

**Standards of Quality (SOQ) Review and Options for Discussion – 2009 Study
DRAFT - SEPTEMBER 17, 2009**

POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

The considerations below are intended to maintain quality standards for public education, recognizing when revenues are limited divisions will need greater flexibility in allocating funds to meet the specific needs of diverse student populations. The options for consideration also pull into the SOQ certain educational programs that are essential to a “quality education” and in the Appropriation Act only. This action will enhance the SOQ and provide greater transparency in the allocation of public funds.

| SOQ Issues for Examination | Possible Action Item | Background Information and Next Steps |
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| <p><u>2008 Flexibility Options</u> – Incorporate the Board’s recommendations on data coordinators, reading specialists, mathematics specialists, and English Language Learner teachers from 2008 and funded in the Appropriation Act into the SOQ. The SOQ survey collects information on the use of specialists for reading, mathematics, and English language learners (ELL).</p> | <p>Put language currently in the Appropriation Act into Standard 2.</p> <p>Currently, The flexibility options cover: 1) data coordinators and instructional technology resource teachers (ITRTs); 2) reading specialists and the Early Intervention Reading Intervention Initiative (EIRI) funds; 3) mathematics specialists and the Algebra Readiness Initiative (ARI) funds; 4) English Language Learner (ELL) teachers and SOQ prevention, intervention, and remediation funds.</p> | <p>The addition of the flexibility language would permanently establish the importance of these positions in state law and provide a long-term flexibility option for school divisions. A common theme in the SOQ survey data is the need for local flexibility.</p> <p><u>Next Steps:</u> Add flexibility language currently in the Appropriation Act in the <i>Code of Virginia</i> in Standard 2 as this will ensure that school divisions continue to have flexibility to spend funds according to the area of greatest need.</p> <p>Over 96 percent of school divisions responding to the SOQ survey indicated that reading specialists will be employed for the 2009-2010 school year.</p> |

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| <p><u>Movement of Other Programs into the SOQ</u> – The issue of moving programs such as the Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI), the Algebra Readiness Initiative (ARI), the Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP), and possibly other programs into the SOQ needs to be examined.</p> | <p>Move EIRI and ARI from Lottery funded accounts into the SOQ.</p> <p><u>Other Issues for Consideration:</u> 1) Should the EIRI and ARI program requirements be set out in the SOQ as separate standards, as is currently done for ELL? 2) Should other programs outside of the SOQ, such as the ISAEP program, be moved within the SOQ?</p> | <p>The EIRI and ARI programs directly support SOQ efforts in the areas of reading and mathematics. Moving these programs into the SOQ further strengthens the foundation program for K-12 education. This action reduces administrative burden on school divisions because there would no longer be a certification process related to certain accounts outside of the SOQ. This action would convert programs that are now optional but carrying almost a 100 percent school division participation rate to SOQ entitlements. <u>Note:</u> This option would change the funding mix between general fund and Lottery accounts. Required local effort for school divisions needs to be considered as well.</p> <p><u>Next Steps:</u> Add EIRI and ARI program requirements and funding to Standard 1. Preliminary estimates of the impact on SOQ funding will need to be calculated as well as the funding mix between the General Fund and the Lottery Proceeds Fund.</p> |
| <p><u>Assistant Principal</u> – Provide flexibility in assigning “school leaders” to individual buildings.</p> <p>Current staffing ratio:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assistant principals are funded in the following manner: 1) in elementary schools - one half-time at 600 students, one full-time at 900 | <p>Provide school divisions the flexibility to deploy assistant principals to the schools with the greatest needs, so long as they employ a sufficient number of assistant principals divisionwide to meet the total number required in the current SOQ staffing requirement.</p> | <p>This option would give additional flexibility to local school divisions in how personnel are assigned but would not change the current funding standard for assistant principals. This option would ensure that assistant principal staffing could be targeted according to need.</p> |

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| <p>students; 2) in middle schools - one full-time for each 600 students; 3) in high school schools - one full-time for each 600 students.</p> | | <p>Next Steps: Draft language in Standard 2 that would permit flexibility but not affect the existing staffing standard for assistant principals. This would be another option for allocation, like those related to reading specialists and mathematics specialists.</p> |
| <p>Basic Operation Cost (58:1,000 ratio) – The language in the Appropriation Act related to this standard (see attachment) could become part of Standard 2 in the <i>Code</i>, with the positions related to gifted, career and technical education (CTE), and special education set out as separate standards.</p> | <p>Adapt Appropriation Act language to Standard 2.</p> | <p>Putting this language in Standard 2 would clarify this arrangement and tie basic standards directly back to the <i>Code of Virginia</i> and house all SOQ items in one place in the law. It would also clearly delineate within the SOQ the minimum foundation program for K-12 education.</p> <p>Next Steps: Insert Appropriation Act language into Standard 2 and make any needed modifications.</p> |

