



2015 Report Executive Summary Standards of Learning Innovation Committee Office of the Secretary of Education

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Committee's Vision Statement

The Standards of Learning Innovation Committee is guided by a commitment to inspire, engage, and personalize learning for every student in the Commonwealth. The Committee's focus is to ensure Virginia has an accountability system that is fair, balanced, and supportive of this vision as the Commonwealth prepares our students for success beyond their high school years.

Committee's Guiding Beliefs

- Accountability plays a critical role in promoting educational success.
- The current assessment and accountability systems have supported greater consistency in teaching the core curriculum and have improved student performance over time.
- Students need and deserve an education that inspires and leverages their curiosity and natural desire to learn so that they are prepared for responsible citizenship and success beyond high school.
- Recruiting and retaining world-class educators is critical to providing students with a high quality education that instills in them a love of learning and prepares them for success after graduation.
- Virginia's assessment and accountability systems should be redesigned to reduce reliance on traditional standardized tests and instead be guided by an innovative and broad set of learning outcomes that prepare all students for success in college, in careers, and as engaged and enlightened citizens.

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Statements of Principle and Recommendations

On October 29, 2015, the Committee unanimously approved two statements of principle, representing the Committee's broad goals & seven corresponding recommendations with specific strategies for achieving those goals.

Statement of Principle I: Virginia's education system should prepare our students for success in post-secondary education, the workforce, and participation as productive citizens.

Four recommendations correspond with Principle I.

1. The Board of Education, in collaboration with stakeholders representing K-12 education, institutions of higher education, business and industry, policymakers and community leaders should develop a Profile of a Virginia Graduate. In the development of such a Profile, the Board should consider the "5 Cs" – critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship – needed for success in the New Virginia Economy.
 - a. Upon development of a Profile of a Virginia Graduate, the State Board of Education and Department of Education should identify the knowledge and skills that students should attain during their public school experience in order to achieve the expectations described in the profile.
 - b. High school graduation requirements should be adjusted as needed to conform to the new expectations identified in this Profile. High schools should be redesigned so that students move from attaining core knowledge and skills in the early years to one of several alternative paths toward college and career readiness. See Appendix A (Proposed Framework for Assessing Student Learning) for a possible model.
 - c. As change toward a new set of expectations for Virginia's students occurs, current Standards of Learning should continue to be updated on a regular revision schedule and should emphasize a smaller number of deeper, more meaningful standards. Revised objectives should reflect the adopted Profile of a Virginia Graduate and the learning needs of today's students and begin the transition process to the new Virginia expectations.
 - d. To support the change in student expectations, the Board should identify the types and timing of assessments that best align with the skills and knowledge outlined in that Profile.
 - e. The Board of Education and the Department of Education should offer school divisions assistance in developing curricula to support the new student expectations. Model curricula, suggested instructional strategies, and sample lesson plans that school divisions may choose to use in implementing the new Standards of Learning should be provided.
2. The Board of Education and Department of Education should adopt a framework for assessing student learning that recognizes the importance of classroom assessment in improving instruction, emphasizes growth measures in elementary and middle school and provides options for students in high school to demonstrate readiness for success upon graduation. See Appendix A (Proposed Framework for Assessing Student Learning.pdf) for an illustrative and innovative example.
 - a. Assessments should include content, formats, and vocabulary that is developmentally appropriate, valid, and fair, require students to construct

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responses rather than selecting answers, and include one or more interdisciplinary measures of learning that require work at higher cognitive levels.

