# Agenda Item: F-Revised (April 18, 2023)

## Date: April 20, 2023

## Title: Final Review of a Proposal to Approve Only a Year-to-Year Comparison of State Assessment Results to Determine Growth

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## Purpose of Presentation:

Action required by state or federal law or regulation

## Executive Summary:

Growth for students who failed the grades 4-8 mathematics and reading state assessments was included in the state accountability system for the first time in accreditation year 2018-2019 based on data from the 2017-2018 school year. It is a component of the combined rate used in the *Academic Achievement-Mathematics*, *Academic Achievement-English*, *Achievement Gap-Mathematics*, and *Achievement Gap-English* indicators. Initially, the methodology used to determine whether a student who failed the test but demonstrated growth included the use of a year-to-year comparison of state assessment results (previous spring test results to current spring test results).

Legislation in the 2021 General Assembly ([HB2027](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?211+sum+HB2027)) amended the [Standards of Quality (Standard 3)](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter13.2/section22.1-253.13:3/#:~:text=In%20lieu%20of%20a%20one-time%20end-of-year%20assessment%2C%20the%20Board%20shall%20establish%2C%20for%20the%20purpose%20of%20providing%20measures%20of%20individual%20student%20growth%20over%20the%20course%20of%20the%20school%20year%2C%20a%20through-year%20growth%20assessment%20system%2C) to include the administration of growth assessments for grades 3-8 reading and mathematics, with “at least one beginning-of-year, one mid-year, and one end-of-year assessment.” Full implementation of the growth assessments occurred over a two-year period. During the 2021-2022 school year, only a beginning of year (fall) growth assessment was given. During the 2022-2023 school year, a fall and mid-year (winter) growth assessment were given.

Due to the addition of growth assessments in [Standard 3](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/22.1-253.13:3/) in 2021, the Board approved a new methodology to determine growth ([July 2021](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/36711/638059464212170000)) so that the methodology included both a year-to-year comparison of Standards of Learning (SOL) test results as well as a comparison of fall growth assessment results to the current spring SOL test results. Specifically for the 2021-2022 school year, growth was determined by first comparing the spring 2022 SOL test results to the spring 2021 SOL test results. If that comparison did not show growth, then the spring 2022 SOL results were compared to the fall 2021 growth assessment results to determine whether there was growth.

Using either the spring 2021 or fall 2021 test results as the initial comparative data measure was possible because the fall 2021 growth assessments measured the previous grade’s content, the same content that was measured by the spring 2021 SOL test. For example, a grade 5 student who took the grade 5 reading test in spring 2021, took a fall 2021 growth assessment as a grade 6 student that measured grade 5 reading content. That same student took the grade 6 reading test in spring 2022. Both comparisons, spring 2021 to spring 2022, and fall 2021 to spring 2022 compared student performance on grade 5 content to student performance on grade 6 content. The exception to this rule was for students in grade 3. Students take an end-of-year SOL test in reading and mathematics for the first time in grade 3. Therefore, there was only one comparison that was available to determine growth. The fall growth assessment (which measured grade 3 content) was compared to the spring SOL test (which measured grade 3 content) to determine whether the student demonstrated growth.

Based on direction provided by previous Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) leadership, the content level of the growth assessments changed in school year 2022-2023. Unlike the fall 2021 growth assessments that focused on content from the student’s previous grade level, the 2022-2023 school year fall and winter growth assessments focused primarily on content from the student’s current grade level. Because the growth assessments no longer focus on the previous year’s content, the methodology approved by the Board in July 2021 is no longer applicable.

VDOE is requesting that the Board approve:

* For grades 4-8: The use of only a year-to-year comparison of state assessment results in the methodology to determine whether a student demonstrated growth. A year-to-year comparison results in comparing a previous year’s SOL test or Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) test to the current year’s SOL test or VAAP test. This will allow the student’s performance on the previous year’s content to be compared to performance on the current year’s content.
* For grade 3: Comparing the fall growth assessment results to the current spring SOL test results in the methodology to determine whether a student demonstrated growth. Since grade 3 is the first year in which students take an SOL or VAAP assessment in the spring, there is not a previous year’s assessment from which to calculate growth. A fall growth assessment to spring SOL test comparison will allow the student’s growth on the current year’s content to be considered in accountability calculations. This is the same methodology used for grade 3 during the 2021-2022 school year (2022-2023 accountability year). Note that grade 3 students who participate in VAAP testing will not be included in accountability growth calculations because they do not take growth assessments.

