

# Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: \_\_\_\_\_ G. \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 3/19/2008 \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic:** Report on a Grant Awarded for the Development of New Alternate Assessments for Students with Disabilities Pursuing Modified Achievement Standards

**Presenter:** Mrs. Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent, Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement

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## Origin:

Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

Board review required by  
\_\_\_\_\_ State or federal law or regulation  
\_\_\_\_\_ Board of Education regulation  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Action requested at this meeting \_\_\_\_\_ Action requested at future meeting: \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

## Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action

Previous review/action  
date \_\_\_\_\_  
action \_\_\_\_\_

## Background Information:

On April 7, 2005, in a meeting attended by a number of Chief State School Officers at George Washington's Mount Vernon, United States Secretary of Education (USED) Margaret Spellings announced additional flexibility for states in the assessment of students with disabilities. In a "Dear Colleague" letter on May 10, 2005, Secretary Spellings noted that "research shows that, even after receiving the best-designed instructional interventions from highly trained instructors, a group of students with academic disabilities, comprising approximately two percent of the school-age population, is not able to achieve at grade level. They are able to make significant progress toward grade-level standards...." The letter mentioned that USED would issue a notice of proposed rulemaking in the near future that would permit states to: 1) develop modified achievement standards for a limited number students with disabilities, 2) develop alternate assessments based on those modified achievement standards, and 3) include proficient scores from the assessments in the calculation of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) subject to a 2% cap at the district and state levels.

In December 2005 USED issued a notice of Proposed Rulemaking on this topic and on April 9, 2007, USED released regulations providing guidance to states regarding the development of assessments for students with disabilities who are pursuing modified achievement standards. In July 2007 the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) announced the availability of grants for states to use in

developing assessments for students with disabilities. The Virginia Department of Education applied for a grant to investigate the development of assessments for students with disabilities pursuing modified achievement standards and on September 26, 2007 we were notified that our proposal had been funded.

**Summary of Major Elements:**

Virginia's grant proposal focuses on working with educators to identify 1) the characteristics of students for whom the assessment based on modified achievement standards would be appropriate and 2) the types of supports these students are provided in classroom instruction and assessment. The identified student characteristics will be used in developing guidance for Individualized Education Plan (IEP) teams to use in determining if students meet the criteria for this assessment. Information on supports used in the classroom will be used to modify the existing online grade 8 reading and mathematics Standards of Learning (SOL) items to make them more accessible to students identified for the alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards. Modified items will be piloted in spring and fall 2008 with a larger field test in spring 2009. It is hoped that the process for developing the alternate assessment measuring modified achievement standards will provide a prototype for the development of alternate assessments at other grade levels.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the BOE accept the report regarding the grant to develop alternate assessments for students with disabilities pursuing modified achievement standards/.

**Impact on Resources:**

N/A

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**

N/A

