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| **Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item** | **Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia** |

# Agenda Item: J

## Date: June 17, 2021

### Title: First Review of Proposed *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments: 2021-2022 and Beyond*

#### Presenter: Mrs. Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent for Student Assessment, Accountability, and ESEA Programs

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## Purpose of Presentation:

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

**Executive Summary:**   
The proposed *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments: 2021-2022 and Beyond* replace the *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2018-2019 through 2019-2020* and provide guidance for local alternative assessments required in Grade 3 History, Grade 3 Science, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History: 1865 to the Present*.* The updated guidelines extend the expectation that school divisions continue to progress toward implementation of performance assessments as part of a balanced assessment system and continue to emphasize the use of the *Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments.*

These guidelines will assist the Board of Education in meeting Priority 1 of the Virginia Board of Education Comprehensive Plan: 2018-2023, which is to “provide high-quality, effective learning environments for all students,” and align with Priority 3, to “ensure successful implementation of the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate* and the accountability system for school quality as embodied in the revisions to the *Standards of Accreditation*.”

While previous guidelines encouraged the use of draft common rubrics developed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the updated guidelines require the use of the finalized common rubrics in order to provide consistent achievement expectations for all Virginia students. Feedback received from Virginia educators using the draft common rubrics to score student responses to formative performance tasks and summative performance assessments was considered by VDOE, with input on final decisions from teachers having experience and expertise in the specific content area, as part of the vetting process. External partners representing the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE) provided feedback for consideration before each draft common rubric was finalized.

## Action Requested:

Other. Specify below:

The Board is requested to waive first review and approve the proposed *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments: 2021-2022 and Beyond.*

## Superintendent’s Recommendation: The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education waive first review and approve the proposed *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments: 2021-2022 and Beyond.*

## Previous Review or Action:

Previous review and actions. Specify date and action taken below:

**Date:** January 24, 2019

**Action:** Board of Education approved *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2018-2019 through 2019-2020.*

**Background Information and Statutory Authority:**  
The 2014 Acts of Assembly eliminated the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments in Grade 3 Science, Grade 3 History, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History: 1865 to the Present. The legislation requires school divisions to administer alternative assessments, consistent with Board guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each subject area in which SOL assessments were eliminated by this legislation. The *Code* now states:

“Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia that §22.1-253.13:3 of the Code of Virginia is amended as follows: “Each school board shall annually certify that it has provided instruction and administered an alternative assessment, consistent with Board guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each Standards of Learning subject area in which a Standards of Learning assessment was not administered during the school year. Such guidelines shall (1) incorporate options for age-appropriate, authentic performance assessments and portfolios with rubrics and other methodologies designed to ensure that students are making adequate academic progress in the subject area and that the Standards of Learning content is being taught; (2) permit and encourage integrated assessments that include multiple subject areas; and (3) emphasize collaboration between teachers to administer and substantiate the assessments and the professional development of teachers to enable them to make the best use of alternative assessments.”

On September 18, 2014, the Board approved *Local Alternative Assessment Guidelines Developed in Response to 2014 Acts of Assembly.* As the legislation instituted an immediate deadline to implement the local alternative assessments, the guidelines for the 2014-2015 academic year provided school divisions with considerable flexibility.

In the years following the approval of these initial guidelines, the Virginia Department of Education has provided support for the development and implementation of local performance assessments to school divisions. During the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years, grants supporting professional development were provided to each of the eight Superintendent’s Regions. During the 2015-2016 school year, school division representatives partnered with The College of William and Mary to develop the “Framework for Local Alternative Assessment Implementation,” a tool to assist school divisions in evaluating their progress in moving toward the use of performance assessments.

The Board approved the *Local Alternative Assessment Guidelines for 2016-2017 through 2018-2019* on October 27, 2016, to clarify the expectation that school divisions were to demonstrate progress in moving toward the use of performance assessments in the courses for which the SOL tests were eliminated in 2014. School divisions used the “Framework for Local Alternative Assessment Implementation” during the 2016-2017 school year to self-assess progress in implementing performance assessments and reported their status on the continuum to VDOE.