**Reasons for Using Only a Year-to-Year Comparison in the Growth Determination Methodology**

The administration of “through-year” growth assessments, which focus primarily on content students are being taught in the current year, occurred for the first time in the 2022-2023 school year. Accordingly, there is no longitudinal data to guide decisions regarding how much within-year growth a student would need to make on a particular test to demonstrate sufficient progress. The necessary data analysis to determine the appropriate amount of within-year growth a student must demonstrate to be included in accountability calculations cannot occur until sufficient testing data is available.

In addition, measurement of student growth in grades 3-8 reading and mathematics is part of Virginia’s federal accountability plan under the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA). In December 2022, the U.S. Department of Education (USED) approved [Amendment 5 to Virginia’s Consolidated State Plan](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/40562/638078265189700000). Amendment 5 includes the growth methodology that was in place during the 2021-2022 school year (comparison of previous spring SOL test results to current spring SOL test results; and fall 2021 growth assessment results to spring 2022 SOL test results, if necessary). Communication from USED indicated that the use of two comparisons in the growth determination methodology could only be approved for the 2021-2022 school year based on flexibility related to the pandemic. However, after the 2021-2022 school year, the use of two comparisons, which results in growth being demonstrated differently for students in the testing population (some students demonstrated growth from the previous spring SOL test to the current spring SOL test and some students demonstrated growth from the fall growth assessment to the current spring SOL test), does not meet federal guidance. Therefore, another growth methodology is necessary for calculating the federal growth measure for the 2022-2023 school year.

To maintain consistency across the state and federal accountability models, VDOE recommends that the methodology for determining growth be the same in both models. The methodology that uses only a year-to-year comparison was previously approved by USED, and VDOE does not anticipate an issue getting that methodology approved for federal accountability, should the Board approve it for use for state accreditation. In addition, USED has given preliminary guidance that they would support the exception to year-to-year testing for grade 3 students, as outlined above.

Lastly, students who participate in the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) are also included in the growth calculations. This population of students does not take fall or winter growth assessments. The determination of growth for these students must be based on a year-to-year comparison (previous spring VAAP testing results to current spring VAAP testing results). Approving only the year-to-year comparison for grades 4-8 students who participate in SOL testing would parallel this methodology.

Based on the explanation above, VDOE requests the Board’s approval to use only a year-to-year comparison of state assessment results (previous spring test results to current spring test results) for grades 4-8 students within the growth determination methodology, and a comparison of fall growth assessment results to current spring SOL test results for grade 3 students. This methodology would begin with the 2022-2023 school year and continue until sufficient data is available to support a different methodology.

## Action Requested:

* Approval requested at this meeting.

## Superintendent’s Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board approve the *Proposal to Approve a Year-to-Year Comparison of State Assessment Results to Determine Growth*, beginning with the 2022-2023 school year and until sufficient data is available to support a different methodology.

**Rationale for Action:**

Approval of the growth methodology at the April 20, 2023, meeting will allow time for the changes to be incorporated into the accreditation calculations prior to the September 2023 release of the accreditation ratings.

## Previous Review or Action:

* First Review on March 23, 2023

## Background Information and Statutory Authority:

[July 22, 2021, Board of Education Business Meeting](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/36711/638059464212170000):

The Board approved using both the previous spring SOL test results and the current fall growth assessment test results to determine whether a student demonstrated growth.

[August 17, 2022, Board of Education Business Meeting](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/35698/638054987774900000):

This Board approved actions that would mitigate the potential negative impacts of being unable to include growth for VAAP students in accreditation calculations for the 2021-2022 school year. Growth could not be calculated for students taking the VAAP assessments because the VAAP test format was new in spring 2022, and there was not a

previous assessment score from which to measure or calculate growth.

[September 15, 2022, Board of Education Business Meeting:](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/35774/638055008285870000)

The Board approved Amendment 5 to Virginia’s Consolidated State plan.

