



League of Women Voters of the Charlottesville Area

Restudy: Education – Local Position – 2021-22

Background

In 2020, at the Annual Meeting of the *League of Women Voters of the Charlottesville Area*, members voted to support a restudy of the Education position found in “Local Program: Positioned for Action” to include the need for “increased internet access and cyber education in schools.” Membership extended this proposed study at the 2021 Annual Meeting. In July, 2021, a study group was formed with Michele Kellermann and Carolyn Fitzpatrick to lead the effort. It was suggested the following statements (1) and (2) be inserted into the present position so that our League could address these issues locally. Below are the two statements with some background information as to why they are each important additions to our present position.

(1) Support for cost-effective secure high speed internet access throughout the Charlottesville Area.

In the spring of 2020, with the pandemic closing down in-person student learning at all local public school systems in the Charlottesville Area (Charlottesville City, and the counties of Albemarle, Greene, Fluvanna, Nelson, and Louisa), the necessity of providing virtual learning became immediate and was met by state [“HB 1923 Broadband capacity; expands existing pilot program, municipal broadband authorities” – see Appendix A of this report] and local governments with increased broadband access so that students could continue their education virtually particularly in rural areas. Even small, rural county public school systems such as Louisa maintained “Help Desks” with “emergency” phone numbers so that students and families could receive immediate technology help [<https://sites.google.com/lcps.k12.va.us/lcps-technology-help-pages/home>].

Thus, one positive outcome of the school closures of 2020-21 was that the need for internet access became universal to student learning with local school systems providing the resources so that students could continue to learn online. In fact, several school systems gave options to parents to enroll their students as full-time virtual students for the 2021-22 school year even when schools were now open for in-person instruction. Area examples include: (1) Albemarle County Public Schools [<https://www.k12albemarle.org/our-schools/virtual-campus>]; (2) Charlottesville City Schools [<http://charlottesvilleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Approved-2021-2022-Program-of-Study-1-7-2021-2.pdf>]; and (3) Nelson County Public Schools [<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xt5Xr0YjgJGjTf4beORTsR0gPjvdpbls/view>].

On December 14, 2021, it was announced that “A planned regional broadband project that will provide residents in 13 Central Virginia counties with access to fiber broadband service will received \$79 million in federal and state funding. [https://dailyprogress.com/news/local/79-million-grant-will-help-expand-broadband-in-13-central-virginia-counties/article_2d800222-5c70-11ec-a5f3-a336ca96caad.html]

(2) Support for curriculum and programs that enable students to critically evaluate information found on the internet and in other media including skills to understand individual rights and privacy.

Along with providing virtual learning, school systems were faced with the necessity of providing students with the critical thinking skills to “evaluate information found on the internet and in other media including skills to understand individual rights and privacy.”

This issue has been discussed broadly on several internet sites. A Google search of “**critical evaluation of information found on the internet and other media**” cites the acronym **RADAR**: RADAR stands for

Relevance - How is this information relevant to your assignment?

Authority - Who is the author? What makes this person or organization an authoritative source?

Date - When was this information published and is the publication date important to you?

Appearance - Does the information look professional or academic? Does it have citations and references?

Reason for writing - Why did the author publish this information?

[Adapted from [Mandalios, J. \(2013\). RADAR: An approach for helping students evaluate Internet sources. *Journal of Information Science*, 39\(4\), 470-478.](#)]

The internet search also includes this often referenced **RADAR** checklist, from the Robert E Kennedy Library, Foundational Experiences Program: <https://lib.calpoly.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Evaluating-Credibility-Fall-2017.pdf>

As part of the critical thinking skills needed to evaluate information found on the internet, students also must be supported with **skills to understanding individual rights and privacy**. To this end, the following definition of “online privacy” provides an explanation:

What is the definition of online privacy?

The definition of **online privacy** is the level of [privacy](#) protection an individual has while connected to the Internet. It covers the amount of online security available for personal and [financial data](#), [communications](#), and preferences. Internet users often attempt to increase online privacy through anti-virus software, strong password choices, turning off tracking, reviewing site security, and opting for stricter privacy settings. Risks to online privacy range from phishing scams to malware, while problems with website security may result in identity theft. From: <https://www.winston.com/en/legal-glossary/online-privacy.html>

Proposed Update to the LWV CVA Local Position on Education

The restudy group proposes the following updates [in bold] for concurrence by LWV CVA members as follows:

Education

Action: Support of equal access to a quality public educational system from pre-kindergarten through high school with adequate funding, competent personnel, well-maintained facilities, and adequate resources and supplies. Support of specified statements to assure quality education, particularly addressing the needs of diverse student populations in the Charlottesville Area school systems, including the City of Charlottesville, and the Counties of Albemarle, and Fluvanna, Nelson, Louisa, and Greene. Support for local policies that promote learning by recognizing that the basic needs of all children include health care and adequate nutrition. Support and funding for pre-kindergarten programs and full-day kindergarten programs for all students. Support for curriculum and programs that prepare students for a 21st century workforce by providing emphasis on scientific, technological, engineering, and mathematical skills. **Support for curriculum and programs that enable students to critically evaluate information found on the internet and in other media including skills to understand individual rights and privacy.** Support of all aspects of community education. Support of specific ways to attract and retain quality classroom teachers and to encourage excellence in teaching. Continued monitoring of local school systems, with special emphasis on expenditures and funding sources, education and extracurricular programs, salaries, and responsibilities, and citizen involvement. Special attention to potential major changes in local school systems. [2013] **Support for cost-effective secure high speed internet access throughout the Charlottesville Area.** [2022]

Study Research and Support

The LWV CVA Study Group on Education (Michele Kellermann, Carolyn Fitzpatrick along with Carol Cutler and Mimi Bender) met on two occasions over the summer (2021) to discuss how to best support the proposed insertions to our present “Action” Education position in the LWV CVA Local Program. Michele indicated that the LWV-VA position on “Education” provided an “umbrella” for inserting the two updates to our local position. There are two documents in place:

- **LWV-VA’s Education “Position in Brief”** [see Appendix B of this report] specifies:

Support for state funding for public schools that insures a high-quality education with equal educational opportunities for all children....[And] Support for a challenging curriculum that includes as essential, “Integrated technology...”

- Further, the **“State of Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL)”** describe the commonwealth's expectations for student learning and achievement in grades K-12 in English, mathematics, science, history/social science, technology, the fine arts, foreign language, health and physical education, and driver education.” See https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/

For Computer Science Standards of Learning, K-12, click on https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/computer-science/index.shtml for the SOL Curriculum framework which defines the content knowledge, skills, and understandings that are measured by the Standards of Learning.

Note: Every public school division in the State of Virginia is mandated to maintain the SOL K-12 benchmarks and testing program for its students.

Note: Currently underway as a 2023 Study, LWV-VA supports equity in “broadband access and affordability” as part of its Education Position restudy. (See lwv-va.org and click on <https://lwv-va.org/lwv-va-2021-studies-program-report/>) At the LWV-VA “Pre-Session” meeting held December 1, 2021, with League members across Virginia, the state League invited Dr. Peter Gretz, superintendent, Fluvanna Public Schools, to present an education segment on behalf of the “Coalition of Small and Rural Schools of Virginia.” (Zoom recording of this presentation is available: <https://youtu.be/OBEtaY9MW1E>) Dr. Gretz states, “Broadband access and affordability has become the greatest equity issue that rural students face.”

Follow-up substantiation of the proposed update: Michele Kellermann contacted Albemarle County’s Phil Giaramita, Strategic Communications Officer, for his thoughts on the inclusion of the proposed updates. **See Appendix C** for his email response, along with comments by Carolyn Fitzpatrick, (LWV CVA Secretary and teacher at Broadus Wood Elementary School, Albemarle County), in response to Mr. Giaramita’s email. She notes that although the internet resources are available, teachers are scrambling to make the access equitably even for disadvantaged students.

Further, an article in *The Daily Progress* “More Internet for area students” dated Wednesday, October 25, 2021, announced that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is sending \$2.27 million to public and private schools in the Charlottesville Area, which can be used to purchase equipment to help students connect to the internet. Schools and libraries had to apply in order to be considered for the funding. In the Charlottesville area, the Louisa County school division received the most at \$1,075,105. Mr. Giaramita reports that Albemarle County public schools received close to \$40,000.

Michele also trolled the internet in search of excellent examples of how area public school systems are offering curriculum and programs that “enable students to critically evaluate information found on the internet and in other media including skills to understand individual rights and privacy.” See **Appendix D** for the Greene County public schools “technology” website page.

Teacher interview: Carolyn Fitzpatrick, LWV CVA Secretary (and co-sponsor of this report) provided these “real world” comments in her role as elementary teacher in Albemarle County:

“Certain parts of counties, such as northern Albemarle are still without proper infrastructure to support increased internet and broadband capabilities. With schools using more technology even outside of “virtual school” this must be addressed in the future.