During the 2017-2018 academic year, VDOE provided the [*Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments*](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/performance-based/quality-criteria-tool.docx) to assist school divisions in determining the quality of existing performance assessments and in developing performance assessments that measure subject-matter proficiency, require students to apply academic content and skills included in the SOL, and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate one or more of the “Five C’s”: critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and citizenship. VDOE and the Virginia Association of School Superintendents co-sponsored a workshop in March 2018 to foster a deeper understanding of the development and use of performance assessments. In May and June of the same year, VDOE held four regional two-day events focused on the *Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments* and the use of draft state-developed rubrics for scoring. These regional events were funded by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and supported by Jobs for the Future and Envision Learning, formerly the Stanford Center for Assessment, Language and Equity (SCALE). SOL Institutes and Deeper Learning Conferences offered for history and social science, English language arts, and science since 2018 have each included sessions related to performance assessments and have provided content-specific models for using the *Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments.*

The Board approved the *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2018-2019 through 2019-2020* on January 24, 2019, setting the expectation that school divisions continue to make progress in the implementation of performance assessments as part of a balanced assessment system in courses where SOL tests have been replaced with local assessments. These guidelines emphasized the use of the *Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments* as a means to promote access to high-quality performance assessments for all students. Additionally, the guidelines promoted the use of the common rubrics developed by VDOE to provide consistent achievement expectations for all students in the Commonwealth. As well, these guidelines directed school divisions to develop Balanced Assessment Plans for the courses in which local alternative assessments are administered, beginning with the 2019-2020 school year. To support school divisions’ planning and development of their initial Balanced Assessment Plans, VDOE staff from the Department of Learning and the Office of Student Assessment conducted four regional events in May and June of 2019, focused on a balanced approach to assessment designed to support and inform instruction and using a process that can be applied across content areas. Department staff introduced the [Assessment Inventory Tool](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/professional-development/2019/assessment-inventory-tool.docx) not only as a means of generating a comprehensive picture of assessments being administered to students but also as a means of encouraging school division teams to consider the usefulness of the information provided by each assessment in light of the instructional time required for its administration. Additional follow-up webinars were offered to all school divisions in August and October 2019, designed to address questions, provide additional supports, and identify additional needs related to Balanced Assessment Plans. VDOE staff conducted desk reviews during late 2019 and early 2020 to determine additional needs, identify examples to share with other school divisions, and to inform professional development decisions. Support for the development and revision of performance assessments and Balanced Assessment Plans within each discipline is ongoing and supported by staff from both the Department of Learning and the Office of Student Assessment.

In spring 2020, VDOE staff from the Department of Learning and the Office of Student Assessment collaborated to share continued expectations and recommendations for Balanced Assessment Plans moving forward. These webinars highlighted best practices VDOE identified during Balanced Assessment Plan desk reviews and provided examples from local school divisions for consideration. In light of the pandemic, the extended school closures, and the uncertainty school divisions faced for the coming 2020-2021 school year, the *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020* were not updated, and school divisions were notified that these expired guidelines should continue to guide their work during the 2020-2021 school year. In October 2020, VDOE staff collaborated to provide via webinar information about Balanced Assessment Plans and the requirements for local alternative assessments as related to the ongoing pandemic. While the expectation was that performance assessments be included as part of the local alternative assessments administered in 2020-2021, considerations for flexibility in the procedures for administration were shared to ensure that all students had the opportunity to demonstrate their learning through a variety of local assessments, regardless of the setting (i.e., virtual, in-person, or a combination).

The proposed *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments: 2021-2022 and Beyond* replace the *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2018-2019 through 2019-2020* and provide guidance for local alternative assessments required in Grade 3 History, Grade 3 Science, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History: 1865 to the Present*.* The updated guidelines extend the expectation that school divisions continue to progress toward implementation of performance assessments as part of a balanced assessment system and continue to emphasize the use of the *Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments.*

While previous guidelines encouraged the use of draft common rubrics developed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the updated guidelines require the use of the finalized common rubrics in order to provide consistent achievement expectations for all Virginia students. Feedback received from Virginia educators using the draft common rubrics to score student responses to formative performance tasks and summative performance assessments was considered by VDOE, with input on final decisions from teachers having experience and expertise in the specific content area, as part of the vetting process. External partners representing the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity (SCALE) provided feedback for consideration before each draft common rubric was finalized.