**Statutory and Regulatory Code Pertinent to the Measurement and Use of Growth**

Subsection A of [Standard 3](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/22.1-253.13:3/) states, in part, that growth measures must be a part of the standards for accreditation:

A. The Board shall promulgate regulations establishing standards for accreditation pursuant to the Administrative Process Act (§ [2.2-4000](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/2.2-4000/) et seq.), which shall include (i) student outcome and growth measures . . . .

## Subsection C of [Standard 3](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/22.1-253.13:3/) states, in part, that the Board shall establish through-year growth assessments and that the VDOE shall ensure adequate training for teachers and principals on how to interpret and use student growth data to improve reading and mathematics instruction:

In lieu of a one-time end-of-year assessment, the Board shall establish, for the purpose of providing measures of individual student growth over the course of the school year, a through-year growth assessment system, aligned with the Standards of Learning, for the administration of reading and mathematics assessments in grades three through eight. Such through-year growth assessment system shall include at least one beginning-of-year, one mid-year, and one end-of-year assessment in order to provide individual student growth scores over the course of the school year, but the total time scheduled for taking all such assessments shall not exceed 150 percent of the time scheduled for taking a single end-of-year proficiency assessment. The Department shall ensure adequate training for teachers and principals on how to interpret and use student growth data from such assessments to improve reading and mathematics instruction in grades three through eight throughout the school year. With such funds and content as are available for such purpose, such through-year growth assessment system shall provide accurate measurement of a student's performance, through computer adaptive technology, using test items at, below, and above the student's grade level as necessary.

## [8VAC20-131-380](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter131/section380/#:~:text=The%20board%20may%20adopt%20valid%20and%20reliable%20measures) F of the [*Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter131/) (SOA) gives authority to the Board to adopt student growth measures:

5. The board may adopt valid and reliable measures of student growth to be used in calculating the Academic Achievement Indicators for English and mathematics and in determining the progress of English learners toward English proficiency.

## [8VAC20-131-380](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter131/section380/#:~:text=1.-,The%20school%20quality%20indicators,-and%20performance%20levels) F 1 of the [SOA](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter131/) details the inclusion of growth measures in the combined rate of the Academic Achievement Indicators and Achievement Gap indicators for grades 3-8 English and mathematics.

a. Academic Achievement Indicator for all students for English (reading and writing) to be calculated based on a rate of (i) students who passed board-approved assessments, (ii) any additional students who showed growth using board-approved measures, and (iii) any additional students who are English learners who showed growth toward English proficiency using board-approved measures.

b. Academic Achievement Indicators for all students for Mathematics to be calculated based on the rate of (i) students who passed board-approved assessments and (ii) any additional students who showed growth using board-approved measures.

d. Academic achievement gaps for English (reading and writing): A single performance level is assigned for academic achievement gaps for English (reading and writing), based upon the composite of performance levels calculated individually for each reporting group using the same methodology and benchmarks as provided for in the academic achievement indicators for all students…

e. Academic achievement gaps for mathematics. A single performance level is assigned for academic achievement gaps for mathematics, based upon the composite of performance levels calculated individually for each reporting group using the same methodology and benchmarks as provided for in the academic achievement indicators for all students…

[ESEA section 1111(c)(4)(B)-(C)](https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/essa-legislation-table-contents/title-i-part-a/#:~:text=State%2Ddetermined%20timeline.-,INDICATORS,-.%E2%80%94Except%20for%20the) states that an academic measure must be valid, reliable, and comparable across all LEAs in the State for all students.

[Frequently Asked Questions Document, published February 2022, (USED)](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2022/02/Acct-FAQ-Final-2.11.22.pdf)

Question B-10. May a State modify its methodology to calculate an indicator using the “best of” two or more data points on an individual student basis?

No. An indicator that is calculated using different data for different students and schools is not comparable or statewide and, therefore, not consistent with the ESEA. For that reason, the Department has not approved a State plan or amendment that includes an indicator that is calculated using the higher of, or best of, two different data sources…it must maintain a consistent approach for calculating each indicator for all students.

## Timetable for Further Review/Action:

Following approval by the Board, the changes will be incorporated into the accreditation calculations.

## Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

There is no impact of the action on VDOE resources (fiscal or staff), and the impact on local school divisions’ resources is indeterminate.