“On elementary laptops there are still opportunities to access programs deemed “not appropriate”, especially in grades 1-3. *Youtube* and the camera function are used by students who know how to access these functions. Rules are put in place, but why load these onto the laptops when the teacher has the capability to access for the whole class? Again, especially in grades 1-3 where cybersecurity is not as focused as in the upper level grades. In grades 1-3 we do go into a “Cyber-security week” of lessons, but they don’t specifically address this.

“Laptops went home last year because of the virtual learning, but if they go home and are accessed by the student outside of school, what can be loaded that is inappropriate? Also, malware may be an issue, so more money for cybersecurity of the equipment must be available.

“Who evaluates the school systems cybersecurity? Is it ‘in-house’ or is there an outside cybersecurity firm that can “grade” the system?”

It is also to be noted that in recent weeks, with *Facebook's* Mark Zuckerberg appearing before Congressional committees, much has come to light about the dangers of social media on children's development, along with teen-age use of *TikTok*, *YouTube*, and *Snap*. Proposals of laws at the national level to protect teens are described in an article in *The Washington Post* which tells of Congressional attempts to update the *Children's Online Privacy Protection Act* by raising the age for safeguards (to the ages of 13 and 15), as well as imposing limits on targeted advertising directed at those covered. [See Bibliography below, "Protect kids from social media."]

Position Update Conclusion

There is substantial and relevant support for the inclusion of the two study statements proposed into the current LWV CVA "Education" Local Position Action statement. **Both statements would allow the League of Women Voters of the Charlottesville Area to support school board decisions as well as local legislation in our area.**

The study group concludes that since these statements would be inserted in the current position, that a "**Concurrence**" of the League members is the next step to be taken. Concurrence is the League process whereby a modification of a current position can be made. [See definitions in the *2021-22 LWV CVA Handbook*.] A "Concurrence" meeting is scheduled to take up these Education updates to Local Program at a meeting for all members on **Sunday, January 16, 2022, 2 to 4 pm**. During this meeting, members would need to reach consensus (agree or disagree) that these two statements should be added to the present Local Position Action statement on Education.

This paper was prepared by Michele Kellermann, **Education Position Re-Study update**, November 5, 2021.

Appendixes

Appendix A: From the Virginia General Assembly *Legislative Information System* (LIS) as found on the LWV CVA website: [lwv-cva.org](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+vot+HV1831+HB1923). Go to: <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+vot+HV1831+HB1923>

State of Virginia House of Delegates: HB 1923 Broadband capacity; expands existing pilot program, municipal broadband authorities.

Summary as introduced:

Electric utilities; broadband capacity pilot program. **Expands an existing pilot**

program under which Dominion Energy and Appalachian Power are authorized to provide or make available broadband capacity to Internet service providers in areas of the Commonwealth that are unserved by broadband to include municipal Internet service providers. The current program is restricted to nongovernmental Internet service providers.

Full text:

01/10/21 House: Prefiled and ordered printed; offered 01/13/21 21101272D pdf | impact statement

Status:

01/10/21 House: Prefiled and ordered printed; offered 01/13/21 21101272D

01/10/21 House: Referred to Committee on Labor and Commerce

01/14/21 House: Assigned L & C sub: Subcommittee #3

01/18/21 House: Subcommittee recommends reporting (11-Y 0-N)

01/19/21 House: Reported from Labor and Commerce (22-Y 0-N)

01/20/21 House: Read first time

01/21/21 House: Read second time and engrossed

01/22/21 House: Read third time and passed House BLOCK VOTE (99-Y 0-N)

01/22/21 House: VOTE: Block Vote Passage (99-Y 0-N)

01/25/21 Senate: Constitutional reading dispensed

01/25/21 Senate: Referred to Committee on Commerce and Labor

02/05/21 Senate: Continued to 2021 Sp. Sess. 1 in Commerce and Labor (15-Y 0-N)

Appendix B - LWV-VA “Positioned for Action”. See <https://lwv-va.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/lwv-va-positions-Full-2021-Final-6-21.pdf>. See pages 23-28 for Education position.

Appendix C - Response email by Phil Giaramita, Albemarle County Strategic Communications Officer.

From: Phil Giaramita <pgiaramita@k12albemarle.org>

Date: Fri, Oct 29, 2021 at 10:42 AM

Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL]LWV Education Position

To: Michele Kellermann <michele.kellermann@gmail.com>

Michele, thank you for the League's continuing interest in local public education.

Your statement is very powerful and relevant. Only one suggestion if it can fit. One of

the major challenges all school divisions face, especially here where our students come from more than 80 birth countries and our economically disadvantaged population exceeds 30 percent, is equal opportunity to education resources. Technology is a major part of this but so are curriculum, teaching strategies and faculty diversity as instruments to achieve that equity. An example of the former is more emphasis on history that incorporates the contributions of all cultures and races to our nation's development.