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**  
Following Board approval, the Guidelines will be posted in Town Hall for a 30-day public comment period pursuant to the Administrative Process Act, communicated to local school divisions and posted on the VDOE website.

## Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

Any costs associated with the implementation of the guidelines to VDOE will be covered by existing funds. The cost to school divisions is indeterminate.

# Attachment A

## Proposed *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments: 2021-2022 and Beyond*

## Purpose of the Guidelines

The *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments*: *2021-2022 and Beyond* replaces the *Guidelines for* *Local Alternative Assessments for 2018-2019 through 2019-2020.* The revisions to these guidelines are minimal, extending the expectation that divisions continue to progress toward implementation of performance assessments as part of a balanced assessment system in non-verified credit courses where the Standards of Learning tests were replaced with local alternative assessments by the General Assembly in 2014. The updated guidelines continue to emphasize the use of the *Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments* and require the use of common rubrics developed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to provide consistent achievement expectations for Virginia students.

Legislation in the 2014 General Assembly amended § 22.1-253.13:3.C of the Code of Virginia to eliminate the following state-developed Standards of Learning (SOL) tests and replace them with locally developed alternative assessments:

* Grade 3 History,
* Grade 3 Science,
* Grade 5 Writing,
* United States History to 1865, and
* United States History: 1865 to the Present.

In addition to replacing these SOL tests, the legislation also required each local school board to annually certify that it had provided instruction and administered an alternative assessment, consistent with Virginia Board of Education guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each SOL subject area in which the SOL assessment was eliminated. Specifically, the Code now states:

*Each school board shall annually certify that it has provided instruction and administered an alternative assessment, consistent with Board guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each Standards of Learning subject area in which a Standards of Learning assessment was not administered during the school year. Such guidelines shall (1) incorporate options for age-appropriate, authentic performance assessments and portfolios with rubrics and other methodologies designed to ensure that students are making adequate academic progress in the subject area and that the Standards of Learning content is being taught; (2) permit and encourage integrated assessments that include multiple subject areas; and (3) emphasize collaboration between teachers to administer and substantiate the assessments and the professional development of teachers to enable them to make the best use of alternative assessments.*

## Certification That Content Has Been Taught and Assessments Administered

Local school boards and division superintendents will continue to certify through the annual Standards of Quality (SOQ) compliance assurance that instruction has been provided and local alternative assessments measuring the Standards of Learning (SOL) and adhering to the Board’s guidelines administered in the following subject areas:

* Grade 3 History,
* Grade 3 Science,
* Grade 5 Writing,
* United States History to 1865, and
* United States History: 1865 to the Present.

## Definition of Authentic Performance Assessments

Performance assessments generally require students to perform a task or create a product that is typically scored using a rubric. Authentic performance assessments often include tasks that mirror those that might occur in a “real-life” situation and/or are authentic to the academic discipline. It is up to the local school division to determine whether a performance task is authentic.

## Implementation of Performance Assessments

School divisions are required to implement performance assessments in Grade 3 Science, Grade 3 History, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History: 1865 to the Present. Continued use of the [*Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments*](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/performance-based/quality-criteria-tool.docx) during the development of new performance assessments and/or the revision of existing tasks is expected in order to ensure that all students have access to quality assessments aligned to the Standards of Learning. School divisions will continue to refine local alternative assessment plans that describe how performance assessments that are designed to inform instruction are being implemented.

### Expectations for the 2021-2022 School Year and Beyond

School divisions are required to continue to develop Balanced Assessment Plans for each course in which local alternative assessments are administered and to continue to utilize resources provided by VDOE that promote consistency across the Commonwealth. Balanced Assessment Plans for Grade 3 History, Grade 3 Science, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History: 1865 to the Present will continue to more fully detail the various types of local alternative assessments used to measure the skills and content included in the Standards of Learning for each course. These plans are to indicate a variety of assessment types, including performance assessments.

