



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

Atif Qarni
Secretary of Education

December 4th, 2019

Virginia General Assembly
1000 Bank Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Members of the General Assembly:

In 2015, the General Assembly amended § 2.2-208 of the Code of Virginia and requested that the Secretary of Education (the Secretary) biennially report to the General Assembly on the coordination efforts among such agencies for which he is responsible. The following is a summary of the coordination efforts I have undertaken since Governor Northam has taken office. The coordination of our efforts is critical as we seek to ensure every student has what they need to succeed from cradle to classroom to career, no matter who they are or where they live.

Throughout my time as Secretary, I have sought to coordinate efforts among the agencies within my purview. I meet regularly with the leadership of the Department of Education, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and the Virginia Community College System. These regular meetings help ensure that we have an aligned vision for the future of K-12 and higher education, and equip our agencies to create complementary policies, solve problems, and strive for equitable outcomes across the education continuum. Additionally, to enhance collaboration I assigned all the higher education related agencies, centers, and extensions, as well as museums and cultural institutions to Deputy Secretary Fran Bradford. All PK-12 agencies and initiatives fall under Deputy Secretary Holly Coy, to include the Department of Education and all early childhood initiatives. This organization has helped streamline requests and questions from agencies. It has also allowed the Deputy Secretaries to exercise creativity and make connections between related agencies and initiatives since they serve as a single point of contact for all related topics.

There are a few initiatives we are currently engaged in that facilitate interoperability and help coordinate efforts between agencies as we seek to ensure students have what they need to succeed from cradle to classroom to career. Two examples in Deputy Secretary Bradford's area are the American Evolution Commemoration and the Tech Talent Initiative. Throughout 2019, American Evolution has brought together many museums and higher education institutions to commemorate the past 400 years of Virginia's complex history. American Evolution planned and executed many important events around the Commonwealth including the Commemoration of the 1619 First African Landing at Fort Monroe, the

Women's Achieve Summit at the Richmond Convention Center, and the Pocahontas Reframed Film Festival at the Byrd Theater.

The second example of collaboration is the Tech Talent Investment Program (TTIP), which was a result of the Commonwealth's agreement with Amazon to locate its HQ2 facility here in Virginia. The TTIP requires the Office of the Secretary of Education, along with the Secretary of Finance, the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia, the Department of Planning and Budget, and the staffs of the House Appropriations Committee and Senate Finance Committee, to develop MOUS with many public higher education institutions. These MOU's will enable Virginia to increase the number of graduates with bachelor's and master's degrees in computer science and closely related fields by more than 25,000. Following several months of collaborative efforts, Governor Northam signed agreements with 11 Virginia universities on October 30th and subsequent agreements will be established with other public higher education institutions, including community colleges.

In the K-12 space under Deputy Secretary Coy's leadership, the two collaborative efforts of note are the School Readiness Committee and the STEM Education Commission. The School Readiness Committee is a group of professionals, educators, providers, and advocates who are appointed by the Secretary of Education to provide strategic guidance on state level early childhood policy. This group works across agencies and secretariats to increase access and quality of early childhood programs, with a particular emphasis on supporting the early childhood practitioner workforce. The Committee includes representatives from a variety of higher education institutions, the Virginia Department of Education, local schools, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, myself, and many other stakeholders. Additionally, the STEM Education Commission also brings together a diverse set of stakeholders across agencies and secretariats and is working to create a unified vision and adopt a set of shared goals to strategically inform how we prepare students for STEM jobs of the future.

As you can see, our office has taken numerous steps to ensure coordination among education agencies and other secretariats. Because of the limited authority over the operation and decisions of public schools and higher education institutions, this type of coordination is necessary. We will continue this coordination to provide students, no matter who they are or where they live, a high quality public education experience that equips them to enter the 21st century workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Atif Qarni". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Atif Qarni
Secretary of Education