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Board President Reaffirms Support for SOLs; Opposes Imposition of Common Core

Board of Education President Eleanor Saslaw released the following statement today regarding her support for the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL):

On Thursday, June 24, I will ask the Board of Education to adopt a statement expressing its continuing commitment to the Standards of Learning and opposition to making participation in federal grant and entitlement programs contingent on word-for-word adoption of the newly developed Common Core State Standards in reading and mathematics.

My colleagues on the board and I supported the development of internationally benchmarked model standards for states to adopt outright or to use as a guide to ensure that their own standards prepare students to compete nationally and globally. The latter approach makes the most sense for Virginia for the following reasons:

- The commonwealth is in the process of implementing recently revised Standards of Learning in English and mathematics that meet national benchmarks for college and career-ready content.
- The revised English and mathematics SOL and the Common Core are comparable in content and rigor. The board's established process for revising and adopting standards is ideally suited to incorporating Common Core content into the SOL where warranted.
- Virginia's entire system of instruction, support and accountability is founded on the SOL.
- The subtle differences between the SOL and the Common Core do not justify the disruption to instruction, accountability, professional development and teacher preparation that would follow word-for-word adoption of the model national standards.
- Adoption of the Common Core would leave teachers without curriculum frameworks, scope and sequence guides and other materials specifically aligned with the standards students are expected to meet. Experience shows that these supports are critical to successful standards-based reform.
- Virginia's accountability program is built on a validated assessment system aligned with the SOL; validated assessments aligned with the Common Core do not exist.
- Virginia's investment in the Standards of Learning since 1995 far exceeds the \$250 million Virginia potentially could have received by abandoning the SOL and competing in phase two of Race to the Top.

The Standards of Learning are clear, rigorous and understood and trusted by Virginia teachers. Whatever adjustments that might be needed to ensure alignment of the SOL with the Common Core can be made without disrupting instruction and accountability, and within the existing process through which the board exercises its constitutional authority to establish standards for the commonwealth's public schools.

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