

**Virginia Board of Education
Committee on School and Division Accountability**

Preliminary Concepts for the Comprehensive Review of the Standards of Accreditation

The following concepts were shared with the Board of Education at the July 22, 2015, Accountability Committee meeting, and based on preliminary feedback from Board members Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff will **proceed with drafting** the proposals for inclusion in the Comprehensive Review of the Standards of Accreditation (SOA):

Instruction Concept:

- Addition of an “Excellence in Science and Environment” diploma seal.

Assessment Concepts:

- Require each school/division to have a policy for dropping courses that ensures that students’ course schedules are not changed to avoid end-of-course assessments.
- Use the previous year’s Graduation Completion Index (GCI) for accreditation purposes.
- If a school has been fully accredited for three consecutive years and meets legislative and Board of Education criteria, its review and accreditation can be moved to every three years instead of annually.
- In calculating GCI, provide bonus points for schools/divisions that achieve progress in graduation and completion for key student subgroups.
- Add a “small n” to reflect a minimum number of students required for school accreditation calculations.
- Add an “appeals” option for accreditation decisions. Divisions could present their own data to support the appeal.
- Consider further differentiating the interventions provided to schools that are not fully accredited based on the number of years a school has been not fully accredited and the number of subjects in which the school is partially accredited.

Licensure Concept:

- Align the SOA with the Uniform Performance Standards for Principals.

Policy Concept:

- Addition of a specific award to motivate and recognize achievement in reduction of the dropout rate by school divisions and/or schools.

Further, VDOE staff will begin drafting the following proposals based on feedback from Board members:

- Add a notice to parents of sexually explicit instructional materials being used in the classroom.
- Add a provision to address how schools will be accredited when there is an increase in the rigor of the standards coupled with significant changes to the assessment.

The following concepts were shared with the Board of Education at the July 22, 2015, Accountability Committee meeting, and based on preliminary feedback from Board members **further discussion is needed at the October 21, 2015, Accountability Committee meeting:**

Proposal #	SOA Part/Section	Issue/ Discussion Point	Recommendation	Justification	Fiscal Impact Local and State
Instruction 1	Part 1 – Definitions 8VAC20-131-5. Definitions	At one time, most middle and high schools were on a six period schedule, so a class period was 1/6 th of the standard school day. With most of secondary schools moving to a seven or eight period day or on a block schedule, there may be more or fewer class periods on any given day, class period can no longer be described as a	Staff recommends changing the definition of “class period” so the measure references time versus class periods and using the definition of “standard day” rather than “instructional day.” Recommended definition: “Class period” means a segment of time in the standard school day that is allocated to a course of study,	Defining “class period” as a function of time versus a fraction of the schedule accommodates the seven or eight period day or block schedules that most secondary schools currently use. A definition of Standard School Day, Planning, and Class period was provided to school divisions in Superintendent’s Memo #109-13 in April 2013. The recommended definition was shared with and received feedback from the State	There is no fiscal impact with this revised definition.

Proposal #	SOA Part/Section	Issue/ Discussion Point	Recommendation	Justification	Fiscal Impact Local and State
		fraction of the “instructional day.” The Standards of Accreditation (SOA) do not define “instructional day.”	lessons, or activities. The segment of time is determined by a division’s approved class schedule configuration.	Superintendent’s Leadership Council (SSLC), VASS, and VSBA.	
Instruction 2	Part 1 – Definitions 8VAC20-131-5. Definitions	Planning period is currently defined using a fraction of a class period. At one time, most middle and high schools were on a six period schedule, so a planning period was one class period, which was 1/6 th of the standard school day. With most of secondary schools moving to a seven or eight period day or on a block schedule, there may be more or fewer class periods on any given day, class period can no longer be described as a fraction of the “instructional day.”	Staff recommends changing the definition of “planning period” so the measure references time versus class periods and using the definition of “standard day” rather than “instructional day.” Recommended definition: “Planning period” means one class period per day, or the equivalent in average minutes per class period, in a standard school day, unencumbered with any teaching assignment or supervisory duties.	Defining “planning period” as a function of time versus a fraction of the schedule accommodates the seven or eight period day or block schedules that most secondary schools currently use. Incorporating the phrase, “or the equivalent in average minutes per class period” accommodates school that have periods of multiple lengths throughout the school day or week. A definition of Standard School Day, Planning, and Class period was provided to school division in Superintendent’s Memo #109-13 in April 2013. The recommended definition was shared with and received feedback from the State	There is no fiscal impact with this revised definition.

