reward Program and Fund; eligibility.	In Subcommittee	Boysko
SB228	Localities; liability insurance, certain waiver of sovereign immunity.	In Committee	Surovell
SB724	High school graduation requirements and methods; application to entering ninth-grade cohorts; retroactive changes prohibited; public guidance.	In Subcommittee	Head