



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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November 1, 2025

The Honorable L. Louise Lucas, Chair
Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee
201 North 9th Street, Room 1404
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Luke E. Torian, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
201 North 9th Street, Room 123
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Ghazala F. Hashmi, Chair
Senate Education and Health Committee
201 North 9th Street, Room 616
Richmond, VA 23219

The Honorable Sam Rasoul, Chair
House Education Committee
201 North 9th Street, Room 910
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Chairs Lucas, Hashmi, Torrian, and Rasoul:

Pursuant to [Item 119.A.3.d. \(Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly\)](#), please find the Virginia Department of Education's *Report on the Statewide Assessment Vendor*.

[Item 119.A.3.d.](#), requires submission of a report that details options for building a high-quality assessment system and associated costs. This report outlines the efforts made since the budget was enacted on May 2, 2025.

If you have questions or require additional information relating to this report, please contact Deputy Superintendent of Student Outcomes and School Quality Tiara Booker-Dwyer at Tiara.booker-dwyer@doe.virginia.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Anne Gullickson".

Emily Anne Gullickson, M.Ed. J.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

EAG/TBD/mj

c: The Honorable Aimee Rogstad Guidera
Virginia Secretary of Education

REPORT ON THE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT VENDOR

Item 119.A.3.d. (Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly)

November 1, 2025



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Item 119.A.3.d. (Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly) requires the Secretary of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction to procure an assessment vendor to analyze options for implementing an innovative new statewide assessment system that supports high-quality teaching and learning in Virginia's K-12 public schools.

In accordance with this requirement, the Secretary of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction established an Innovative Assessment Work Group consisting of representatives from organizations that include superintendents, teachers, principals, curriculum development and assessment specialists, and experts in statewide assessment implementation. This Work Group is charged with providing critical input to inform the development of a new, innovative statewide assessment system.

In September, invitations were distributed to stakeholder organizations to nominate qualified participants. Nominees had to have expertise in one or more of the following areas: assessment design and administration, using assessment outcomes to improve instruction, implementation and change management, testing accommodations, or teaching and assessing a variety of student groups (multilingual learners, students with disabilities, advanced learners, etc.). The Secretary and Superintendent approved the final list of nominees to serve on the Work Group. The Innovative Assessment Work Group had a kickoff meeting on October 30, 2025. At this meeting, participants reviewed the purpose and goals of the Work Group, examined the current status of the assessment system and progress made on HB 585, reviewed and provided input on sample innovative assessment items, and discussed next steps. The Work Group will produce an initial set of recommendations by January 2026.

Item 119.A.3.a. of the budget included \$500,000 in fiscal year 2025 to procure a vendor to analyze options for implementing a new statewide assessment system. This appropriation failed to include language authorizing mandatory carryforward of the funds from Fiscal Year 2025 to Fiscal Year 2026. With the timing of the approved funding being close to the end of the Fiscal Year (June 30, 2025), there was insufficient time to develop, issue, and award a quality RFP for the assessment consultant as outlined in the Appropriation Act. In a typical fiscal year, any discretionary carryover request requires the Governor's approval (Item 4-1.05.a., Chapter 725), with approval typically occurring annually in the fall. The Department was proactive and requested an expedited review of the carryover request specific to this allocation of funding, so we could move forward with issuing an RFP for an assessment consultant due to the time horizon for an effective analysis and informed decisions/recommendations for next steps. The Governor approved the expedited carryover request on August 25, 2025. To ensure compliance with procurement policies and procedures, the Department had to ensure that the carryover request was approved, and carryover funding was allotted prior to posting an RFP, and approved funding/appropriation was available to support the awarding of a contract to an assessment consultant.

On October 6, 2025, the Department issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to procure an innovative assessment consultant to analyze high-quality assessment systems in other states and

provide recommendations for Virginia’s future statewide assessment system. The RFP closed on October 27, 2025. The Department is in the process of evaluating proposals and selecting a vendor. The Department received five responses to the RFP and anticipate awarding the contract by November 15, 2025.

This report details the significant progress made toward fulfilling requirements in the Appropriation Act and developing a more innovative and meaningful assessment system that advances teaching and learning across the Commonwealth.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, the Virginia General Assembly passed House Bill 585 (Chapter 760), directing Virginia's Secretary of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene and consult a work group of stakeholders 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 HB 585 Work group met over six months in 2023 and released [recommendations](#) in October 2023 in five opportunity areas:

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 and implementation

The overwhelming consensus of the HB 585 Work Group was that Virginia is committed to raising learning expectations for all children in the Commonwealth. Three critical aligned components are needed to make this goal a reality: rigorous standards, best-in-class assessments, and a transparent and meaningful accountability and support system. Through the work of HB 585 Work Group, Virginia established a clear plan to ensure these three components are aligned and focused on ensuring every student is on track at every point in their academic journey to graduate ready for life.

