

UPDATE ON THE REVISIONS TO THE VIRGINIA STANDARDS OF LEARNING SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS OF PROFICIENCY HB 585 REPORT

November 1, 2024





COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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November 1, 2024

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Senator Ghazala F. Hashmi
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Delegate Luke Torrian
Delegate House District 24
General Assembly Building, Room 1223
201 North 9th Street
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Senator L. Louise Lucas
Senate District 18
General Assembly Building, Room 1404
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Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Senator Lucas and Hashmi and Delegate Torrian and Rasoul,

I am pleased to submit the enclosed Report on the annual update to the Revisions to Standards of Learning Summative Assessments of Proficiency. [Chapter 760, Enactment Clause 2 \(Regular Session, 2022\)](#) directs the Virginia Department of Education to provide updates on the implementation plan for the revised Virginia Standards of Learning summative assessment of proficiency annually through 2027.

3. That the Department of Education shall submit its initial plan for implementation of revised Virginia Standards of Learning summative assessments of proficiency developed pursuant to § 2 of this act to the Chairmen of the House Committee on Education, the Senate Committee on Education and Health, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations no later than November 1, 2023, and shall provide updates on the implementation of such plan no later than November 1 of each year thereafter through 2027.

If you have questions or require additional information relating to this transmittal, please do not hesitate to contact, Dora Villarreal, Assistant Superintendent of Assessment, at dora.villarreal@doe.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lisa Coons
LC/ ec

CC: Senator Van Valkenburg

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Executive Summary

[Chapter 760, Enactment Clause 2 \(Regular Session, 2022\)](#) directed the Secretary of Education and the Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene and consult a work group consisting of representatives of the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and other appropriate stakeholders to revise the Virginia Standards of Learning summative assessments of proficiency that require students to demonstrate that they possess the skills, knowledge, and content necessary for success and to develop a plan for implementation of such revised assessments.

In March of 2023, the Secretary of Education and the VDOE convened the work group comprised of teachers, Board of Education members, leaders, parents, and state level experts to review the current assessment system, analyze national reports on leading innovative state assessments, participate in discussions with national and state assessment leaders in innovative assessment design, and compare Virginia's rigor of standards and annual assessment framework to high performing states. The work group convened over the course of five months with the outcome resulting in the below recommendations for the future of Virginia's assessment system. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Clearer and more rigorous standards
2. More rigorous assessment items
3. More, timely, clear, and actionable reporting
4. Improved system coherence
5. Innovative assessment design

The purpose of this report is to provide the yearly updates on the implementation of [recommendations](#) from the HB 585 Report as required by the General Assembly.

Updates on HB 585 Workgroup Recommendations

This section provides updates on each recommendation from the HB 585 Report submitted to the General Assembly on September 25, 2023. The progress listed below are efforts VDOE was able to make without additional funding.

Recommendation 1: Review, clarify, and revise Virginia Standards of Learning

This recommendation included the following:

1. Review, clarify, and revise Virginia’s Standards of Learning
2. More Rigorous Assessment Items
3. Update state assessments to reflect revised Standards of Learning
4. Ensure cut scores—meaning how many correct answers it takes to demonstrate proficiency—and growth measures signal true proficiency through a transparent, valid standard-setting process and align to nationally recognized assessment

Progress on revised standards and assessment alignment: School Year 2023-2024 and 2024-2025

Virginia K-12 students now have more rigorous standards which will lead to the highest quality education for every child and prepare them for the next grade and the workforce.

A best-in-class education system includes high expectations for all students in all content areas. To continue the academic rigor needed in all content areas, History and Social Science standards were adopted in April 2023.

The Board adopted new Mathematics SOL in August 2023 and new English SOL in March 2024; these standards will be measured in the Spring 2025 test administration. Virginia test items have been reviewed and realigned to the newly adopted standards. School divisions were provided resources explaining the new test structure including the alignment to the new Mathematics and ELA standards.

Timeline for Virginia Standards of Learning Adoption	
Content Area	Update
History and Social Science	Approved by Board April 2023
Mathematics	Approved by Board August 2023
English Language Arts	Approved by Board March 2024
Computer Science	Approved by Board June 2024

Due to the delayed implementation of the 2018 Science Standards, VDOE only conducted a review of the 2018 Science Standards as mandated by Virginia Code. Clarifications on the SOL are being provided in educator resources that will be released in Spring 2025. Testing of the 2018 Science Standards began in May 2023. The Board in Winter/Spring 2025 will focus on expanding eleven advanced high school Board-approved courses (such as Chemistry II, Astronomy) which can currently be used to meet science graduation requirements but do not have BOE-approved standards. There is currently no plan to add SOL assessments for these courses.

