

Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item



Agenda Item: B

Date: September 18, 2014

Title	Final Review of Proposed Local Alternative Assessment Guidelines Developed in Response to 2014 Acts of Assembly		
Presenter	Mrs. Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent, Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement		
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Purpose of Presentation:

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

Previous Review or Action:

Previous review and action. Specify date and action taken below:

July 24, 2014: First Review

Action Requested:

Final review: Action requested at this meeting.

Alignment with Board of Education Goals: Please indicate (X) all that apply:

	Goal 1: Accountability for Student Learning
	Goal 2: Rigorous Standards to Promote College and Career Readiness
X	Goal 3: Expanded Opportunities to Learn
	Goal 4: Nurturing Young Learners
	Goal 5: Highly Qualified and Effective Educators
X	Goal 6: Sound Policies for Student Success
	Goal 7: Safe and Secure Schools
	Other Priority or Initiative. Specify:

Background Information and Statutory Authority:

Goal Three: The approval of the proposed guidelines for local assessments will support expanded opportunities for student learning.

Goal Six: The approval of the proposed guidelines for local assessments will promote sound policies for student success.

The 2014 Acts of Assembly eliminated the following Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments: Grade 3 Science, Grade 3 History, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865 and United States History:1865 to the Present. In addition, the legislation requires school divisions to administer alternative assessments, consistent with Virginia Board of Education guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each subject area in which SOL assessments were eliminated by the legislation. According to the legislation, the Virginia Board of Education is to develop guidelines that “1) incorporate options for age-appropriate, authentic performance assessments and portfolios with rubrics and other methodologies designed to ensure that students are making adequate academic progress in the

subject area and that the Standards of Learning content is being taught; (2) permit and encourage integrated assessments that include multiple subject areas; and (3) emphasize collaboration between teachers to administer and substantiate the assessments and the professional development of teachers to enable them to make the best use of alternative assessments.”

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia that §[22.1-253.13:3](#) of the Code of Virginia is amended as follows:

“Each school board shall annually certify that it has provided instruction and administered an alternative assessment, consistent with Board guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each Standards of Learning subject area in which a Standards of Learning assessment was not administered during the school year. Such guidelines shall (1) incorporate options for age-appropriate, authentic performance assessments and portfolios with rubrics and other methodologies designed to ensure that students are making adequate academic progress in the subject area and that the Standards of Learning content is being taught; (2) permit and encourage integrated assessments that include multiple subject areas; and (3) emphasize collaboration between teachers to administer and substantiate the assessments and the professional development of teachers to enable them to make the best use of alternative assessments.”

Over the past several months the Board has heard from numerous organizations regarding the development and implementation of the local assessment guidelines required by this legislation. The following organizations have either presented to the Board’s Accountability Committee or to the full Board.

- Virginia Consortium of Social Studies Specialists and College Educators
- Virginia Association of Science Teachers
- Virginia Association of Teachers of English
- Virginia Council for the Social Studies
- Assessment and Accountability Roundtable
- Virginia Mathematics and Science Coalition

Summary of Important Issues: The proposed guidelines were developed using input from the organizations listed above and from other school division personnel. The guidelines contained in Attachment A have been revised to include suggestions made by the Board at the July 24, 2014, meeting and comments received from school divisions and members of the educational organizations following the meeting. A revised version of the guidelines was posted on the Board’s page on the Department of Education’s Web site on August 14, 2014, and school divisions and the educational organizations were advised that an updated version had been posted. The proposed guidelines acknowledge that the legislation’s timeline provides school divisions with an immediate deadline to implement the local assessments. As such, the guidelines for the 2014-2015 year provide school divisions considerable flexibility. The Board will review the guidelines after the 2014-2015 school year and will likely revise them based on the experiences of the first year of implementation.

Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

Costs will be absorbed within the Department of Education’s existing resources.

Timetable for Further Review/Action:

Upon approval by the Board of Education, the approved guidelines will be disseminated to school divisions via a Superintendent's Memorandum.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education approve the local alternative assessment guidelines.