Virginia's assessments must evolve to ensure Virginia has clear information that students are on the path to be well prepared for success in college and career opportunities. In order for this to happen, the Commonwealth must continue its efforts to revamp subject area *Standards of Learning* to be best-in-class, high-quality, and rigorous, reset proficiency definitions to be benchmarked to the best in the nation, and develop a multifaceted assessment system that clearly and accurately assesses teaching and learning. The Virginia Board of Education successfully adopted nation-leading Standards of Learning for Mathematics, English, History, Social Sciences, and Computer Science.

Guided by those recommendations, as well as recommendations from House Bill 938 (Chapter 99, 2022 Acts of Assembly), the Department has been working to improve the Virginia Assessment Program. The HB 585 Work Group defined the future of the Virginia assessment program for more rigorous items in the following way:

"With rigorous standards as the foundation, standards-aligned assessment items can reinforce strong instructional practices. Strong assessment items allow students to engage with complex ideas, support their thinking with evidence, produce informed judgments, and demonstrate critical thinking and understanding through various item types, including written responses."

The Department provides a yearly update to the General Assembly on progress to date for implementing recommendations from the HB585 Report. The first annual report was submitted on [November 1, 2024](#). Additionally, monthly email status updates are provided to the Chairs and staff of the Senate Finance and Appropriations, Senate Education and Health, House Appropriations, and House Education Committees on innovative assessments.

Also beginning in 2022, Virginia developed new item types that are currently being used in the assessment system. Assessments and a description of test items are listed below.

- ***Integrated Reading and Writing***: Grades 5 and 8 assessments have a computer-adaptive section with reading passages and related multiple-choice or technology-enhanced items. Another non-adaptive section asks students to read nonfiction passages based on science or history/social science content, answer related questions, and write a response to a prompt.
- ***Science***: Test items were added that combine science instructional practices with content, which are called science item clusters. Science item clusters are composed of 3-6 questions, multiple-choice or technology-enhanced, that are connected to a context-based stimulus. The HB 585 Work Group recommended adding more constructed-response formats, including writing prompts, ensuring they align with standards and provide insights into students' understanding and learning. The Department is also working with its assessment partner to develop science simulations. These simulations allow students to engage in interactive science experiments, analyze data, and report on outcomes.
- ***History***: Innovative test items were field tested in Spring 2025 and will be added to the spring 2026 operational item bank. Test items include history cluster sets, which are composed of 1-3 stimuli, such as primary/secondary source texts, photographs, maps, and data tables/charts, that students analyze and interact with to answer test items. Other innovative items for History include multiselect items and interactive maps for World Geography, World History I and II, Virginia and U.S. History, Virginia Studies, and Civics and Economics.

In 2024, the Governor signed into law two new bills that support the advancement of innovative assessment practices in Virginia.

1. [Subsection C of § 22.1-253.13:3](#) of the Code of Virginia expands mathematics and reading through-year growth assessment options for school divisions. It authorizes the Virginia Board of Education to allow school boards to administer alternative growth assessment systems during the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years. These alternative assessments must align with the Standards of Learning and receive approval from the Department.
2. [§ 22.1-200.3 of the Code of Virginia](#) permits alternative instructional time models, such as competency-based learning models. This flexibility allows local school boards to request waivers for existing instructional clock hour requirements, allowing students to progress through coursework as they demonstrate mastery in skills and content.

Additionally, in accordance with [Item 119.A.2](#) (Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly), the Department issued a Request for Information (RFI) for K-12 assessment vendors to better

determine the costs and requirements of a new, innovative assessment system. The RFI was posted on August 26, 2024, and closed on September 30, 2024. The purpose of the RFI was to gain a deeper understanding of the marketplace, assess vendor capacity to meet the needs of Virginia schools, and explore innovative approaches and associated costs for developing a next-generation assessment system. The [summary of vendor responses](#) to the RFI is hyperlinked. Insights from the RFI supported the development of the RFP for an innovative assessment consultant.

INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENT CONSULTANT

[Item 119.A.3.a.](#) of the budget included \$500,000 in fiscal year 2025 to procure a vendor to analyze options for implementing this new statewide assessment system. The budget was enacted on May 2, 2025. Because the General Assembly prohibited the issue of an RFP for a new assessment system until a contractor review is completed, but also did not include mandatory carryforward language for the funding of that assessment consultant, the fiscal year had to end before the Administration could use discretionary carryforward authority to engage the assessment consultant to move forward.

