

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY - 2025 SESSION

CHAPTER 516

An Act to amend and reenact § 22.1-253.13:5 of the Code of Virginia, relating to school board employees; health care professionals; professional development and continuing education; optional programs; children with autism spectrum disorder.

[S 1293]

Approved March 24, 2025

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 22.1-253.13:5 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 22.1-253.13:5. Standard 5. Quality of classroom instruction and educational leadership.

A. Each member of the Board shall participate in high-quality professional development programs on personnel, curriculum and current issues in education as part of his service on the Board.

B. Consistent with the finding that leadership is essential for the advancement of public education in the Commonwealth, teacher, principal, and superintendent evaluations shall be consistent with the performance standards included in the Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers, Principals, and Superintendents. Evaluations shall include student academic progress as a significant component and an overall summative rating. Teacher evaluations shall include regular observation and evidence that instruction is aligned with the school's curriculum. Evaluations shall include identification of areas of individual strengths and weaknesses and recommendations for appropriate professional activities. Evaluations shall include an evaluation of cultural competency.

C. The Board shall provide guidance on high-quality professional development for (i) teachers, principals, supervisors, division superintendents, and other school staff; (ii) principals, supervisors, and division superintendents in the evaluation and documentation of teacher and principal performance based on student academic progress and the skills and knowledge of such instructional or administrative personnel; (iii) school board members on personnel, curriculum and current issues in education; (iv) teachers of the blind and visually impaired, in cooperation with the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, in Braille; (v) any individual with an endorsement in early/primary education preschool through grade three, elementary education preschool through grade six, special education general curriculum kindergarten through grade 12, special education deaf and hard of hearing preschool through grade 12, special education blindness/visual impairments preschool through grade 12, or English as a second language preschool through grade 12, or as a reading specialist that builds proficiency in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction; (vi) each teacher with an endorsement in middle education grades six through eight who teaches English that builds proficiency in evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research; (vii) each middle school principal and teacher with an endorsement in middle education grades six through eight who teaches mathematics, science, or history and social science that builds an awareness of evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research; (viii) each teacher with a provisional general education or special education license or an endorsement in early/primary education preschool through grade three, elementary education preschool through grade six, middle education grades six through eight, and secondary education grades six through 12; each principal with an endorsement in administration and supervision preschool through grade 12; and each teacher's aide or other paraprofessional that builds proficiency in instructional practices to support specially designed instruction in inclusive settings; ~~and~~ (ix) each teacher with a provisional special education license or an endorsement in special education general curriculum preschool through grade 12, special education deaf and hard of hearing preschool through grade 12, or special education blindness and visual impairments preschool through grade 12 that builds proficiency in implementing the Virginia IEP established pursuant to subdivision 11 of § 22.1-214.4 and the referral, evaluation, reevaluation, and eligibility forms and worksheets referenced in subdivision 6 of § 22.1-214.4; *and (x) all instructional personnel and school board employees whose duties include regular contact with students on communicating with and supporting students with autism spectrum disorder.*

The Board shall also provide technical assistance on high-quality professional development to local school boards designed to ensure that all instructional personnel are proficient in the use of educational technology consistent with its comprehensive plan for educational technology.

The Department shall provide technical assistance, including literacy coaching, to local school divisions to provide professional development in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction for students in kindergarten through grade eight. The Department shall also create a list of professional development programs aligned with science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction that includes programs that provide training in dyslexia for reading specialists as required by subsection G of § 22.1-253.13:2. The list shall be approved by the Board. The Department shall provide resources to local school divisions to ensure that each division is able to provide professional development to

teachers and reading specialists listed in subdivision E 2 in one of the programs enumerated in the list approved by the Board pursuant to this subdivision and that such professional development is provided at no cost to the teachers and reading specialists.

The Department shall provide technical assistance, including special education coaching, to local school divisions to provide professional development in special education and related services and in instructional practices to support specially designed instruction in inclusive settings. The Department shall provide resources to local school divisions to ensure that each division is able to provide professional development to the teachers, principals, teacher's aides, and other paraprofessionals listed in subdivisions E 4 and 5 at no cost to such individuals.

D. Each local school board shall require (i) its members to participate annually in high-quality professional development activities at the state, local, or national levels on governance, including, but not limited to, personnel policies and practices; the evaluation of personnel, curriculum, and instruction; use of data in planning and decision making; and current issues in education as part of their service on the local board and (ii) the division superintendent to participate annually in high-quality professional development activities at the local, state, or national levels, including the Standards of Quality, Board regulations, and the Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers, Principals, and Superintendents.