Rationale for Action:

The 2014 legislation which requires school divisions to administer local alternative assessments consistent with Virginia Board of Education guidelines became effective on July 1, 2014. The superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board approve the guidelines so that they can be communicated to school divisions and used to implement the local assessments during this school year.

Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2014-2015
Developed in Response to 2014 Acts of Assembly
Updated on August 14, 2014

Legislative Mandate: House Bill 930 and Senate Bill 306

Legislation in the 2014 General Assembly amended [§ 22.1-253.13:3.C](#) of the *Code of Virginia* to eliminate several Standards of Learning (SOL) tests:

- Grade 3 History,
- Grade 3 Science,
- Grade 5 Writing,
- United States History to 1865, and
- United States History: 1865 to the Present.

Specifically, the *Code* now states (emphasis added):

The Standards of Learning assessments administered to students in grades three through eight shall not exceed (a) reading and mathematics in grades three and four; (b) reading, mathematics, and science in grade five; (c) reading and mathematics in grades six and seven; (d) reading, writing, mathematics, and science in grade eight; and (e) Virginia Studies and Civics and Economics once each at the grade levels deemed appropriate by each local school board.

In addition to eliminating these SOL tests, the legislation also requires each local school board to annually certify that it has provided instruction and administered an alternative assessment, consistent with Virginia Board of Education guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each SOL subject area in which the SOL assessment was eliminated. Specifically, the *Code* now states:

Each school board shall annually certify that it has provided instruction and administered an alternative assessment, consistent with Board guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each Standards of Learning subject area in which a Standards of Learning assessment was not administered during the school year. Such guidelines shall (1) incorporate options for age-appropriate, authentic performance assessments and portfolios with rubrics and other methodologies designed to ensure that students are making adequate academic progress in the subject area and that the Standards of Learning content is being taught; (2) permit and encourage integrated assessments that include multiple subject areas; and (3) emphasize collaboration between teachers to administer and substantiate the assessments and the professional development of teachers to enable them to make the best use of alternative assessments.

Purpose of the Guidelines

In the past several years there has been increasing concern regarding the amount of testing in local school divisions and the time spent in test preparation activities. The intent of this legislation was to eliminate some of the tests used for accountability and to encourage the greater

use of assessments that were designed to inform instruction. While the legislation does not mandate the type of local assessment that should be administered, the intent of these guidelines is to encourage the use of assessments that may be used by teachers to improve their instruction. Such assessments provide information about what students have learned as well as the concepts and skills that they have not yet mastered.

Revision of the Guidelines

The current version of the guidelines was developed with the understanding that the legislation's timeline provides school divisions with an immediate deadline to implement the local assessments. As such, the guidelines for the 2014-2015 year provide school divisions with considerable flexibility. The Board will review the guidelines after the 2014-2015 school year and will likely revise them based on the experiences of the first year of implementation.

Expectations for Inclusion of SOL in Alternative Assessments

For the 2014-2015 school year, school divisions should administer assessments that incorporate each strand or reporting category¹ for that content area and grade level (e.g., the Economics strand² for Grade 3 History/Social Science or the Civics and Economics Reporting Category for US History: 1865 to the Present). However, the assessments administered in the 2014-2015 school year will not be expected to cover all of the content standards contained in that strand. The requirements for coverage of the content standards may increase in subsequent years as experience in implementing the local assessments statewide is gained.

Certification That Content Has Been Taught and Assessments Administered

Scores from the local assessments will not be reported to the Department of Education. Instead local school boards and division superintendents will certify through the annual Standards of Quality (SOQ) compliance assurance that local alternative assessments measuring the Standards of Learning (SOL) and adhering to the Board's guidelines have been administered. In addition, school divisions will be asked to prepare plans that describe how local assessments that are designed to inform instruction will be implemented in 2014-2015 as well as how their use will be expanded in 2015-2016 and beyond. For 2014-2015, school divisions should retain:

1) documentation that demonstrates that the assessments administered address each strand included in the SOL for that grade and subject, 2) copies of the assessments and 3) any ancillary materials such as rubrics or sample student responses used to train teachers. Each school division's plan should address whether these documents will be retained at the school division central office or at individual schools.

