

Local Alternative Assessment Guidelines for 2016-2017 through 2018-2019

Legislative Mandate: House Bill 930 and Senate Bill 306

Legislation in the 2014 General Assembly amended [§ 22.1-253.13:3.C](#) of the *Code of Virginia* to eliminate several 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.

Specifically, the *Code* now states (emphasis added):

The Standards of Learning assessments administered to students in grades three through eight shall not exceed (a) reading and mathematics in grades three and four; (b) reading, mathematics, and science in grade five; (c) reading and mathematics in grades six and seven; (d) reading, writing, mathematics, and science in grade eight; and (e) Virginia Studies and Civics and Economics once each at the grade levels deemed appropriate by each local school board.

In addition to eliminating these SOL tests, the legislation also requires each local school board to annually certify that it has provided instruction and administered an alternative assessment, consistent with Virginia Board of Education guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each SOL subject area in which the SOL assessment was eliminated. Specifically, the *Code* now states:

Each school board shall annually certify that it has provided instruction and administered an alternative assessment, consistent with Board guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each Standards of Learning subject area in which a Standards of Learning assessment was not administered during the school year. Such guidelines shall (1) incorporate options for age-appropriate, authentic performance assessments and portfolios with rubrics and other methodologies designed to ensure that students are making adequate academic progress in the subject area and that the Standards of Learning content is being taught; (2) permit and encourage integrated assessments that include multiple subject areas; and (3) emphasize collaboration between teachers to administer and substantiate the assessments and the professional development of teachers to enable them to make the best use of alternative assessments.

Legislative Intent

In response to increasing concern regarding the amount of testing in local school divisions and the time spent in test preparation activities, legislation passed in the 2014 General Assembly eliminated some of the tests previously used for accountability. The intent of the legislation was to encourage the greater use of assessments, such as performance assessments, that may be used

by teachers to improve their instruction. Such assessments provide information about what students have learned as well as the concepts and skills that they have not yet mastered.

Purpose of the Guidelines

The *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2016-2017 through 2018-2019* are intended to clarify the expectation that school divisions are to demonstrate progress in moving toward the use of performance assessments and provide a timeline for the implementation of performance assessments in Virginia schools. In addition, the guidelines are intended to encourage sharing high quality, performance assessments, to help assess the need for ongoing professional development, and to provide the opportunity through a variety of approaches for students to be successful.

Definition of Authentic Performance Assessments

Performance assessments generally require students to perform a task or create a product that is typically scored using a rubric. Authentic performance assessments often include tasks that mirror those that might occur in a "real-life" situation.

Timeline for the Implementation of Performance Assessments

For the 2016-2017 school year, school divisions are 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.

The expanded use of authentic, performance assessments constitutes a direction for the Commonwealth that is still relatively new. As such there is no expectation that the performance assessments will be perfectly executed immediately; rather, this should be viewed as an opportunity to engage in innovation that will provide new opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge of the curriculum.

Expectations for Inclusion of SOL in Alternative Assessments

School divisions should administer assessments that incorporate either each strand or reporting category¹ for that content area and grade level (e.g., the Economics strand² for Grade 3 History/Social Science or the Civics and Economics Reporting Category for US History: 1865 to the Present). However, the assessments will not be expected to cover all of the content standards contained in that strand.

Certification That Content Has Been Taught and Assessments Administered

Scores from the local assessments will not be reported to the Department of Education. Instead local school boards and division superintendents will certify through the annual Standards of Quality (SOQ) compliance assurance that local alternative assessments measuring the Standards of Learning (SOL) and adhering to the Board's guidelines have been administered. School divisions will be asked to prepare plans that describe how performance assessments that are designed to inform instruction will be implemented in 2016-2017 as well as how their use will be

expanded in 2017-2018 and beyond. School divisions are expected to use the *Framework for Local Alternative Assessment Implementation* found at the end of these guidelines to assess their progress in implementing performance assessments in their divisions and to include their status on the continuum in the plans submitted to the Department of Education. The framework includes seven stages in the implementation of local performance assessments: *readiness, design, develop, administer, use, account, and institutionalize/innovate*. Included with the framework are two supplements that are intended to assist school divisions in determining in what stage they are in the continuum of implementing performance assessments. The first describes actions associated with each stage in the framework and the second identifies documents that could be used to verify a school division's placement in each stage. A third supplement provides examples of actions associated with enacting the vision of the Local Alternative Assessment Initiative.

