



## **Fast Facts**

### **New State Assessment Rules for Students Using the VGLA: Considerations for IEP and 504 Teams**

**June 2010**

On April 23, 2010, via Superintendent's Memorandum Number 096-10, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) informed school division superintendents about new rules for students with disabilities who use the Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA) Standards of Learning (SOL) state assessment. Concerns raised by Virginians, feedback from the United States Department of Education, and results of VDOE monitoring indicated the need to examine the use of the VGLA as a test option for the state's accountability system. The Virginia General Assembly passed House Bill 304, which was signed into law by Governor McDonnell, which requires justification for each student participating in the VGLA and calls for eventually phasing out the use of the VGLA as a test option for students with disabilities.

The new law requires that IEP teams and 504 committees have justification, using the VDOE participation criteria form, for any student who will be participating in the VGLA during the 2010-2011 school year. Supporting documentation and a justification statement explaining why they have determined that the impact of the student's disability prevents the student from accessing the regular SOL assessment(s), even with accommodations, must be maintained in the student's record. Each local superintendent and school board chairman must certify to the Virginia Board of Education that there is a justification form included for all students with disabilities who take the VGLA. VGLA math testing will be discontinued in 2012 and VGLA reading will be discontinued in 2013 for students with disabilities. A time table has not been established yet for phasing out use of the VGLA for writing, history and science.

Parents and IEP teams should be aware that a new online test option, the Virginia Modified Achievement Standard Test (VMAST) will be available for math in 2012 and reading in 2013. The VMAST is for students with disabilities who are learning grade level content but are not expected to achieve proficiency at the same level as their peers. Reports from the field indicate that some of these students have been participating in the VGLA. For them, the VMAST will be a more appropriate assessment.

For more information about the new requirements visit the Virginia Department of Education Web site and refer to Superintendent's Memorandum Number 096-10, April 23, 2010 at <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/index.shtml> or contact the Division of Special Education and Student Services at 804-225-2932, 1-800-422-2083, text users dial 711 (Virginia Relay).

For more information about local policies and procedures, contact the local special education director.