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| <p><u>Administrative Support Categories</u> – Should the current positions within the administrative support category be further defined and categorized in the SOQ. Positions affected would include administrative personnel, attendance and health, pupil transportation, operation and maintenance, facilities, technology, and school-based support positions.</p> | <p>The types of support positions could be set out in the SOQ. Furthermore, the Standard 2 could be modified to state that funding provided for support positions can be used to support instructional services.</p> <p>Define the categories of personnel who make up “support services,” specify how those positions are funded, and require transparency in the use of funds by mandating divisions publicly report the state and local amounts budgeted and expended for each category.</p> <p>Permit school divisions to use funds for support services to provide additional instructional services and include instructional services as a separate category to be reported publicly.</p> | <p>Reporting the types and funding for each administrative position makes the SOQ clearer and easier to understand. Language in the SOQ providing flexibility for school divisions to use support funding for instruction would memorialize current practice.</p> <p><u>Next Steps:</u> Insert draft language into Standard 2 that clarifies categories of administrative support services, specifies how these positions are funded and requires public reporting of funds budgeted and expended for each category. Insert flexibility language into Standard 2.</p> |
| <p><u>Special Education</u> – The staffing ratios used for funding special education are referenced in the Appropriation Act and outlined in regulations.</p> | <p>Insert special education ratios in the SOQ so that the standards are formally recognized in the <i>Code</i>.</p> | <p>Currently, staffing ratios for special education exist in regulations and are funded in the SOQ because of language in the Appropriation Act. Including the staffing standards in Standard 2 would clarify this arrangement and tie special education staffing directly back to the SOQ.</p> <p><u>Next Steps:</u> Insert staffing ratios in the Standard 2.</p> |

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| <p><u>Career and Technical Education (CTE) Staffing</u> – The Board’s CTE regulations include staffing ratios, but they do not appear in the SOQ.</p> | <p>Move the current CTE staffing ratios into the SOQ.</p> | <p>Currently, staffing ratios for CTE exist in regulations and are funded in the SOQ because of language in the Appropriation Act.</p> <p><u>Next Steps:</u> Insert staffing ratios in the Standard 2.</p> |

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POTENTIAL POLICY DIRECTIVES FOR FURTHER ACTION IN 2010

The considerations below are intended to maintain quality standards for public education, recognizing when revenues are limited divisions will need greater flexibility in allocating funds to meet the specific needs of diverse student populations. The options for consideration also pull into the SOQ certain educational programs that are essential to a “quality education” and in the Appropriation Act only. This action will enhance the SOQ and provide greater transparency in the allocation of public funds. These considerations also suggest key issues where the Board may want to authorize further study, with a report next year pending the availability of resources.

| SOQ Issues for Examination | Issue for Further Action in 2010 | Background Information and Next Steps |
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| <p>Principal/Assistant Principal – Create staffing ratios to give superintendents flexibility in assigning “school leaders” to individual buildings given a total divisionwide allocation for school leaders (principals and assistant principals). The staffing ratio would take into account the goal of having a principal assigned to each building and additional assistants for schools with the greatest need.</p> <p>Current staffing ratios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Principals are funded in the following manner: 1) in elementary schools - one half-time to 299 students, one full-time at 300 students; 2) in middle schools - one full-time, to be employed on a 12-month basis; 3) in high schools - one full-time, to be employed on a 12-month basis <p>Assistant principals are funded in the following manner: 1) in elementary</p> | <p>Define a new funding formula that addresses the Board’s school leadership priorities of requiring a principal in every school and increasing the number of assistant principals in schools with the greatest need.</p> | <p>Converting from a specific formula for principals and assistant principals to a “school leadership” umbrella would give additional flexibility to local school divisions in how personnel are assigned. This option would provide additional funding for elementary principals and assignments for assistant principals could be targeted according to need. The standard needs to be written in such a manner that small school divisions do not encounter compliance issues.</p> <p>Because this item involves a greater level of funding for school leaders in school divisions, it needs to be addressed in 2010 in conjunction with other staffing issues noted below.</p> |