In a typical fiscal year, any discretionary carryover request requires the Governor's approval ([Item 4-1.05.a.](#), Chapter 725, 2025 Acts of Assembly), with approval typically occurring annually in the fall. The Department was proactive and requested an expedited review of the carryover request specific to this allocation of funding, so we could move forward with the issuance of an RFP for an assessment consultant due to the time horizon for an effective analysis and informed decisions/recommendations for next steps. The Governor approved the expedited carryover request on August 25, 2025. To ensure compliance with procurement policies and procedures, the Department had to ensure that the carryover request was approved, and carryover funding was allotted prior to posting an RFP and that approved funding/appropriation was available to support the awarding of a contract to an assessment consultant.

The Department issued the [RFP](#) on October 6, 2025. In accordance with [Item 119.A.3.c.](#), the statement of needs outlines the guiding principles in researching and developing an innovative assessment system aligned to the rigorous *Virginia Standards of Learning* that meets the needs of diverse learners and provides detailed, user-friendly information for educators and families. The statement of needs included:

1. An analysis of high-quality assessment systems in other states, emphasizing models that incorporate:
 - a. alignment with state standards and instructional goals;
 - b. non-traditional assessments, such as project-based, competency-based, personalized-learning, and performance-based approaches;
 - c. accessibility for English learners and students with disabilities, with examples of accommodations and multilingual assessments from other states;
 - d. advanced technology integration, such as adaptive testing and online platforms, including infrastructure requirements and associated costs;

- e. integration of authentic growth measures that provide actionable, formative feedback for educators and could be integrated into a statewide assessment system;
- f. feedback on the application of knowledge and higher-level reasoning skills as described in the standards;
- g. best practices for release of rubrics, sample items and tasks, performance level descriptors, item maps, anchor papers, exemplars, and other resources that clarify the benchmarks for success;
- h. recommendations for innovative, reliable, and valid scoring practices that support data cleaning, validation, and timely reporting of assessment outcomes;
- i. best practices for sharing and reporting assessment outcomes to students, parents, teachers, principals, and superintendents in a timeframe that can inform instructional improvement; and
- j. best practices for sharing and reporting assessment outcomes to the state education agency in a timeframe that can inform support to school divisions.

2. A detailed project plan of the work planned and completed by the contractor.

From October 6 through October 27, 2025, an [RFP](#) was posted to secure an innovative assessment consultant in alignment with requirements outlined in [Item 119.A.3.c](#). The purpose of the RFP was to solicit sealed proposals to establish a contract through competitive negotiation with a consultant to analyze options for implementing an innovative statewide assessment system that supports high-quality teaching and learning in Virginia public schools. The new assessment system will align with Virginia's *Standards of Learning*, be implemented in the 2027-2028 school year, and reflect best practices in assessment design, accessibility, and instructional alignment. The selected vendor will be a consultant or organization that has demonstrated expertise in K-12 statewide assessment systems and developing comprehensive reports with recommendations for state education agencies.

On October 16, 2025, an optional preproposal conference was held with prospective vendors. The purpose of the conference was to allow potential offerors an opportunity to present questions and obtain clarification on any aspect of the solicitation. There were 16 participants representing 14 different organizations at the preproposal conference. Questions submitted along with answers provided are shared below.

1. What is the anticipated start and end date for this scope of work?

November 2025 – March 2026. The assessment vendor is required to develop and submit a final comprehensive report that will be shared as part of the monthly submission updates. This will be available to General Assembly members prior to the 2026 legislative session.

Additional time was included to account for unanticipated events.

2. What is the budget maximum or budget range for this scope of work?

The budgeted amount is \$500,000. Please keep in mind that this is a competitive solicitation and the price is part of the evaluation factor.

3. With whom should the vendor plan to engage during this work, for what purposes (e.g.,

VDOE staff, working groups, legislature, other stakeholders)?

The vendor will work directly with the point of contact for the Department. The selected vendor will also present to the Innovative Assessment Work Group.

4. It is noted in the RFP that funding for this work was appropriated through Virginia's budget (Item 119 A.3.a). Section A3 of Item 119 also mentions a work group (A.3.b) as well as a final report due on November 1, 2025 (A.3.d). What is the scope of the work group's report?

The report will share recommendations from the Work Group members. This will be available to General Assembly members ahead of the legislative session, as requested.

