

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 Superintendent's Leadership Advisory Council, 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 and social science test was identified for possible elimination. There are four additional SOL history tests that are administered at the elementary/middle school level.

In support of a literacy approach to history and social science 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.

At its May 28, 2009, meeting the Board of Education directed department staff to bring to the June 25, 2009, meeting 1) a timeline for using topics from the K-3 history and social science content in the development of reading passages for the grade 3 reading test and 2) a proposal for ensuring that the K-3 history and social science content would be taught if the grade 3 history/social science assessments were removed from the Virginia Assessment Program.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends the Board of Education authorize, with such funds as are made available for this purpose, the Department of Education to (a) proceed with the development of Grade 3 History and Social Science Standards of Learning assessments based on the revised 2008 History and Social Science Standards of Learning and Curriculum Framework and to administer the current Grade 3 assessment until the new tests are completed, and (b) proceed with the proposed timeline to include reading passages and associated items on the Grade 3 reading tests based on K-3 history and social science content standards concurrent with the implementation of tests based on the revised English reading standards scheduled for adoption in 2010.

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.