



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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FROM: State Superintendent Jillian Balow
TO: Virginia State Board of Education President Gecker and Members
DATE: October 17, 2022
RE: Superintendent's Update

1) Presentation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) released national results from the 2022 Nation's Report Card, or NAEP, in September. Average scores have declined precipitously since the 2019 NAEP administration. The largest declines were among lower-performing students. NAEP is a national benchmark that has been researched and validated as a measure with proficiency levels that represent what students should know and be able to do. Policymakers, educators, the assessment community, and the media use NAEP policy and practice. The value and usefulness of the NAEP has been downplayed in Virginia. At this month's board meeting, we have asked Mark Schneider, Director of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), to present information about NAEP to the Board in advance of the October 24 release of statewide NAEP data. Director Schneider was confirmed by the U.S. Senate in 2018 to serve a six-year term. Prior to this post, Director Schneider served as a vice president and institute fellow at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and College Measures. From 2005 to 2008, he was the commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Mark will provide an overview of the history and significance of NAEP as a tool to provide trusted snapshot of academic performance across the country every two years. This Board has an opportunity to elevate NAEP as a common sense, meaningful measure for all of Virginia.

2) Annual Report to the General Assembly

This month the Board will receive and discuss its *Annual Report on the Condition and Needs of Public Schools in Virginia*. The report included in the board book is a DRAFT for your consideration and editing. VDOE staff attempted to encapsulate priorities identified and actions taken by the Board previous to July 2022. Indeed, the Board with five new members may wish to make substantial edits to board priorities and this report.

3) Update on History and Social Science Standards

At the September Board meeting, staff provided an update on the anticipated timeline for revision of the History/Social Science Standards. As previously discussed, Department staff anticipated conducting Community Engagement Sessions throughout

October and November and then presenting the draft standards for first review at the November 2022 Board meeting.

Since the September Board meeting, new board members have raised important concerns and questions about the draft standards. Additionally, we sought reviews by individuals and entities, whose voices had not yet been heard. Meanwhile, VDOE staff has worked diligently, to correct errors, remove repetition, reorder guidance, and edit language so that parents, educators, and students can understand and use the standards document. This work is paramount, and we must not settle on a standards product that falls short of our best because of strict adherence to a timeline. To address the questions and concerns that have been raised, I have asked staff to make adjustments to the process presented to the Board in September. Under my direction, staff will conduct community engagement sessions and public comment meetings when the product is coherent and ripe for public feedback. The intended date for these meetings is in December and January. We will present more comprehensive curriculum frameworks several months after the standards document.

Our immediate goal is to present a draft standards document to the Board that is:

- Understandable and accessible for experts, educators, and the public
- Succinct and concise
- Error-free
- Neutral in content and approach
- Balanced with content, facts, and inquiry opportunities for students
- Inclusive of more voices
- Rigorous and scalable to an assessment that ensures our students demonstrate a foundational understanding of social studies
- Ordered in grade-level progression
- Devoid of content gaps

It remains our shared objective to have best-in-class standards that teach students that America is simultaneously diverse and united, that we continuously endeavor to become the greatest country in the world, and that our freedoms are both protected and fragile. Simply, our standards will be representative of many voices in Virginia across multiple years.

Here is the revised and intended plan:

October-November 2022

- Seek additional input, incorporate changes, make edits to the standards document
- Focus on a correct, concise, understandable standards document

November 17, 2022

- First review of standards document

November 28 - December 16, 2022

- Community engagement Sessions
- Continue working on curriculum frameworks

January 9-13, 2023

- State Board public hearings
- Continue working on curriculum frameworks

January-February 2023

- Final standards content review
- Review public comments
- Incorporate changes into standards document

February 2023

- Review and adoption by the State Board

March to August

- Finalize curriculum frameworks for school divisions

I look forward to continuing - we will work swiftly, thoroughly, and thoughtfully. It remains my honor to lead Virginia education alongside this Board. Thank you for your work and service.