



#114-21

**Commonwealth of Virginia
Virginia Department of Education
Superintendent's Memo #114-21**

DATE: April 30, 2021
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **93rd Annual Virginia Middle and High School Principals Conference & Exposition (Hybrid Event) - June 23-25, 2021 (School Law Clinic June 25, 2021)**

Virginia's only statewide conference for middle level and high school principals is the **Annual Virginia Middle and High School Principals Conference & Exposition**. Since 1927, the Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals (VASSP) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) - and now with the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership (VFEL) - have collaborated to develop and enhance middle level and high school administrators' leadership skills, increase their understanding of current educational issues, and expand their knowledge base for success. While recognizing the challenges of the current health crisis, this hybrid event is scheduled for **June 23-25, 2021** at **Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa** in Short Pump at 12042 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23233. VASSP, VFEL, and VDOE are hopeful this hybrid event will take place as scheduled. As the June dates approach, reliance on government guidance will inform changes from a hybrid to virtual event and a notification will be sent out accordingly.

A cordial invitation is extended to principals, assistant principals, division superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors of instruction, supervisors, college/university personnel, and administrators of nonpublic middle and high schools to attend.

Conference Theme

The theme for this year's State Conference is *Principals of the Pandemic: Changing the Narrative*. Principals will be able to reflect on the past year, focus on their growth for the year ahead, build upon their professional community, and discover solutions so they can provide the best possible leadership for those who need it most – their staff and students. Conferees will have the opportunity to connect with a professional community of leaders, hear keynotes featuring the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and learn from other leading state and national experts. The focus of the conference is to prepare principals for the opening of schools in these challenging circumstances.

Professional Practices Symposium and Conference Professional Library

The **Professional Practices Symposium** will focus on exemplary practices that excel in content delivery for students in today's schools. The fast-paced learning environment necessitated by the global economy requires a competitive edge. Principals must understand, appreciate, and implement effective performance systems. VASSP, VDOE and VFEL conducted a statewide needs assessment of all middle level and high school administrators earlier this year. Your input on the survey this year was invaluable! All information was shared with the Virginia Department of Education. The Professional Practices Symposium will address: Equity, Learning Loss, Student Engagement, and Future Possibilities for Virtual, In-Person, and Hybrid Learning.

New this year is the **Conference Professional Library** that will house videos, handouts, and other materials, from conference presenters and other participants. The Conference Planning Committee receives an impressive array of presentation proposals from presenters every year from nearly all 132 school divisions who offer a wealth of knowledge, skills, and expertise in the world of middle and high school education. The conundrum in the past has been two-fold when selecting presenters for the conference: not enough sessions to include all of the proposals and not enough time for attendees to see all the presentations. The development of the Conference Professional Library is designed to alleviate that problem.

As an added bonus for this year's attendees, the Library will be open through the end of December 2021, thus enabling access to all the presentations and download materials that

will support their efforts with students, schools, and communities as *Principals of the Pandemic: Changing the Narrative*.

Virtual Platform

The 2021 state conference will be conducted using the event platform Whova, winner of the "Best Event App" at the Event Technology Awards. Downloaded to the conference participant's smartphone, iPad, or laptop, the Whova event app provides conferees with the best experience to participate and interact more actively while making connections with principals at the conference as well as principals participating virtually. The Whova event app provides up-to-date event information, personalized agenda, live polls, message boards, and photo sharing opportunities. The app includes an agenda center, speaker hub, URL Zoom links, announcements, exhibit hall, and impromptu meet-ups. The Whova event app houses a Conference Professional Library and allows participants to virtually connect through chat and one-to-one video calls for six months following the event.

All sessions will be available to participants virtually and in-person. Presenters will be on-site at the conference hotel. On June 23-24, 2021, the Professional Practices Symposium will include three components for each of the four conference themes: On June 23, 2021, Virginia Department of Education staff will present an in-depth overview of Equity and Learning Loss, followed by concurrent sessions regarding professional practices on these two themes. The last component for each theme will include a reflection discussion group facilitated by field practitioners. Principals can choose to attend reflection discussion groups based on their role (urban, suburban, rural, middle school, or assistant principals). On June 24, 2021, the same agenda will address the last two conference themes - Student Engagement and the Future Possibilities for Virtual, In-Person, and Hybrid learning. The School Law Clinic is a post-conference half-day activity that will be held on June 25, 2021.

The Title II, Part A - Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting funds may be used to support attendance at this event. The State Conference program addresses the key principles of professional development for principals. Attending the conference will provide participants opportunities to explore their leadership strengths and how they can be enhanced to generate a school culture of performance success.

A detailed announcement about the general session speakers, workshop presenters, topics, and more will be sent via a VASSP email blast to principals and division superintendents, and will be posted on the Association's website. The Annual Virginia Middle and High School Principals Conference & Exposition webpage includes a link to the [online registration and payment form](#). The website also includes information for the [online hotel accommodation form](#), the Whova link to the [Conference Overview](#).

Hilton Richmond Hotel & Spa / Short Pump will house all the conference programs. To take advantage of EARLY REGISTRATION, the online registration form must be submitted by June 7, 2021. Hotel accommodations are available on a first-come, first-serve basis, and we encourage you to make your hotel accommodations as soon as possible. All rooms not confirmed with a reservation by June 7, 2021, will be released.

For more information

If you have questions about the conference or desire additional information, please visit the [VASSP website](#) or call the Association at (804) 355-2777.

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