One other consideration, which your statement does touch upon is the importance of wellness, especially social and emotional health of students. Very important to their development and academic success. This would translate into more staffing and programs reducing student stress and anxiety and helping to align courses with their individual interests.

The reference to promoting math and science skills is critical but we are trying to expand that whenever possible to reach those students whose talents and interests lie in other areas as well, for example the performing arts. I think what all these areas have in common is the creativity and innovation they promote.

On the question of internet access, yes, we are expecting to receive close to \$40,000 from the FCC and will use the money to provide unlimited hot spot access to the 420 students who are enrolled in our virtual school.

We are involved in several initiatives to expand access including providing hot spots to individual homes, setting up access in community centers and libraries and serving on the county's Broadband Authority. We want to ensure that as fiber is brought into more sections of the county that this includes those neighborhoods with students and families who are now under served.

I hope this helps.

Phil

Appendix D

"More internet for area students" appeared in *The Daily Progress* on Wednesday, October 27, 2021. The release states, "We [Federal Communications Commission] are proud to see these federal dollars go toward keeping Virginia's communities connected. This investment will help

close the digital divide, while improving access to job opportunities and educational resources for Virginians as we continue to recover from the impacts of COVID-19.”

Appendix E

(1) Greene county Public Schools website page:

<https://www.greenecountyschools.com/Page/1004>

Here is the “Table of Contents” located on this website page:

Technology

- [Home](#)
- [1:1 Chromebook Initiative](#)
- [Google Resources](#)
- [Transfer Drive and Gmail Content](#)
- [Instructional Technology Resources](#)
- [Video Conferencing](#)
- [Access to Technology](#)
- [Cisco Phone Information](#)
- [eRate Information](#)
- [Internet Safety](#)
- [Technology Tips](#)

Note that the “Internet Safety” link when open contains additional links to :

“Internet Safety

The Internet is a valuable tool in today's world. It is important that our students know how to navigate the Internet safely. Below are some resources that will assist you in helping to educate your child to be a smart Internet user.

Cyber Bullying

[What is Cyber Bullying?](#)

[Warning Signs](#)

[10 Tips to Protect Your Child from Cyber Bullying](#)

[Cyberbullying - NetSmartz](#)

Federal Bureau of Investigation

[FBI - Internet Safety K-5](#)

FBI Safe Online Surfing Internet Challenge - Grades 3-8

Safety, Health, and Consumer Council

[Keeping Kids Safe in Cyber Space](#) – This link is particularly valuable as evidence that public school systems such as Greene County are promoting internet safety for their children users.

Teach Online Safety - by the National Cyber Security Alliance

Stay Safe Online

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)

Net Smartz

Net Smartz Kids

Social Media

(2) Albemarle County Public Schools:

<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1597666845/k12albemarleorg/zbx0up92t5e5l5bkzzl/Technology-and-Digital-Citizenship-Field-Guide-for-Families-ENG.pdf>

Bibliography

1. For information about technology and the use of the internet in the classroom, go to **Charlottesville Area School Division Websites:**
 - Charlottesville City Schools - <http://charlottesvilleschools.org/>
 - Albemarle County Public Schools - <https://www.k12albemarle.org/>
 - Nelson County Public Schools - <https://www.nelson.k12.va.us/en-US>
 - Fluvanna County Public Schools - <https://fluco.org/>
 - Greene County Public Schools - <https://www.greenecountyschools.com/>
 - Louisa County Public Schools - <https://lcps.k12.va.us/>
2. [Mandalios, J. \(2013\). RADAR: An approach for helping students evaluate Internet sources. *Journal of Information Science*, 39\(4\), 470-478.](#)
3. *LWV CVA Members Handbook for 2021-22: Local Program: Positioned for Action.* Education Position found on page 18.

4. **LWV-VA “Position for Action” – Education position on pages 23-28.** <https://lwv-va.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/lwv-va-positions-Full-2021-Final-6-21.pdf>
5. **Virginia Department of Education: Standards of Learning, K-12 Computer Science.** https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/computer-science/index.shtml
6. **Virginia Legislative Information System (LIS): HB1923 – Broadband capacity; expands existing pilot program, municipal broadband authorities.** LIS link to this legislation passed on 2/22/21:
<https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+vot+HV1831+HB1923>
7. **“More Internet for area students.”** *The Daily Progress*, Wednesday, October 27, 2021.
8. **“Protect kids from social media.”** *The Washington Post*, Sunday, October, 2021.
Describes Congressional attempts to update the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act by raising the age for safeguards, as well as imposing limits on targeted advertising directed at those covered.