During the 2014-2015 school year Department staff will make site visits or conduct "desk reviews" in which documents will be examined and school division staff interviewed either by webinar or by telephone. The purpose of the site visits or "desk reviews" will be to determine how local school divisions are verifying that the content is being taught and to determine the types of alternative assessments that are being administered. The reviews will also help Department staff to identify "best practices" for sharing and distribution to other Virginia school divisions. As part of the site visits or the interviews, some of the documents mentioned above may be reviewed.

Use of Authentic Performance Assessments

As background, performance assessments generally require students to perform a task or create a product that is typically scored using a rubric. Authentic performance assessments often include tasks that mirror those that might occur in a “real-life” situation. While the legislation provides for the use of authentic performance assessments and portfolios, the use of such assessments is not required.

Development or Selection of Assessments

The development and/or selection of the local assessments are left to the discretion of the school division. School divisions may use a combination of several different assessments for each grade and content area to meet the requirement of the legislation, or they may choose a specific test or assessment method. Assessments used should be designed to provide feedback to parents and teachers regarding the extent to which the student has demonstrated proficiency in the content included in the SOL covered.

Local school divisions may choose to administer the same assessments for particular grade levels and content areas to all students in the division. The use of division wide assessments ensures consistency across the division so that the local school board and superintendent can certify that the assessments required by this legislation have been administered. If school divisions choose to allow more flexibility at the school level in selecting the assessments, the school division should prepare a written plan detailing the evidence from each school that will be reviewed by the local school board and superintendent to certify that the requirements of the legislation have been met. Such evidence should include: 1) documentation that demonstrates that the assessments administered address each strand included in the SOL for that grade and subject, 2) copies of the assessments and 3) any ancillary materials such as rubrics or sample student responses used to train teachers. Each school division’s plan should address whether these documents will be retained at the school division central office or at individual schools.

Use of Integrated Assessments

The legislation encourages “integrated assessments that include multiple subject areas.” For example, a local assessment might address content from both grade 3 history and grade 3 science. If such assessments are used, the results should include information about the extent to which the student has demonstrated proficiency in the content of each specific set of SOL covered.

Professional Development

The capacity of teachers to design and implement assessments that are intended to inform instruction is likely to vary widely across the Commonwealth. School divisions should evaluate the capacity and experience of their teachers in implementing such assessments and to use this information to design professional development. Professional development should encourage the collaboration of teachers within grades and across grades in implementing the assessments and in using their results in determining instructional needs. Professional development should also facilitate collaboration among teachers within a school, across schools within a division, across divisions, and across the state wherever possible. School divisions are encouraged to leverage the resources and established training opportunities available from professional organizations.

Associated Costs

School divisions are encouraged to maintain records of the costs associated with 1) the development and implementation of the local alternative assessments and 2) the professional development provided to educators to assist them in implementing this requirement. Information regarding costs will be collected by the Department of Education staff and shared with the Virginia Board of Education and the General Assembly.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

School divisions should be aware of the following requirement found in [Section 300.160 c \(1\) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#):

A State (or, in the case of a district-wide assessment, an LEA) must develop and implement alternate assessments and guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in regular assessments, even with accommodations, as indicated in their respective IEPs, as provided in paragraph (a) of this section.

Use of Local Assessments in State Accreditation or Federal Accountability

The results of the local authentic assessments will not be used to designate state accreditation or federal accountability status.

¹School divisions should be aware that the Scientific Investigation, Reasoning, and Logic strand of the grade 3 Science SOL is not to be assessed separately from the content strands but rather included as a part of local alternative assessments for each content strand. This strand represents a set of systematic inquiry skills that defines what a student will be able to do when planning and conducting investigations within the physical, biological, and Earth sciences.

²The strands for history SOL are: 1) History, 2) Geography, 3) Economics, and 4) Civics