

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: F.

Date: May 28, 2009

Topic: First Review of a Proposal to Eliminate Grade 3 History and Social Science from the Virginia Assessment Program

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

Telephone Number: (804) 225-2102 **E-Mail Address:** Shelley.Loving-Ryder@doe.virginia.gov

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 (date) _____
 Action requested at future meeting: _____

Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action
 Previous review/action
date _____
action _____

Background Information:

The Standards of Quality (SOQ) provide authority for the Virginia Board of Education to prescribe assessments designed to measure the level of achievement of the Standards of Learning (SOL) by all students.

The SOQ at 22.1-253.13:3. Standard 3. Accreditation, other standards and evaluation states:

...C. With such funds as are available for this purpose, the Board of Education shall prescribe assessment methods to determine the level of achievement of the Standards of Learning objectives by all students. Such assessments shall evaluate knowledge, application of knowledge, critical thinking, and skills related to the Standards of Learning being assessed. The Board shall (i) in consultation with the chairpersons of the eight regional superintendents' study groups, establish a timetable for

administering the Standards of Learning assessments to ensure genuine end-of-course and end-of-grade testing and (ii) with the assistance of independent testing experts, conduct a regular analysis and validation process for these assessments.

Summary of Major Elements:

The Board of Education is asked to remove the assessment of grade 3 students on the SOL for history/social science for grades K-3 from the Virginia Assessment Program. The last administration of the grade 3 SOL history test, the Virginia Grade Level Alternative for grade 3 history, and the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program for grade 3 history would be spring 2009.

The Superintendent's Leadership Advisory Group, which consists of the eight regional chairs and officers of the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS), and other educators have encouraged the Department of Education to look for ways to relieve educators of administrative testing burdens, especially in tested areas not required by the federal government. Reducing the number of tests in areas where there are multiple tests required can free up additional time for instruction, particularly in reading. In response to this request, the grade 3 history test has been identified for possible elimination. Because there are four additional SOL history tests that are administered at the elementary/middle school level, the removal of the grade 3 history test should not have any significant impact on the instructional focus on history at this level.

Further, the elimination of the grade 3 history test may allow school divisions additional flexibility to integrate the content of the K-3 history standards into reading instruction. In support of this literacy approach in K-3, the Department of Education will move towards enhancing the SOL reading tests by developing reading passages using topics from the Standards of Learning for history and social sciences and other SOL content areas. While the history content itself would not be tested as part of the Grade 3 reading test, some of the non-fiction passages would be based on topics from the K-3 SOL history and social sciences. For example, passages on the Grade 3 reading test might be based on the contributions of the West African country of Mali or about the accomplishments of Christopher Newport or Christopher Columbus.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education accept for first review the proposal to remove the assessment of the history and social science SOL for grades K-3 from the Virginia Assessment Program.

Impact on Resources:

No additional funds will be needed

Timetable for Further Review/Action:

The Department of Education will notify school divisions of the Board of Education's decision.