Board of Education April 2015 Retreat Summary

This paper is a summary of comments made by Board of Education members during a section-by-section review of staff recommendations for amendments to the Standards of Accreditation, including points and issues raised. The review of the SOA with subsequent discussion was the focus of the April 2015 Board retreat. This paper presents opinions and questions, not consensus.

<u>**Part I Definitions and Purpose**</u>

Consensus: Revise the definition of "class period" to remove the reference to one sixth of the instructional day to allow flexibility and **add a definition of instructional day** that allows some flexibility.
Do not use the term "instructional day" in the definition of a planning period in order to provide flexibility –but still protect teacher planning time. One approach would be to use a year-long average.

Should a definition of laboratory science be added?
"Laboratory Science" means those secondary biological and physical science courses where students directly investigate phenomena as a significant part of instruction. In a variety of settings, students learn to manipulate real materials, think systematically, and work safely by developing research questions, designing and conducting experiments, analyzing data, engaging in argumentation, and drawing conclusions. Investigations must be at least forty (40) percent of instruction.

Under "Standard unit of credit"—consider how to transition from 140 clock hours of instruction to a competency-based standard, available across all subjects.
Which courses would be appropriate for waiver of the 140 clock hours and lend themselves to a Board-approved proficiency measure? What types of outcomes would indicate successful completion? Could there be a blended approach, with hours required for designated content areas like lab sciences? Should there be a release of the 140 clock hours under certain criteria which would indicate readiness of a school system to have outcome measures in place? See Part IV.

Should the purpose be amended to add the objectives of recognizing progress in academic achievement, acknowledgement of factors affecting school quality, and expectations for staff?
Consideration: The purpose could be amended to reflect the overall philosophy of recognizing continuous improvement in student achievement and to add specific purposes, for example, "Promote equality in access to education."

<u>**Part II—Philosophy, Goals, and Objectives**</u>
    None

Part III Student Achievement

Should end-of-course assessments be the only means of measuring student understanding and achievement?
Consideration: Could student competencies replace tests, or be used as an alternative to tests, as long as quality in the measurement of student knowledge is maintained?
Consideration: Testing for each individual academic course does not necessarily cover other aspects of college and career, and workforce readiness.
Consideration: There does not have to be a forced choice between end-of-course assessments and other options.

What is the appropriate number of end-of course tests—for which subjects?
Consideration: Should some end-of-courses be eliminated? Is a student-selected test necessary? What are the specific purposes of the tests—and could those purposes be achieved other ways? How are assessments being used now? What is being measured and to what end?

Should all end-of course tests be replaced with one comprehensive examination? What other tests are available that might be used to define college readiness and career readiness?
Is there a test available which is fair, valid, and reliable, aligned with the SOL, and which would measure successful completion of secondary school, including college and career readiness, that K-12 and higher education could accept?
More information needed: Information is needed about the purposes of such tests as the VPT in terms of identification of areas/standards/content of alignment; use for decisions making; administration.
How valid is the community college test, and for preparation for two or four years? What is the scope of the test? Is it Virginia–based only?
What is a standard measure of student knowledge that evokes quality and confidence in earned diplomas?

Completion of basic preparation is different from meeting expectations of community colleges and four year institutions—which can diverge. Community college assessment may have different purposes/expectations from four year school preparation assessment. What are the fundamental preparation requirements for two year and for four year colleges?

If some tests are eliminated, then the basis for and impact on the current accreditation system needs to be considered. School divisions may not rely on SOA assessments as much as the state for measuring student achievement; however, they are important and need to be taken seriously for accreditation purposes.

Area for additional information: What do other states use and how? See ECS and ACT research.

What are the alternatives to end-of course assessments?
A student selected competency-based project addressing real world problem-solving and application of concepts could be an alternative for the student selected test.
A "real world" experience in learning could be part of the formal graduation requirements. As an alternative, real world applied learning experiences could be referenced in the SOA guidance document.