The development and selection of the local assessments that comprise the Balanced Assessment Plans are left to the discretion of the school division; however, assessments administered should be designed to provide feedback to students, parents, and teachers regarding the extent to which the student has demonstrated mastery in the content and skills included in the SOL covered and should demonstrate continued progress in implementing performance assessments as part of a balanced local assessment system.

Local school divisions may choose to administer the same assessments for particular grade levels and content areas to all students in the division or may provide schools with flexibility in selecting the assessments to be administered.

School divisions are to use the common rubrics provided by VDOE when scoring student responses to performance assessments and performance tasks in classrooms where an SOL assessment has been replaced by local alternative assessments. Additionally, school divisions are expected to continue to provide opportunities for cross-scoring student responses to performance assessments within schools and across schools within the school division. Professional learning opportunities related to scoring and the application of the common rubrics will be provided by VDOE in order to maximize the opportunity for classroom teachers to participate in these events.

## Use of Integrated Assessments

The legislation encourages integrated assessments that include multiple subject areas. For example, a local assessment might address content from both grade 3 history and grade 3 science. If such assessments are used, the results should include information about the extent to which the student has demonstrated proficiency in each specific set of SOL covered.

## Professional Development

The capacity of teachers to design and implement assessments that are intended to inform instruction varies across the Commonwealth. School divisions are encouraged to evaluate the capacity and experience of their teachers in implementing and interpreting the results of such assessments and further encouraged to use this information when designing professional development. Professional development that promotes the collaboration of teachers within and across grades is strongly recommended. School divisions are encouraged to incorporate the resources and materials shared on the Performance Assessments and Local Alternative Assessments web page into local professional development. Additionally, divisions are encouraged to share locally-developed resources for local alternative assessments and performance assessments through #GoOpenVA.

# Reporting to Students, Parents, and Families

School divisions are expected to provide to the student and parents or guardians information regarding the outcome of each local alternative assessment administered. The format for this reporting is to be determined by the local school division. When reporting scores on performance assessments or performance tasks, it is best practice not only to report the score but also to provide a copy of the rubric, a description of the performance assessment/task, and the student’s response. School divisions are expected to report scores or grades but are not expected to report achievement levels associated with the scores achieved on Standards of Learning tests (e.g., Pass/Advanced, Pass/Proficient, Fail/Does Not Meet, etc.).

## Documentation and Reporting to the Virginia Department of Education

VDOE staff will conduct annual site visits or “desk reviews” in a sample of school divisions. As a part of these “desk reviews,” documents will be examined and school division staff interviewed either by webinar or by telephone. The purpose of these reviews will be to determine how local school divisions are verifying that the content is being taught, to determine the types of alternative assessments that are being administered, to identify exemplars of performance assessments that may be shared with other school divisions, and to assist teachers, schools, and school divisions in strengthening their own alternative performance assessments. The reviews will help Department staff to identify “best practices” for sharing with other Virginia school divisions.

Balanced Assessment Plans will continue to be included in the desk review process. Materials retained at the division for possible review should include:

1. Balanced Assessment Plan for each of the five replaced SOL assessments;
2. Copies of assessments administered, including performance tasks;
3. Division-specific material used to train teachers; and
4. Samples of student responses representing each of the various score points of the rubric.

School divisions are to retain these documents for one year after the end of the academic year, as outlined in the [Records Retention and Disposition Schedule, General Schedule No.GS-21](http://www.lva.virginia.gov/agencies/records/sched_local/GS-21.pdf) (Series 000236, 000240). The VDOE will not require the retention of individual student work beyond the student work samples that demonstrate division scoring.

## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

School divisions should be aware of the following requirement found in Section 300.160 c (1) of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*:

A State (or, in the case of a district-wide assessment, an LEA) must develop and implement alternate assessments and guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in regular assessments, even with accommodations, as indicated in their respective IEPs, as provided in paragraph (a) of this section.

If school divisions choose to meet the local alternative assessment requirements through the use of division wide assessments, an alternate assessment for students with disabilities who cannot participate in regular division assessments must be provided.

## Use of Local Assessments in State Accreditation or Federal Accountability

# The results of the local alternative assessments will not be used to designate state accreditation or federal accountability status.

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