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## **Board of Education to Revisit ESEA Objectives *USED Praises Virginia's Commitment to Closing Achievement Gaps***

Board of Education President David M. Foster said today that he will ask the board at its September 27 meeting to revisit annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for mathematics achievement that were set in July using a methodology approved by the US Department of Education (USED). The methodology was included in Virginia's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Request, which waived certain No Child Left Behind-era mandates, that was approved by USED on June 29.

"The timeline for reviewing Virginia's request necessitated both the Board of Education and USED approving a methodology for setting annual objectives for student subgroups before results from the rigorous new mathematics Standards of Learning (SOL) tests were available," Foster said. "Now that we know the impact of the 2011-2012 tests on the mathematics AMOs, USED, Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright, Secretary of Education Laura Fornash and I agree that the board should revisit the methodology in order to set more aggressive annual goals for raising subgroup achievement and closing achievement gaps."

In a letter today to Wright, federal Assistant Secretary of Education Deborah S. Delisle acknowledged the state's decision to revisit the AMOs and applauded Virginia's commitment to implementing college- and career-ready standards for all students and for being the first state to base its annual measurable objectives on rigorous new standards and assessments. Delisle said Foster's decision to ask the Board of Education to revisit the AMOs reflects the commonwealth's "commitment to put into place a system intended to improve the performance of all students and close achievement gaps."

"Governor McDonnell and the Board of Education are committed to high expectations for all students," Foster said. "This is evident in our decision not to back away from the commonwealth's challenging new mathematics standards. And this commitment will inform the board's review of the federal AMOs next month and the discussion that will begin shortly thereafter about strengthening the commonwealth's accreditation standards and reaching the board's goal of proficiency for all students."

The Board of Education's accreditation standards do not vary depending on the demographic characteristics of the school. The same achievement levels on SOL tests in English, mathematics, science and history/social science are required for a school to earn a rating of Fully Accredited regardless of the race or ethnicity of the children attending the school.

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