E. Each local school board shall provide a program of high-quality professional development (i) in the use and documentation of performance standards and evaluation criteria based on student academic progress and skills for teachers, principals, and superintendents to clarify roles and performance expectations and to facilitate the successful implementation of instructional programs that promote student achievement at the school and classroom levels; (ii) as part of the license renewal process, to assist teachers and principals in acquiring the skills needed to work with gifted students, students with disabilities, and students who have been identified as having limited English proficiency and to increase student achievement and expand the knowledge and skills students require to meet the standards for academic performance set by the Board; (iii) in educational technology for all instructional personnel which is designed to facilitate integration of computer skills and related technology into the curricula; and (iv) for principals and supervisors designed to increase proficiency in instructional leadership and management, including training in the evaluation and documentation of teacher and principal performance based on student academic progress and the skills and knowledge of such instructional or administrative personnel.

In addition, each local school board shall provide:

1. Teachers and principals with high-quality professional development programs each year in (i) instructional content; (ii) the preparation of tests and other assessment measures; (iii) methods for assessing the progress of individual students, including Standards of Learning assessment materials or other criterion-referenced tests that match locally developed objectives; (iv) instruction and remediation techniques in English, mathematics, science, and history and social science; (v) interpreting test data for instructional purposes; (vi) technology applications to implement the Standards of Learning; and (vii) effective classroom management;

2. High-quality professional development and training in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction, from the list developed and the resources provided by the Department pursuant to subsection C or an alternative program that consists of evidence-based literacy instruction and aligns with science-based reading research approved by the Department, for each elementary school principal and each teacher with an endorsement in early/primary education preschool through grade three, elementary education preschool through grade six, special education general curriculum kindergarten through grade 12, special education deaf and hard of hearing preschool through grade 12, special education blindness/visual impairments preschool through grade 12, or English as a second language preschool through grade 12, or as a reading specialist that builds proficiency in evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research in order to aid in the licensure renewal process for such individuals;

3. High-quality professional development and training in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction, from the list developed and the resources provided by the Department pursuant to subsection C, or an alternative program that consists of evidence-based literacy instruction and aligns with science-based reading research approved by the Department, for (i) each teacher with an endorsement in middle education grades six through eight who teaches English that builds proficiency in evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research and (ii) each middle school principal and teacher with an endorsement in middle education grades six through eight who teaches mathematics, science, or history and social science that builds an awareness of evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research;

4. (Effective July 1, 2027) High-quality professional development in implementing the Virginia IEP established pursuant to subdivision 11 of § 22.1-214.4 and the referral, evaluation, reevaluation, and eligibility forms and worksheets referenced in subdivision 6 of § 22.1-214.4 for each teacher with a provisional special education license or an endorsement in special education general curriculum kindergarten through grade 12, special education deaf and hard of hearing preschool through grade 12, and special

education blindness and visual impairments preschool through grade 12; ~~and~~

5. (Effective July 1, 2027) High-quality professional development in instructional practices to support specially designed instruction in inclusive settings for each teacher with a provisional general education license or an endorsement in early/primary education preschool through grade three, elementary education preschool through grade six, and secondary education grades six through 12; each principal with an endorsement in administration and supervision preschool through grade 12; each teacher's aide or other paraprofessional; and any teacher with a provisional special education license for whom the school board determines there is a need for such professional development; *and*

6. *High-quality professional development each year in communicating with and supporting students with autism spectrum disorder for any instructional personnel and school board employees whose duties include regular contact with students, in accordance with the guidance provided by the Board pursuant to clause (x) of subsection C, that includes (i) an overview of the characteristics and behavioral recognition of autism spectrum disorder, (ii) strategies for communicating and interacting with and supporting students with autism spectrum disorder, and (iii) best practices for responding to and de-escalating certain behavioral challenges and situations. Such professional development shall be optional, provided, however, that any instructional personnel or school board employee who completes such professional development shall be eligible for professional development points toward renewal of his license for the number of in-person hours of coursework completed.*

F. Schools and school divisions shall include as an integral component of their comprehensive plans required by § 22.1-253.13:6, high-quality professional development programs that support the recruitment, employment, and retention of qualified teachers and principals. Each school board shall require all instructional personnel to participate each year in these professional development programs.

G. Each local school board shall annually review its professional development program for quality, effectiveness, participation by instructional personnel, and relevancy to the instructional needs of teachers and the academic achievement needs of the students in the school division.

2. That each licensing board within the Department of Health Professions shall make a recommendation that each individual who is registered, certified, licensed, or issued a multistate licensure privilege by such licensing board and whose duties may involve direct contact with children complete continuing education on communicating with children with autism spectrum disorder that includes (i) an overview of the characteristics and behavioral recognition of autism spectrum disorder, (ii) strategies for communicating and interacting with children with autism spectrum disorder, and (iii) best practices for responding to and de-escalating certain behavioral challenges and situations. Each licensing board may include as a part of such recommendation specific continuing education programs on communicating with children with autism spectrum disorder.