

Guiding Questions for the Review of the Standards of Quality (SOQ)

1. What provisions in the SOQ are needed to support the goals for public education as outlined in the Board of Education's comprehensive plan-over the next biennium?

The SOQ should be consistent with the comprehensive plan. This might be where the Board could address the needs of students and the expectations for student achievement. As the SOQ is the foundation program for public education, it would be helpful to look at both outcome data and expenditure data in this context. A review of the data by a third party, such as the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), would bring external validity to the study.

2. What are school divisions held accountable for that are not included in the SOQ?

Should school division accountability reflect increased emphasis on student achievement and narrowing the achievement gap? There is some sentiment on the Board that there should be more tools to reward school divisions that consistently demonstrate high student achievement and consequences for school divisions that persistently demonstrate low student achievement. Should programs funded outside the SOQ, such as the early reading and algebra readiness programs, be considered? Should the Board's SOQ recommendations that have not been funded, such as reading specialists and mathematics specialists, be considered in this review?

3. Are there provisions in the SOQ that are no longer relevant?

Are there provisions in the SOQ that don't relate to student achievement? If so, what is the rationale for those provisions, and do they serve another important purpose?

4. In order to provide for flexibility, what decision criteria should be used to guide the reallocation of resources? Who should determine these criteria?

What are the priorities, and to what extent does the General Assembly define those priorities? The General Assembly needs to be involved, especially as it relates to new funding or the reallocation of existing funding. What are the cost drivers? Do these resources need to be realigned?

There should be more focus on outcomes and less on how the outcomes are achieved. Providing school divisions with flexibility in meeting the desired outcomes is critical, especially in these times of budget constraints. It is also critical to look at ways to recruit and retain teachers and administrators.