Consideration: Issues associated with "real-world" problem-solving projects to demonstrate mastery include:
How can this be implemented? Are there unintended consequences?
What is the local capacity to provide for this? Professional development would be needed before implementation.
There are logistical issues to implementation at high school—for example, standard definition and consistency across courses; scheduling.
The applied "real-world" project could take the place of something else, for example, an exam.
The project could be offered as an option, student choice.

Considerations: This real world application should not be seen as a replacement but possibly as a Senior Project.
If required during the Senior year, it could be seen as an obstacle to transfer students, especially English Language Learners.

Possible Approach: Collect data about applied real world problem solving projects from schools to include in the Report Card as a first step. Providing the opportunity for the learning experience and demonstration of knowledge could be used as an incentive for accreditation and ultimately as an aspect of student achievement.

Should the science courses for the Standard Diploma be distributed across three different science disciplines?
Consideration: This would ensure a rigorous set of science courses.
Consideration: This could be too inflexible for an interpretation of what constitutes "science."

Consideration: A broad look at science could be considered, rather than a more concentrated study of one area. Possible approaches include integration of concepts from separate science areas. Blended courses can affect the way science is taught and how students learn it. Studying a broad spectrum of sciences, including principles of science as they apply to knowledge for responsible citizenship, is appropriate for 21st century learning. A multidisciplinary approach could be taken.

Precautions: If math pre-requisites were in place for multidisciplinary courses, make sure that some science courses do not become unavailable to students who will not take an Algebra II or above courses.
Consider the availability of teachers in specific science disciplines before changing the Standard Diploma requirement from two to three science disciplines.

Should a BOE Diploma Seal for Excellence be added for Science?
Consideration: In the future, consider replacing separate subject and add-on seals with an integrated representative designation, designed to show all areas of accomplishment for seals, such as biliteracy, Board of Education recognition, and so forth. Specific criteria could be included in the SOA guidelines.

Part IV School Instructional Program

Overall Section Comment: Keep the SOA at a policy area. Technical areas, such as expunging records, can be referred to the SOA guidance document.

How should the waiver of the 140 hours a standard unit of credit be implemented?
Legislative requirement: Within the 2015 legislation, the waiver of 140 clock hours by school divisions is contingent upon providing the Board with satisfactory proof, based on Board guidelines, that students receiving the waiver have learned the content and skills. The level of information to be brought before the BOE for approval for local waivers has to be determined. Establishing the criteria for measuring this proof could also support identification of competencies as an alternative to testing.

Approach: The 140 clock hours could be required for some courses, such as laboratory sciences, but not for others. One approach is not to waive the 140 clock hours until competency-based measures are available for credit bearing courses. Waivers could be provided for courses without SOL tests.
There could be a phased in approach that allows for waiver of the 140 clock hours when specified criteria are met.

Area for additional information: If "competency-based" tests are to be used to establish student mastery of content, what tests are available beyond CTE?

Consideration: To have an integrated section, should Part IV of the SOA, which deals with the school instructional program, clock hours, and standard and verified credits, be revised from scratch?

Observation: A student currently cannot finish a Virtual VA course without sitting for 140 hours. This could delay student completion and achievement, if the student's pace could be faster.

 Part V School and Instructional Leadership

What are the essential responsibilities of the principal that should be noted in the SOA?
The SOA should reflect bests practice principles. Potential areas to specify include: Mentorship; evaluation of teachers, and ensuring professional development; understanding and leadership in data evaluation.

Note: External criteria can be informative in the development of a SOA listing of duties and expectations. For example, the most recent issue of NASSP's "Breakthrough Schools" publication features principals creating positive school culture, personalized learning, professional development, shared leadership, and accessible relevant instruction for all students in a supportive environment. ISLLC Standards include : (1) Setting a widely shared vision for learning; (2) Developing a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth; (3) Ensuring effective management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment; (4) Collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources; (5) Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner; and (6) Understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, legal, and cultural contexts.