- b. In adopting such a model, the Board of Education and Virginia Department of Education should redesign high school, so that students spend the early high school years developing core skill sets, and the later years following one of several alternative paths toward college and career readiness (e.g. internships/apprenticeships, early college, workplace and career readiness certifications, and/or student portfolio that demonstrates mastery of essential skills). This will require options for relevant college and career readiness assessments that may serve in place of assessment requirements that are included in the current system. As mentioned in recommendation 1.b., this will also require the revision of graduation requirements and replacement and/or elimination of certain end-of-course assessments while still providing options for students. Finally, these changes will also have an impact on the structure of high school and will require flexibility in order to promote innovative course development, effective professional development for high school teachers, additional support and guidance for students, and ongoing partnerships with the business community and higher education institutions.
 - c. The assessment system should recognize the unique needs of students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Where possible, the model should include accommodations and alternative assessments to provide such students with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.
 - d. SOL tests should be shortened to the extent possible; the time required to complete each assessment should be appropriate for the age of the student.
 - e. Additionally, all assessments should be scored fairly and accurately, with partial credit being awarded for assessment items that require multiple responses.
 - f. The Department of Education and local school divisions should identify ways to reduce the amount of time students spend taking locally administered benchmark tests and in other test preparation activities to developmentally appropriate levels.
 - g. Students should be given multiple opportunities to show proficiency rather than relying on a single point-in-time assessment during the school year.
3. The Governor, General Assembly and Department of Education should identify resources to support this new assessment model.
 - a. Funding should be allocated to the Department of Education to provide ongoing technical assistance and professional development to disseminate models and support collaboration to help educators implement the new assessment model.
 - b. The Department of Education should develop a bank of high quality local alternate assessments to be provided for teachers. Training in using these assessments should be provided as well as a process for teachers to score student work on alternate local assessments across school divisions.
 - c. The Department of Education should work collaboratively with teachers, building leaders, and division-level administrators to share and advance best practices in classroom assessment. The Department of Education should collaborate with local school divisions, professional organizations and teacher preparation programs to ensure that both practicing and pre-service teachers

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are trained in the ongoing use of classroom assessment strategies to support instruction.

- d. Funding should be allocated to provide for personnel in local school divisions, to implement this assessment model. Needs include curriculum and assessment specialists/coaches and counseling services at the middle and high school levels to assist with transitions and students' selection of career pathways.
 - e. Funding should be provided to develop fair, valid, and developmentally appropriate measures of student growth. One example could be a computer adaptive format.
4. The Governor should encourage further collaboration among higher education institutions, employers and the Department of Education to ensure coordination in the PK-20 educational system. Representatives of higher education institutions (both 2- and 4-year) and of the business community should be mandated members of the SOL Innovation Committee.

Statement of Principle II: Appropriate changes to Virginia's existing accountability system can occur by increasing the state's emphasis on measures of individual student growth while rebalancing the emphasis on students passing standardized tests.

Three recommendations correspond with Principle II.

5. The Board of Education should revise the accountability system to include a variety of school quality indicators.
 - a. Students' academic success should appropriately remain the main consideration in school accreditation, with consideration also given to other factors. Academic success at the school level should be represented by both "point-in-time" achievement and individual student growth measures. A variety of school quality academic indicators, reflecting the above-recommended assessment model, should be included in accreditation.
 - b. Additional school quality indicators should be considered including, at minimum: graduation rate (for schools with graduating classes), attendance and a measure of school climate (environment of the school, shared values and goals, safety, relationships, etc.).
 - c. For English Language Learners, a student's English language proficiency should determine whether the student's score on the regular test should be used in accreditation, if a differentiated cut score or alternative assessment should be considered, or if the student's score should be excluded from accreditation.
 - d. In the shorter term, the Board of Education should provide accreditation data that is timely, accessible and reported in ways that are actionable, in order to drive school improvement and address gaps in achievement.
 - e. In the longer term, the Board of Education should develop multiple pathways to school accreditation leading to a single designation, rather than a ranking system based solely on test results.
 - f. Contextual data should also be reported, such as number of students in poverty, local financial support, etc.

*Denotes ex-officio members

6. The Board of Education should continue its work in revising the school performance report card to provide a more comprehensive school quality profile of each Virginia public school. The school quality profiles should include information about school accountability and other factors that provide a comprehensive view of the school. The school quality profiles should be presented in a dashboard format and should provide information “at a glance” with easy access to more detailed supporting data to allow users to view data at a variety of levels.
 - a. The Governor and General Assembly should continue to allocate funding for developing and maintaining school profiles.
 - b. School profile data should include selected elements that are important to school quality and of interest to parents and the public. These elements should be descriptive of the community in which the school operates as well as indicative of whole child education (e.g. participation in fine arts and extracurricular programs and measures of equity).
 - c. The school profile should include a link or space where a school may self-report areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.
 - d. The dashboard should display data in formats that provide context (e.g. peer group comparisons, trends over time, etc.). The dashboard display should be a dynamic, “real-time” document in which information is updated as data becomes available and should allow the public to compare schools, while recognizing the complexity and potential shortcomings of some ranking systems.

