

Chairman Atkinson, members of the Accountability Committee, President Foster, members of the Board and Dr. Wright. My name is Kerri Wilson and I am president-elect of the Virginia School Boards Association. I am pleased to appear before you today to comment on possible revisions to the Standards of Accreditation.

You have already received some excellent suggestions from several organizations regarding revisions to the Standards. I will not take up your time by repeating all of those suggestions. I would, however, like to add the VSBA's perspective on a few of those suggestions.

First, we share the concern that the Board of Education - you - face the extremely difficult, if not impossible, challenge of developing appropriate student growth measures by July 31 of this year for the use in accrediting schools and evaluating teachers. If the VSBA's participation in the development of the teacher evaluation guidelines taught us one thing it is that developing student growth measures for an individual teacher is a terribly complex task because of, among other things, the diverse composition of an individual class. These complexities are only multiplied when we speak of the population of an entire school.

The emphasis on appropriate inclusion and instruction for English language learners, to name just two factors, point out that performance on state assessments may not, and probably will not, be an accurate predictor of the performance of a particular teacher or of a particular school. The use of raw data regarding student performance without taking into consideration the many variables which can affect that performance can be very misleading. It is for this reason that the VSBA strongly supported the passage of HB 1889 in the 2013 session of the General Assembly that exempts from public disclosure, under the Freedom of Information Act, the "[t]eacher

performance indicators ... used by the local school board to judge the performance or quality of a teacher.”

This potential unfairness is only magnified when student growth measures are used in conjunction with the newly mandated A-F grading scale. In our view, the case was not made during the General Assembly session and the VSBA remains unconvinced that the A-F grading scale will further quality education. On the other hand, we believe there is great potential for confusion when the grading scale is used in conjunction with the accreditation ratings which have been used for years and are understood and accepted by the public.

We realize that the General Assembly has spoken and that you must comply with its mandate, but we would urge you to go slow and adopt interim student growth indicators that can be field tested to insure validity. You do this for SOL test questions and you should do no less for the student growth measures. To do otherwise may be to condemn teachers, schools and school divisions to a perception of failure versus the reality of true student growth.

We would also request that the Board consider revising the “seat time” requirements in the current Standards. Requiring all students to have a certain number of clock hours of instruction in the core subjects appears to be inconsistent with the emphasis being placed on online instruction. Replacing such requirements with a competency standard, certainly for students receiving online instruction, may be in order.

The VSBA would also suggest that it may be time to review, and possibly revise, the limitations on class periods currently in the Standards. It is respectfully submitted that current practices in many school divisions have overtaken those restrictions. Many school divisions have gone to

seven period days and restrictions such as these may stifle the very innovation necessary to turn around under-performing schools.

Again, you have received many meritorious suggestions from other organizations and our failure to mention those suggestions should not be interpreted as a lack of support for them. Rather, we hope and trust that you will give serious consideration to all of the suggestions that have been shared with you.