Future implementation of revised standards and assessments: School Year 2025-2026

Full implementation of the 2023 History and Social Science SOL will occur during the 2025-2026 school year with new SOL assessments in Spring 2026. Test items measuring the 2023 History and Social Science SOL will be field-tested with Virginia students in Spring 2025. Resources and supports for educators will be provided to school divisions in Summer 2025.

The 2025 new standards for high-school science courses will be implemented in the 2025-2026 school year, but no state assessments are currently indicated for any of these courses at this time.

Considering the passage and signing of HB1477 in 2024, a new law focused on competency-based learning and seat time flexibility, the VDOE is evaluating existing assessment practices and protocols, with plans to update guidance for school divisions in Spring 2025 on assessment administration to account for competency-based learning models and the growing use of personalized learning, a critical component in the new Mathematics and English Language Arts standards.

Setting Cut Scores to Measure True Proficiency

The VDOE Office of Assessment will also hold meetings with Virginia educators during November (Mathematics) and December (Reading) 2024 to provide feedback on the proficiency cut score for each of the performance levels (i.e., Advanced, Proficient, Basic/Does Not Meet, Below Basic). The feedback from the committees will be used alongside data and research from national assessment experts and the assessment vendor to make a recommendation for the score range for each performance level (e.g., a score of 500-600 is Advanced). Cut scores will be aligned to the proficiency needed by students to be ready for the next grade level and college and/or career. Recommendations will be submitted to the Virginia Board of Education in the spring of 2025 for approval.

Recommendation 2: More Rigorous Assessment Items

The recommendation included the following:

1. Assessments should go beyond selected response questions
2. Maintain rigorous critical thinking expectations while ensuring accessibility for all students

Assessments should go beyond selected response questions

High quality assessments allow students to demonstrate their knowledge of content standards in multiple ways through user-friendly technology. With technology rapidly evolving, assessment item types must also evolve. Providing various item types besides multiple choice not only assesses understanding of content at a deeper level, but it also allows students to show their learning similarly to how they do so with the high-quality instruction being provided in class by their teachers. Teachers facilitate activities and tasks in classrooms to understand how their students are progressing, and assessments should feel reflective of the learning happening in classrooms.

A small number of short written response test items were developed in 2023-2024 in reading and mathematics. Virginia teachers reviewed these items in summer 2024 and provided constructive feedback to guide future development. These items will be reviewed for possible field testing in Fall 2025.

Some examples of items included in the current Virginia Assessment Program include bar graphs, drag and drop, and equation writing that allow students to critically think about content and show proficiency beyond multiple choice questions. New items that have been developed will be field-tested in Spring 2025.

Maintain rigorous critical thinking expectations while ensuring accessibility for all students

Every student deserves the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in and competency on content standards, and the Virginia assessments continue to evolve to ensure they provide appropriate accommodations for English learners and students with disabilities.

Accessibility features are provided in online tests that enable access without changing the expectations for students who are completing the assessments. Ongoing accommodations continue to be provided including read aloud, text-to-speech, assistive technology support for screen readers, braille, American Sign Language (ASL), speech-to-text, word prediction and pop-up glossary with translations.

Additional accessibility features have been included to support accessibility include:

- Screen magnification,
- Magnification tool, and
- Color contrast settings.

Additional testing accommodations are available to students who need them to access the tests, as specified in a student's Individualized Education Program, 504 Plan, EL Assessment Participation Plan, or in the documentation for a temporary condition.

Recommendation 3: More Timely, Clear, and Actionable Reporting

The recommendation included the following:

1. Prioritize timely data for teachers and families,
2. Set assessment windows that maximize learning time,
3. Differentiate reports by audience, and
4. Support educators through training on using state assessment results to inform instruction.

Prioritize timely data for teachers and families

Communication to teachers and families about how their students are progressing is of utmost importance. Teachers need timely, actionable data to support instructional decisions for the individual needs of students. Families are partners in a child's educational journey, and they need transparent information about where their child is having success and where they need additional support to stay on track with learning at or above grade level.

The VDOE partnered with Learning Heroes, a national organization that supports meaningful communication to parents to best support their children's educational success, to review the current Parent Report and Student Detail by Question Report (SDBQ) through a series of parent focus groups and individual principal interviews. Based on feedback from the parent focus groups, Learning Heroes recommended that the parent report be clarified by utilizing simplified language, changed in format so it is easy to navigate, remove information that would not be relevant for parents, use consistent color coding for data categories and labels, and include of extra resources for parents to help with learning at home.

