Overview:

Balanced Assessment Plans

The *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2018-2019 through 2019-2020* adopted by the Virginia Board of Education in January 2019 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.

# Requirements

Division-level Balanced Assessment Plans are to include information for each of the courses for which the General Assembly eliminated the Standards of Learning (SOL) test in 2014 (Grade 3 History, Grade 3 Science, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History: 1865 to the Present) and replaced these SOL tests with local alternative assessments. These plans should reflect a move toward balanced assessment to inform instruction, must include performance assessment, and must indicate that content is being taught and assessed in each of these courses. The school division may develop separate Balanced Assessment Plans for each of these courses or one Balanced Assessment Plan that addresses each of these areas.

Balanced Assessment Plans should indicate the types of local alternative assessments (e.g., formative, diagnostic, summative) and how they will be used to measure students’ mastery of specific content and skills for each course. Plans should also indicate the item formats (e.g., multiple-choice, short answer, performance assessments) that will be used. Detailed documentation of the daily formative assessment practices and strategies used during classroom instruction is not required, but the division’s plan for supporting the effective use of ongoing formative assessment should be described. Evidence of opportunities for students to demonstrate acquisition of Virginia’s 5 C’s (critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration and citizenship) is encouraged.

# Considerations

## Format

A specific format is not required for the Balanced Assessment Plans, and divisions should consider if existing documents may be adjusted to reflect the assessments administered. For example, it may be possible to modify local documents describing the scope and/or sequence of instructional units within a content area to include the information needed in a Balanced Assessment Plan.

## Assessment Inventory

An Assessment Inventory Tool was introduced during the “Supporting Instruction and Deeper Learning through Balanced Assessment” professional development events as a sample that school divisions may use to evaluate current assessment systems. Use of this Assessment Inventory Tool is not required; however, use of an assessment review process is encouraged to obtain a comprehensive picture of the assessment system currently in place. Analyzing the results of a completed assessment inventory can be helpful in making deliberate decisions about the continued use of each assessment administered to students in each course or content area.

If an assessment inventory is conducted, school divisions are encouraged to use a team approach to consider each assessment carefully. The inventory may serve to: 1) identify assessments that do not serve the intended purpose; 2) ensure that each assessment provides useful data that justifies the instructional time required for its administration; 3) identify redundancies where assessments should be considered for elimination; and 4) identify gaps where measures are needed for certain content or skills. The results of this decision-making process can then inform the division’s Balanced Assessment Plans.

## Additional Courses or Content Areas

Some school divisions have adopted balanced assessment practices that prompt innovative instruction and deeper learning in additional courses or content areas. School divisions may wish to develop Balanced Assessment Plans for these courses or content areas to document these innovations.

# Records Retention, Revision, and Virginia Department of Education Review

## Records Retention

Balanced Assessment Plans should be maintained for one year after the end of the academic year.

## Revision

Balanced Assessment Plans are written for a particular school year; as such, annual review and revision are required.

## Desk Reviews

A sample of school divisions representing each of the eight Superintendent’s regions will be selected for desk review by Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff to determine the ways local school divisions are verifying content is being taught and the types of alternative assessments that are being administered. These reviews will also be used to identify professional development needs and exemplars of performance assessments and Balanced Assessment Plans that may be shared with other school divisions. School divisions selected for review will be notified in November 2019. Only those school divisions selected for review will submit their Balanced Assessment Plans to the VDOE.