The BOE can encourage a minimum number of hours for professional development for educational staff through aspirational language without creating a unfunded mandate. Should the SOA also provide protections of team planning time?

SOA language could include rewards and expectations for teachers to remain in the classroom and mentor others, assuming leadership roles.

Should staffing levels for positions in the SOQ be reflected in the SOA?
Consideration: The Code provides the standards for staffing levels and could be referenced in the SOA.

Part VI, School Facilities and Safety
>   None

Part VII School and Community Communications

Which data elements should be reported in the School Performance Report Card, and which as part of, or with, the Accreditation Ratings?
Consideration: The report card should be broader than academic performance. Design ways to capture other elements, for example, parent engagement. A dashboard approach is one way to present information. As consideration of indicators for accreditation moves forward, potential data for use in accreditation could first be reported on the School Performance Report Card. For example, indicators could include data from the *Discipline Crime, and Violence Report* and selected items of the UVA School Safety Audit. Progress in student passing rates should be provided with an accreditation rating.

Consideration of the approach to redesign the report card: Begin with examples from other state reports that are models, and determine what data on what topics would be a priority. Determine the data VDOE has readily available and what would have to be collected to provide

information on a list of topics blended from these state samples. (Illinois has been mentioned as a model.)

Consideration: Identify the data categories that can measure "excellence." What is important for the education community to know, and for parents to know? The categories can be presented, with the metrics that measure them. Mentioned categories include: expenditures above the SOQ funded share; gap analyses; and local investment in education. The report card could reflect measures of the goals in the Board of Education's *Annual Report on Conditions in Schools*.

What do parents and various audiences expect to be shown in the report card? How will public comment be solicited and when? How can we build on the comments collected in 2013 collected through focus groups?
Consideration: Hold multiple stakeholder group discussions to be more interactive than formal public hearings. Further determine the methods and timelines for soliciting public comment in order to meet legislative deadlines.

What notification to parents of what types of instructional materials should be required in the SOA?
Notice to parents language in SOA: The term "sensitive" should be removed from the section of the SOA dealing with school division noticing of parents about materials used in instruction. Collect more information about other areas that perhaps should be added, for example "violence."

Consideration: All of this section should be removed. It is not within the purview of the SOA.

Part VIII, School Accreditation

Should accreditation categories be multiple and tiered—beginning with academic achievement as a basic expectation?
Consideration: If academic achievement were the first tier of accreditation, further bases for school accreditation could be added from multiple measures. Performance on the measures could provide credit towards accreditation in various ways. Possible measures could include progress in closing achievement gaps; student growth as measured by progress tables at individual, subgroup, school, and division levels; school climate and culture indicators; parental engagement survey results; extracurricular activities student opportunities; reduction of short term suspensions and office referrals; and increased awards of standard and advanced diplomas to special education students.

Should progress for individual academic content areas and for specific student groups be acknowledged through the accreditation designations of schools?
Consideration: A rating designation could provide for full accreditation in some areas but making progress in others. Another alternative is to have separate rating designations by content area, separate such as full accreditation in mathematics and "making progress" in

English. At a minimum, this information should be provided for each content area with an accreditation rating.

Could there be multiple time periods for accreditation designation, associated with improvement or the reaching of objectives in designated areas?

Consideration: Accreditation could be provided in some areas, and then areas of improvement designated that must be brought to a standard within a specified time period.

According to Code, the BOE may accredit for three years under specific criteria.   If a school has been awarded a multi-year accreditation, for example for three years, a waiver could be granted to allow focus on targeted progress in areas that fall beneath full accreditation over that time period.

Should the SOA be written to specify technical assistance to schools BEFORE accreditation in warning status?

New accreditation designations for progress and student growth, as required by 2015 legislation, could be referenced with designated actions as a result of the ratings, and the associated technical assistance to be received to reach full accreditation.

Consideration: When the SOA is being changed, and during the review process, could there be designated time periods, when applicable, when application of new rates or criteria to a rating is provided? A mechanism for transition to new approaches is needed to allow time for schools to adapt.