| SOQ Issues for Examination | Issue for Further Action in 2010 | Background Information and Next Steps |
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| <p>schools - one half-time at 600 students, one full-time at 900 students; 2) in middle schools - one full-time for each 600 students; 3) in high school schools - one full-time for each 600 students.</p> | | |
| <p>Special Education – As response to intervention (RTI) is effectively implemented, more students are mainstreamed reducing a division’s special education funding. The practice of mainstreaming creates a perverse funding incentive for school divisions and needs to be examined since effective RTI requires additional instructional support, such as that provided by reading and mathematics specialists. Are there any funding options available that could supplement school divisions so that dollars are not being lost due to the unintended funding consequences of RTI use?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The SOQ contains standards that are based on certain student populations, such as English language learners (ELL) but does not reference specific standards for students with disabilities. | <p>Create a funding mechanism that would supplement the use of RTI by providing additional instructional support to help children receiving RTI continue to meet student achievement goals. Funds lost due to students being mainstreamed could be made available to divisions in a special “hold harmless” account to support additional instructional staff such as reading and mathematics specialists.</p> <p>To create this funding mechanism, further study is needed. The full effect of educating students with disabilities in the mainstream classroom coupled with the trends in the special education child count resulting from this intervention strategy needs further examination.</p> | <p>The Board has heard comments from school divisions that the use of RTI has the unintended consequence of actually lowering state funding for special education services because more students are being educated in the mainstream classroom.</p> <p>Funding could be provided to offset this unintended consequence and to provide resources for more instructional tools in those classrooms where RTI is being used. <u>Further study is needed to determine how such funding should be allocated.</u></p> |

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| <p><u>Administrative Support Categories</u> – Should the current positions within the administrative support category be grouped into categories and possibly streamlined or divided amongst ratio-based funding and existing funding methodologies? The intent is to maintain quality support services while increasing emphasis on instructional support services.</p> | <p>The feasibility of establishing ratios for all or some categories of support positions needs further study as does the establishment of a methodology by which support costs are funded.</p> | <p>A study of this issue could result in the establishment of a standard that would staff specific support positions in line with how instructional staffing standards are presented. The standard needs to be written in such a manner that small school divisions do not encounter compliance issues.</p> <p><u>This is an issue that needs further study.</u></p> |
| <p><u>CTE Staffing Study</u> – The Board's CTE regulations and staffing ratios need to be updated. Before this takes place, a study may be needed to examine class size ratios.</p> | <p>With the establishment of the technical diplomas in the SOQ and increased emphasis on high-tech industry certification programs, the examination of these regulations is timely. Furthermore, the proliferation of STEM academies, changes to the Perkins Act, the addition of economics and personal finance as a graduation requirement, and trends in technology further add to the justification that an independent study be undertaken.</p> | <p>A study of this issue will ensure that any changes to the staff ratios reflect the needs for school divisions and those of industry.</p> <p><u>This is an issue that needs further study.</u></p> |

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| <p><u>Alternative Staffing Approaches</u> – This issue examines the feasibility of converting each major category of the “support services” positions into ratios (for example, a certain number of positions per 1,000 students). Also, the feasibility of establishing ratios based on per-pupil weights to provide school divisions with additional instructional resources to address identified needs is an issue for further examination.</p> | <p>This analysis could include ratios for assistant principals, school counselors, and library-media specialists that would reduce funding “cliffs.” It could also include assigning weights for students who may be at-risk and require additional support, including special education services, services to English language learners, and services to disadvantaged students.</p> | <p>A study of this issue will ensure that the staffing needs related to specific student populations are examined in accordance with all school division personnel needs.</p> <p><u>This is an issue that needs further study.</u></p> |
| <p><u>Technology Standard Study</u> – The technology support standard in the SOQ (one position per 1,000 students) was first funded by the 2004 General Assembly.</p> | <p>The feasibility of updating technology staffing ratios needs to be examined, taking into consideration the increased role of technology in instruction, assessment, and operations since staffing standards were first established in the SOQ.</p> | <p>A study should take into account the technology support positions that are being funded via the administrative support funds.</p> <p>The establishment of the STEM academies, the General Assembly interest in electronic textbooks and instructional materials, and general trends in technology also need to be considered.</p> |