Proposal #	SOA Part/Section	Issue/ Discussion Point	Recommendation	Justification	Fiscal Impact Local and State
		The Standards of Accreditation (SOA) do not define “instructional day.”		Superintendent’s Leadership Council (SSLC), VASS, and VSBA.	
Instruction 5	Definitions 8 VAC 20-131-5.	<p>Laboratory science is not currently defined in the SOA.</p> <p>Parents, teachers, and school and school division staff have contacted VDOE staff requesting the definition for laboratory science since the graduation requirements use the term “laboratory science.” The term is used to: (1) connect the graduation expectation to laboratory investigations; and (2) to serve as a connection to the college expectation of laboratory</p>	<p>Staff recommends the definition of “laboratory science” be included as a part of the SOA.</p> <p>The inclusion of a definition would provide a standard meaning and intent for the term that is supported by the Board-approved <i>Science Standards of Learning</i>.</p> <p>Suggested Definition:</p> <p>“Laboratory science” means those secondary science courses where students directly investigate natural phenomena as a significant part of</p>	<p>The SOA currently includes the term “laboratory science” but no definition. National reports such as the National Research Council’s <i>America’s Lab Report</i> indicate students should spend the majority of their science course time in the lab setting.</p> <p><i>The NRC report found that the laboratory science programs in high school classrooms are in disarray, and certain factors seriously hamper efforts to improve them. The NRC report committee concluded that there exists no commonly agreed upon definition of laboratories in high schools amongst researchers and educators. Without agreement on a definition of what constitutes a laboratory</i></p>	No state or local fiscal impact.

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		<p>sciences for college admission requirements.</p>	<p>instructional time (minimum of 40 percent), along with discussions, simulations, and lectures. In laboratory experiences, students learn to manipulate real materials and equipment, think systematically, and work safely by developing research questions, designing and conducting investigations, collecting and analyzing data, engaging in argumentation, and drawing conclusions.</p>	<p><i>exercise, research and the accumulation of knowledge on specific methods to improve the experience for student is undirected, difficult to classify, and difficult to draw conclusions from.</i> (p.10)</p> <p>Well-crafted laboratory experiences, in concert with other science instruction, are viewed as a promising practice to improve student interest and achievement in science. Clarity in what constitutes “laboratory science” instruction will further inform improvements in secondary schools preparing college- and career-ready graduates.</p> <p>The inclusion of the percentage of time rather than a certain number of hours allows for flexibility if school divisions choose to have courses that are fewer than 140 clock hours.</p>	

Proposal #	SOA Part/Section	Issue/ Discussion Point	Recommendation	Justification	Fiscal Impact Local and State
Assessment 5	Part IV: School Instructional Program 8VAC20-131-110.B.3	Currently regular education students who do not pass Standards of Learning tests in science or history and social science may receive locally awarded verified credits from the local school board in accordance with criteria established in guidelines adopted by the Board of Education.	Consider expanding the availability of local awarded verified credits to include mathematics and English as well as science and history/social science	Expanding the availability of locally awarded verified credits will provide additional options for students to meet graduation requirements.	Additional local funds may be needed to develop policies that address the criteria that would be used in awarding additional locally awarded verified credits.
Assessment 6	Part IV: School Instructional Program 8VAC20-131-110. D	The current criteria for expedited retakes allow students to immediately retake a test needed for verified credit if they have earned a scaled score of 375-399 or have extenuating circumstances. However, students with disabilities	Consider revising the expedited retake language to clarify that the students with disabilities who are eligible for credit accommodations will also be eligible for expedited retakes.	Revising the expedited retake criteria to address the needs of students who are eligible for credit accommodations requirements will assist students with disabilities in earning a standard diploma.	Expanding the definition would increase the number of expedited retakes and would increase the costs.

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		who are eligible for credit accommodations must achieve a scaled score of 375 to earn a verified credit under the credit accommodations policy.			
Assessment 8	Part VIII: School Accreditation 8 VAC 20-131-280 B.4. Expectations for school accountability	Schools that have no tested grades are paired with another school that does and carry the same accreditation rating.	A school that is “paired” for accreditation purposes, and has no tested grades, may be unpaired and accredited based on an alternative accreditation plan approved by the Board.	The revision would provide another accreditation option for schools that have no tested grades.	N/A

The following concepts will be discussed as part of the larger conversation related to the Comprehensive Review of the Standards of Accreditation (SOA):

Assessment Concepts:

- Defining college readiness
- Changing the number of verified credits
- Adding credit accommodations for English Language Learners
- Requiring schools not fully accredited to conduct a self-study the first year of not being fully accredited

Special Education Concept:

- Establishing through guidelines accredit accommodations for students with disabilities to the standard and verified credit requirements

Policy Concept:

- Considering additional ways to increase flexibility for school divisions by looking at High School Program Innovation grantees
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The following proposals have been removed from consideration at this point:

Instruction Concepts:

- Using “world language” in place of “foreign language”
- Changing the number of science discipline areas for the Standard Diploma from two (2) to three (3).