Desk Reviews

During the 2016-2017 through the 2018-2019 school years Department staff will conduct annual site visits or "desk reviews" in which documents will be examined and school division staff interviewed either by webinar or by telephone. The purpose of these reviews will be to determine how local school divisions are verifying that the content is being taught, to determine the types of alternative assessments that are being administered, to identify exemplars of performance assessments that may be shared with other school divisions, and to assist teachers, schools and school divisions in strengthening their own alternative, performance assessments. The reviews will help Department staff to identify "best practices" for sharing with other Virginia school divisions. School divisions are to retain the documents listed below until the summer after the assessments are administered as some of the documents may be examined as a part of the desk reviews.

- 1) Documentation that demonstrates that the assessments administered address each strand or reporting category included in the SOL for that grade and subject,
- 2) Copies of the assessments, including performance tasks, and
- 3) Any ancillary materials such as rubrics or sample student responses used to train teachers.

Development or Selection of Assessments

The selection of the local assessments is left to the discretion of the school division. Assessments used should be designed to provide feedback to parents and teachers regarding the extent to which the student has demonstrated proficiency in the content included in the SOL covered and should demonstrate progress in implementing performance assessments.

Local school divisions may choose to administer the same assessments for particular grade levels and content areas to all students in the division or may provide schools with flexibility in choosing the assessments to be administered.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

School divisions should be aware of the following requirement found in [Section 300.160 c \(1\) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#):

A State (or, in the case of a district-wide assessment, an LEA) must develop and implement alternate assessments and guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in regular assessments, even with accommodations, as indicated in their respective IEPs, as provided in paragraph (a) of this section.

If school divisions choose to meet the local alternative assessment requirements through the use of division wide assessments, an alternate assessment for students with disabilities who cannot participate in regular division assessment must be provided.

Use of Integrated Assessments

The legislation encourages *integrated assessments that include multiple subject areas*. For example, a local assessment might address content from both grade 3 history and grade 3 science. If such assessments are used, the results should include information about the extent to which the student has demonstrated proficiency in each reporting category or strand of each specific set of SOL covered.

Professional Development

The capacity of teachers to design and implement assessments that are intended to inform instruction is likely to vary widely across the Commonwealth. School divisions should evaluate the capacity and experience of their teachers in implementing such assessments and to use this information to design professional development. Professional development should encourage the collaboration of teachers within grades and across grades in implementing the assessments and in using their results in determining instructional needs. School divisions are encouraged to leverage the resources and established training opportunities available from professional organizations.

Use of Local Assessments in State Accreditation or Federal Accountability

The results of the local authentic assessments will not be used to designate state accreditation or federal accountability status.

¹School divisions should be aware that the Scientific Investigation, Reasoning, and Logic strand of the grade 3 Science SOL is not to be assessed separately from the content strands but rather included as a part of local alternative assessments for each content strand. This strand represents a set of systematic inquiry skills that defines what a student will be able to do when planning and conducting investigations within the physical, biological, and Earth sciences.

²The strands for history SOL are: 1) History, 2) Geography, 3) Economics, and 4) Civics

Framework for Local Alternative Assessment (LAA) Implementation

	Readiness	Design	Develop	Administer	Use	Account	Institutionalize & Innovate
Operational Definitions of Stages	Ensuring readiness in the personnel, technical, and organizational domains of the division in order to undertake the initiative, namely with regard the development and use of performance-based assessments (PBAs).	Similar to the work of an architect, making use of required guidelines and desirable qualities of alternative assessments to conceptualize Local Alternative Assessments (LAAs).	Similar to the work of an engineer, applying expert knowledge of the relevant academic disciplines, pedagogies, characteristics of child development, needs of special populations (e.g., ELL, SPED), and principles of assessment to create technically adequate (i.e., valid & reliable) LAAs.	Teachers administer and students complete LAAs; teachers and school leaders evaluate performance on LAAs.	LAA results are used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. evaluate student learning (summative), b. demonstrate student progress relative to Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), c. make formative decisions about instruction, and d. critique and strengthen the validity and reliability of the LAAs. 	LAA results are reported to constituents (parents, students, teachers), as appropriate.	Alternative assessments are incorporated within a balanced assessment system at the classroom level by teachers and at the school / division level by educational leaders; alternative assessment practices prompt innovative instruction and deeper learning.

