# Superintendent’s Memo #181-19

[](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/index.shtml)  
**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA   
Department of Education**

DATE: August 2, 2019

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: Balanced Assessment Plans for 2019-2020

On January 24, 2019, the Virginia Board of Education adopted the [*Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2018-2019 through 2019-2020*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2019/025-19a.docx) to provide guidance to school division staff for continued implementation of local alternative assessments administered in place of the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests eliminated by the General Assembly in 2014 (Grade 3 History, Grade 3 Science, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History: 1865 to the Present). These *Guidelines* state:

Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, all school divisions will be expected to prepare Balanced Assessment Plans for each of the five replaced SOL assessments. These Balanced Assessment Plans will more fully detail the local alternative assessment plan for each of these courses and will indicate the types of assessments used to measure the content and skills covered in the course. Assessment plans may include a variety of assessment types but must include some performance assessments.

Additionally, the *Guidelines* state:

The development and selection of the local assessments that comprise the balanced assessment plans are left to the discretion of the school division. However, assessments used should be designed to provide feedback to students, parents, and teachers regarding the extent to which the student has demonstrated proficiency in the content and skills included in the SOL covered and should demonstrate continued progress in implementing performance assessments as part of a balanced local assessment system.

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) provided professional development, “Supporting Instruction and Deeper Learning through Balanced Assessment,” to assist school divisions in the development of a balanced approach to assessment that is used to inform instruction. The presentation from these events has been shared with participants and is available [online](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/professional-development/2019/index.shtml) with other materials. Additional materials used during these events will be posted [online](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/professional-development/2019/index.shtml) as they become available. As announced in the professional development sessions, school divisions are expected to develop Balanced Assessment Plans for the 2019-2020 school year by October 25, 2019. An attachment, “Overview of Balanced Assessment Plans,” and the [Assessment Inventory Tool](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/professional-development/2019/assessment-inventory-tool.docx) are provided as guidance and support to school divisions.

School divisions are asked to respond to a survey related to balanced assessment and the implementation of performance assessments in their division by August 23, 2019. A separate communication that will include the link for the online survey will be sent to Division Directors of Testing. Responses to this survey will be compiled and used to plan professional development and support for school divisions. Before completing the survey, please review the [*Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2018-2019 through 2019-2020*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2019/025-19a.docx) and the [*Framework for Local Alternative Assessment Implementation*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/framework-for-laa-implementation.pdf).

To further support school divisions in the development of Balanced Assessment Plans, optional webinars will be offered as follows:

Thursday, August 15, 2019: 3:00-4:00 p.m.

Friday, August 16, 2019: 7:30-8:30 a.m.

Thursday, October 10, 2019: 4:00-5:00 p.m.

Friday, October 11, 2019: 7:30-8:30 a.m.

Information needed to access these webinars will be sent in a separate communication to the contact person identified in each division’s survey response.

Finally, a sample of school divisions representing each of the eight Superintendent’s regions will be selected for desk review of Balanced Assessment Plans for 2019-2020. VDOE staff will use these reviews to determine: 1) the ways in which local school divisions are verifying that content and skills are being taught; and 2) the types of alternative assessments that are being administered. These reviews will also be used to identify professional development needs and exemplars of Balanced Assessment Plans that may be shared with other school divisions. School divisions selected for review will be notified in November 2019.

Questions should be directed by email to [student\_assessment@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:student_assessment@doe.virginia.gov) or by telephone to (804) 225-2102.

JFL/LHC/sw

Attachment

A: [Overview of Balanced Assessment Plans](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/10697/638030759979130000) (Word)