7. In refining the accountability system, the Board of Education should maintain and strengthen a threshold of performance below which schools receive ongoing, meaningful support that is prompt and timely. The Department of Education and the local school divisions should collaborate in determining the support that is provided.
 - a. The Department of Education should consider on-site reviews as one way to offer support for school improvement. However, these reviews should only be implemented if: 1) the review and reporting protocol is based on agreed-upon research-based indicators of school success and provides meaningful feedback; 2) the review process is transparent and clearly understandable to the school and community in advance; 3) resources accompany recommended changes, including incentives for teachers to increase the time spent working with colleagues to strengthen their own skills and to improve the performance of the school as a whole; and 4) the review process leverages technology applications such as video-based observations, distance coaching, online collaboration, and video conferencing as options.
 - b. Any support strategies or programs should acknowledge that meaningful, lasting improvement will not occur absent engagement of the people who are doing the work with students. Therefore, strategies for improvement should be designed or chosen with significant participation of school staff.
 - c. The system should encourage and motivate continuous improvement for ALL schools, whether meeting accreditation benchmarks or not.

The Standards of Learning
Innovation Committee
Full Report is available at
<https://education.virginia.gov/initiatives/sol-innovation/>.

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Appendix A

Proposed Framework for Assessing Student Learning

<i>Formative Classroom Assessment Pre-K through 12</i>				
Primary	Upper Elementary	Middle School	Early High School	Advanced High School
<p>Diagnostic Assessment Measure for Reading/Language (not used for accountability ratings)</p>	<p>Growth Measure (e.g. CAT) for Mathematics Grades 3-5</p>	<p>Growth Measure (e.g. CAT) for Mathematics Grades 6-8</p>	<p>Achievement Measure for Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II (at least 1 Required)</p>	<p>Option 1: Earn Industry or Workplace Credential</p> <p>Option 2: Successfully Complete an Apprenticeship and/or Internship</p> <p>Option 3: Complete a series of Dual Enrollment or AP Courses (Early College)</p> <p>Option 4: Complete Traditional High School Program and Successfully Complete a Locally Scored Portfolio Assessment</p>
<p>Diagnostic Assessment Measure for Math Literacy (not used for accountability ratings)</p>	<p>Growth Measure (e.g. CAT) for Reading Grades 3-5</p>	<p>Growth Measure (e.g. CAT) for Reading Grades 6-8</p>	<p>Achievement Measure for High School Reading by Grade 10</p>	
	<p>Locally Administered and Scored Performance Assessment for Virginia Studies (Grade 4 or 5)</p>	<p>High Quality Civics Assessment* with Writing Component (Grade 7 or 8)</p>	<p>High Quality Science Assessment* (Earth Science or Biology) with Writing Component (at least 1 Required)</p>	
	<p>High Quality Science Assessment* with Writing Component (Grade 5)</p>	<p>High Quality Science Assessment* with Writing Component (Grade 7 or 8)</p>	<p>Option for Substitute tests (eg. PSAT or VPT) to meet graduation requirements for ELA and Mathematics</p>	
<p><i>English Language Learners – Alternative Measure (e.g. WIDA ACCESS for ELLs (K-12))</i> <i>Students with Significant Disabilities – Alternative Measure (e.g. Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (K-12))</i></p>				

*A “High Quality Assessment” includes performance tasks that measure content and essential skills.

- It will be necessary to refer to the work of the Accountability 2.0 Subcommittee to determine how these assessments factor into accreditation ratings for schools.
- In order to fully implement these recommendations, significant changes must be made to the state assessment and accountability system.
- The high school options will require the development of a strong partnership with community colleges and post-secondary institutions across the state.
- The proposed model incorporates SOLs existing at any time as its foundation.