Supplement 1: Essential Actions Relevant to the LAA Initiative

	Readiness	Design	Develop	Administer	Use	Account	Institutionalize & Innovate
<p>Descriptions of Actions Considered Essential to Meeting the Intent of the LAA Initiative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Awareness of requirements of the initiative among key personnel in the division (e.g., teachers, school leaders, school board). b. Assessment literacy of LAA developers. c. Assessment literacy for administrators. d. Leaders / champions for initiative identified within the division. e. Determination of either school- or division-level implementation of the LAA initiative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Create LAAs for removed SOL assessments. b. Align LAAs to SOL Strands or Reporting Categories. c. Create common language and template examples. d. Undertake a grass-roots process (i.e., teachers collaborating in designing PBAs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Align LAAs to relevant SOLs. b. Identify authentic performance-based tasks. c. Create of valid and reliable prompts. d. Identify relevant and feasible student response formats. e. Create accurate and reasonably objective performance criteria (i.e., rubrics). f. Identify appropriate accommodations for the Inclusion of special populations (e.g., ELL, special education). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Administer LAAs in designated grades / subjects. b. Score LAAs. c. Embed LAAs into curriculum maps and/or pacing guides. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Evaluate student performance. b. Use results on LAA to adjust instruction and revise/improve LAAs. c. Use results to demonstrate student growth / achievement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Report results to teachers, students, and parents. b. “Substantiate” LAAs to VDOE. 	<p>Review and revise division curriculum to reflect 21st century skills (i.e., critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and citizenship), subject-specific skills, and integrated skills.</p> <p>Undertake initiatives through professional development and instructional supervision to align teachers’ pedagogical practices to more authentic, engaging learning experiences.</p>

Supplement 2: Documents Relevant to Substantiating Compliance with the LAA Initiative

	Readiness	Design	Develop	Administer	Use	Account	Institutionalize & Innovate
Examples of Documents and Artifacts	Professional development materials	LAA design template	Local alternative assessments Anchor responses Inter-rater reliability protocols	Written directions for administering LAAs	Student score report template Sample student score reports	Aggregate student score reports Multi-year LAA development plan	Division-level strategic plan that includes vision and action plan for LAA initiative and innovation Balanced assessment plan

Supplement 3: Illustrative Examples of Enacting the Vision of the LAA Initiative

	Readiness	Design	Develop	Administer	Use	Account	Institutionalize & Innovate
Illustrative Examples	<p>Ensure broad-based awareness of and support for initiative among key stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students, parents, school board).</p> <p>Develop teacher and instructional leaders' capacity to create PBAs.</p>	<p>Align to broad educational aims, career and college readiness, 21st century skills (i.e., critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and citizenship), and sophisticated learning goals (e.g., scientific inquiry, jurisprudential inquiry, writing for a variety of purposes and audiences).</p>	<p>Develop alternative assessments in non-tested grade levels to strengthen vertical alignment.</p> <p>Develop alternative assessments in non-tested subject areas to strengthen interdisciplinary integration and alignment.</p>	<p>Engage students in metacognitive / self-assessment protocols.</p> <p>Embed the use of alternative assessment practices throughout the year as a regular part of instructional units.</p>	<p>Provide public exhibitions / showcases of student performances and products.</p> <p>Pilot, analyze, and revise LAAs to strengthen validity, reliability, and authenticity.</p>	<p>Enact capstone assessments (e.g., exiting elementary school, exiting middle school, and exiting high school) within division.</p> <p>Utilize LAAs for school and teacher growth goals.</p>	<p>Expand use of performance assessments in non-tested grade-levels and subject areas.</p> <p>Develop teacher and instructional leaders' capacity to create PBAs</p> <p>Connect assessment and pedagogy to develop instructional methods and strategies</p> <p>Promote teachers' collaborative analysis of student work to critique and strengthen curriculum, instruction, and assessment.</p>