5. The last paragraph on page 3 of the RFP discusses the vendor for this project as well as the future respondent/vendor for the Virginia Assessment Program. It includes the sentence, "VDOE owns existing test items that must be imported into the respondent's system." Can VDOE confirm that the respondent for RFP - 201-26-028 does not need to be able to import VDOE items?

We are confirming that the respondent to this RFP does not need to import VDOE items.

The Department is evaluating the five submitted proposals based on established criteria and award a contract no later than November 15. The Department will immediately support the assessment contractor in gathering background information and engaging with the Innovative Assessment Work Group.

To support monthly updates to the Chairs and staff of the Senate Finance and Appropriations, Senate Education and Health, House Appropriations, and House Education Committees, the assessment contractor will provide reports to the Department that include:

1. Accomplishments achieved during the reporting period;
2. Tasks completed pursuant to the provisions of the contract and the completion dates of such tasks; and
3. Projected completion dates for the remaining specific tasks required by the contract.

The assessment vendor is required to develop and submit a report that will be shared as part of the monthly submission updates. This will be available to General Assembly members prior to the 2026 legislative session.

INNOVATIVE ASSESSMENT WORK GROUP

Item 119.A.3.b requires the Department and Secretary of Education to establish an Innovative Assessment Work Group consisting of representatives from organizations that include superintendents, teachers, principals, curriculum development and assessment specialists, and experts in statewide assessment implementation. This Work Group is charged with providing critical input to inform the development of a new, innovative statewide assessment system.

In September 2025, invitations were extended to organizations that represent superintendents, principals, teachers, school boards, and higher education to nominate individuals to the

Innovative Assessment Work Group. Nominations were also received from the Superintendent and Secretary. The individuals listed in table 1 were selected to participate on the work group based on nominations.

Table 1: Innovative Assessment Work Group Members

Organization	Name
Founder of Read Not Guess	Mr. Chad Aldeman
Founder of EduTutor VA	Ms. Kristen Amundson
Virginia School Boards Association	Mr. Douglas Brown
Augusta County Public Schools	Ms. Wendy Chandler
Collaborative for Student Success	Mr. Jim Cowen
Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals	Ms. Victoria Gilbert
ExcelinEd	Ms. Christy Hovanetz
Comprehensive Instructional Program	Mr. Matt Hurt
All4Ed	Ms. Anne Hyslop
Virginia Community Colleges	Ms. Paula Mooradian
School Board Member Alliance	Ms. Shelly Norden
Virginia Council on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children member/Virgina K-12 Parent	Ms. Tian Olsen
Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals	Dr. Melanie M. Patterson
Former State Board of Education Member; Roanoke City Public Schools	Dr. Alan Seibert
Virginia Association of School Superintendents	Dr. Kristy Somerville-Midgette
Virginia Education Association	Mr. Chad Stewart
Virginia K-12 Parent	Mr. Todd Truitt
Virginia Teacher of the Year (Region 5) and Adapted Special Education Teacher at Jefferson Forest High School Bedford	Ms. Genevieve Kathryn Weaver

The Innovative Assessment Work Group had a kickoff meeting on October 30, 2025. At this meeting, participants reviewed the purpose and goals of the Work Group, examined the current status of the assessment system and progress made on HB 585, reviewed and provided input on sample innovative assessment items, and discussed next steps. Additional meetings are scheduled for November 6, November 20, and December 4, 2025. The Work Group will produce an initial set of recommendations by January 2026.

Innovative assessments are also informed by input from the Department's Technical Advisory Council (TAC). The TAC is an advisory board of national experts and respected psychometricians with in-depth knowledge of effective practices for large-scale assessments. TAC members provide guidance on assessment design, development, and implementation; standard setting and cut scores; growth models; test item banks; innovative assessment items; and test security. TAC Members are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Virginia’s Technical Advisory Council

Experience	Name
National Assessment Governing Board and Professor Emeritus for the University of Pittsburgh	Dr. Suzanne Lane
Former Chief Research Scientist at the College Board	Dr. Denny Way
Former Assistant Commissioner for the Florida Department of Education	Mr. Vincent Verges
Nation Expert in Multilingual Learners and a Virginia Public School Parent	Dr. Molly Faulkner-Bond

On October 2-3, 2025, TAC members, Department staff, and the state’s assessment vendor convened to discuss Virginia’s assessment system. The group reviewed innovative test items, including science simulations and performance tasks, and engaged in thoughtful discussion on strategies to incorporate these items into future assessments.

NEXT STEPS

The Department will continue to provide monthly status updates of accomplished tasks and project benchmarks as the contractor and Work Group convene. Once completed, a full report will be distributed to the General Assembly.