



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
Department of Education

May 1, 2015

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: Local Alternative Assessment Plan Reviews**

As stated in [Superintendent's Memorandum No. 278](#), dated October 10, 2014, the 2014 General Assembly amended [§ 22.1-253.13:3.C](#) of the *Code of Virginia* to eliminate the following Standards of Learning (SOL) tests:

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

In September 2014, the Virginia Board of Education approved guidelines for local alternative assessments. These guidelines provided additional information on expectations for inclusion of the SOL in alternative assessments and for all division superintendents to certify through the annual Standards of Quality (SOQ) that local alternative assessments measuring the SOL had been administered based on the guidelines.

For the 2014-2015 school year, school divisions were asked to retain:

1) documentation that demonstrates the administered alternative assessments address each strand included in the SOL for the grade and subject, 2) copies of the assessments, and 3) any ancillary materials such as rubrics or sample student responses used to train teachers. Each school division was also asked to retain these documents at the school division central office or at individual schools; however, school divisions were not required to retain each individual student assessment.

The alternative assessments guidelines also stipulated that during the 2014-2015 school year, the Virginia Department of Education would conduct either site visits or desk reviews with some school divisions. The purpose of these reviews is to gather information about how school divisions are verifying that the content addressed by the eliminated SOL tests has been taught, to ascertain the types of alternative assessments being administered, and identify exemplars of alternative assessments that may be shared with other school divisions.

By May 15, 2015, the Department of Education will begin notifying school divisions that are selected to participate in the reviews. School divisions should maintain copies of their alternative assessment materials and submissions until June 5, 2015, when all school divisions participating in a review will have been notified. The school divisions selected will receive more specific guidelines regarding which materials to prepare for the review through an e-mail notification to the division director of testing (DDOT).

In addition, in summer 2015, Department of Education staff will collect information from school divisions about the costs associated with the implementation of the local assessment guidelines. As a reminder, the guidelines encouraged school divisions “to maintain records of the costs associated with 1) the development and implementation of the local alternative assessments and 2) the professional development provided to educators to assist them in implementing this requirement. Information regarding costs will be collected by the Department of Education staff and shared with the Virginia Board of Education and the General Assembly.” More information about the procedures that will be used to collect cost estimates will be provided to school divisions at a later date.

Questions about the reviews of the locally developed assessments or about the collection of cost estimates should be directed to the student assessment staff at [student\\_assessment@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:student_assessment@doe.virginia.gov) or by phone at (804) 225-2102.

SRS/SLR/aw