As a result, the Office of Assessment worked with the current assessment contractor to provide videos for families to understand what the reports mean for their child, and beginning with the Fall test administration for school year 2024-2025, reports will be provided to families reflecting the feedback of the focus groups and interviews.

Differentiate Reports by Audience

Easy-to-access reports for families, teachers, and school and division leaders are a priority as Virginia modernizes its assessment system. Educators and families must be able to understand what the reports say and mean to support their students.

As part of the Virginia Assessment Parent Portal, personalized reading and mathematics videos were created to assist parents to better understand the score reports. These videos are available in the free, [online parent portal](#) and the VDOE [Assessment Student Parent Resources](#) page. Additional parent materials will be created to support the 3E Readiness Framework, high school pathways, and other opportunities for students aligned to assessment results.

Virginia provides test results to school divisions within 24 hours of test administration, but these results are often not shared promptly with school leaders, teachers, and families since some divisions need to generate their reports or conduct data analyses before distributing scores. Currently, the 24-hour result turnaround is feasible due to the use of selected-response formats. While incorporating constructed-response items and performance tasks may affect this turnaround time, Virginia aims to implement strategies like artificial intelligence (AI) scoring and minimal human scoring to ensure rapid results are maintained. To improve access, VDOE will ensure development of a user-friendly reporting suite based on user research, facilitating easy navigation and sharing of reports.

Recommendation 4: Improve System Coherence

The recommendation included the following:

1. Ensure the assessment system measures proficiency and student growth
2. Support divisions in administering high-quality, rigorous interim assessments
3. Measure student learning before third grade in both literacy and numeracy
4. Provide school division support in developing coherent, aligned, assessment calendars to ensure assessment data is actionable

Ensure the assessment system measures proficiency and student growth

Understanding student growth during the school year and student proficiency at the end of the school year are critical data points for both educators and families.

Subsection C of § 22.1-253.13:3 of the Code of Virginia states the Board of Education permits school boards to administer, during the 2024–2026 school years, assessments as alternatives to the through-year growth assessment system established by the Board of Education pursuant to such provision of law, provided that any such alternative assessment is aligned to the Standards of Learning. This allows for divisions to have a choice in the utilization of assessments to measure growth in the Fall and Spring in math and reading. The ability for divisions to utilize alternative assessments is conducted through a division request to the VDOE.

Measure student learning before third grade in both literacy and numeracy

Grades 3-12 have reading and math assessments measuring proficiency of grade-level content standards. Bridging the gap in data by providing a measurement of K-3 literacy and numeracy will support an aligned and coherent assessment system.

The VDOE has ensured that divisions can measure growth prior to third grade in literacy. This school year, Virginia shifted to a new, comprehensive literacy screener and received funding to implement the Virginia Language and Literacy Screening System (VALLSS), for students in PreK-Grade 3 for 2024-

2025 created by the University of Virginia. VALLSS Grade 4-8 is being piloted in 2024-2025 with a group of Virginia schools. It will be implemented beginning in 2025-2026 with students who meet the determined criteria (to be determined). VALLSS assesses Alphabet Knowledge, Phonological Awareness, Decoding, Encoding, Language: Passage Comprehension, Vocabulary, and Rapid Automatized Naming (RAN).

Recommendation 5: Innovative Assessment Design

Plan for future innovation

Using innovative assessments is a key priority for a modernized assessment system in multiple areas. As discussed above, the VDOE has incorporated innovative new assessment types beginning Spring 2025. Additionally, the VDOE posted a Request for Information (RFI) from August-September 2024 that asked respondents to provide detailed information on the development of competency-based assessments and performance tasks as part of future planning for innovative assessments. Currently, the VDOE is working develop fifth and eighth grade performance tasks for the Commonwealth which are part of the middle school and high school readiness indicators in the School Performance and Support Framework that will be piloted in the Spring of 2025. These innovative item types will be a core element of a future assessment RFP.

Summary and Next Steps

The Work Group emphasized throughout its meetings the importance of a timely transition process that provides sufficient input from and support for educators, families, and students as well as strong alignment across rigorous standards, assessment, and accountability leading to high expectations for all students. It called for the transition to be grounded in rigorous standards before a high-quality assessment or accountability systems is created. The VDOE has worked diligently to ensure that the recommendations outlined by the HB 585 Workgroup were prioritized, and this report indicates the progress that has been made.

The Department will submit a report to the General Assembly on the RFI in a separate report on November 1, 2024.

