



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

November 11, 2016

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: *New Local Alternative Assessment Guidelines*

On October 27, 2016, the Virginia Board of Education adopted *Local Alternative Assessment Guidelines for 2016-2017 through 2018-2019* to provide guidance to school division staff as they implement local alternative assessments for Grade 3 Science, Grade 3 History, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History: 1865 to the Present. As a reminder, legislation passed by the 2014 Virginia General Assembly eliminated the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments in the content areas listed above. The legislation also required school divisions to administer alternative assessments, consistent with Virginia Board of Education guidelines, to students in each subject area in which SOL assessments were eliminated.

The new local alternative assessment guidelines, found in Attachment A, replace the *Local Alternative Assessment Guidelines for 2014-2015* originally adopted by the Board in September 2014. The new guidelines clarify the expectation that school divisions are to demonstrate progress in moving toward the use of performance assessments in their schools. School divisions are expected to use the *Framework for Local Alternative Assessment Implementation* included in the new guidelines to assess their progress in implementing performance assessments and to report their status on the continuum to the Department of Education. A survey to collect each school division's status on the framework continuum as well as more detailed information about the division's plans for implementing performance assessments will be forthcoming. Department staff will use the results to plan professional development and support to school divisions.

Regarding an implementation timeline, the guidelines state that, for the 2016-2017 school year, school divisions will be expected to use at least one performance assessment in classrooms where Grade 3 Science, Grade 3 History, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History from 1865 to the Present are taught. In 2017-2018 school divisions will be expected to share examples of performance assessments across divisions and by 2018-2019 school divisions should be prepared to partner with other divisions to score some of the assessments from each other's schools. While this is the expected timeline, school divisions that are not ready for this implementation schedule will be provided with additional support.

If you have questions about the new local alternative assessment guidelines, please contact the student assessment staff by email at student_assessment@doe.virginia.gov or by phone at (804) 225-2102 or instruction@doe.virginia.gov or by phone at (804) 225-2034.

SRS/SLR/cb

Attachments:

A. [*Local Alternative Assessment Guidelines for 2016-2017 through 2018-2019*](#) (PDF)

