



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

April 25, 2014

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT:

Use of the Virginia Modified Achievement Standards Test (VMAST) and the Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP) for Students with Disabilities pursuing the Standard Diploma with Credit Accommodations or the Modified Standard Diploma

As a result of the 2012 General Assembly's amendment to the *Code of Virginia* eliminating the Modified Standard Diploma, the Board of Education was directed to make provisions for students with disabilities. The Board amended the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* to permit credit accommodations for students with disabilities pursuing a Standard Diploma. In March 2013, the Board of Education approved guidelines for school divisions on allowable credit accommodations.

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide clarification to school divisions regarding use of the VMAST and VSEP for students with disabilities who are pursuing Standard Diplomas with credit accommodations and the use of VMAST for students with disabilities pursuing Modified Standard Diplomas.

Students with Disabilities Pursuing a Standard Diploma with Credit Accommodations

- Beginning with the summer 2014 Standards of Learning (SOL) test administration, VMAST will no longer be a part of Virginia's accountability system; however, End-of-Course (EOC) Reading VMAST and Algebra I VMAST will continue to be available as a credit accommodation for eligible students with disabilities. To take the VMAST for verified credit purposes, students must pass the course and score 374 or below following two attempts at the corresponding SOL EOC test. The passing score on VMAST remains at 400; the score may not be used to determine if a student may receive a locally awarded verified credit.
- Because the Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP) is an alternative to the SOL tests and covers the same content, students who have been determined to be eligible for credit accommodations may use VSEP scores to qualify for locally awarded verified credits. The credit accommodations guidelines communicated to school divisions via Superintendent's Memo No. 191-13, July 26, 2013, provides the follow guidance regarding locally awarded verified credits:

To be eligible to earn locally awarded verified credits in English, mathematics, science and/or history and social science under the guidance, an eligible student must:

- a. Pass the high school course,

- b. Score within a 375-399 scale score range on any administration of the Standards of Learning test after taking the test at least twice, and
- c. Demonstrate achievement in the academic content through an appeal process administered at the local level.

Students who participate in VSEP must meet the same criteria. However, the VSEP assessments do not provide scaled scores. The VSEP score range comparable to a scaled score of 375-399 on the SOL tests is 95-123 on the end-of-course reading VSEP and 72-99 on the Algebra I VSEP.

- Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams and 504 committees must always evaluate a student's eligibility for credit accommodations relative to the following eligibility criteria adopted by the Board of Education in the [Guidelines for Standard Diploma Credit Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#):
 - a. Student must have a current IEP or 504 plan with standards-based content goals.
 - b. Due to the intensity of the student's disability the student is unlikely to achieve and make progress commensurate with grade level expectations, but is learning on grade level content.
 - c. Student needs significant instructional supports to access grade level SOL content and to show progress.
 - d. Based on multiple objective measures of past performance, the student might not be expected to achieve the required standard and verified units of credit within the standard time frame.

A [sample eligibility form](#) has been developed and is available for use. Additional materials and training resources developed on credit accommodations can be found at:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/credit_accommodations.shtml

- The failure to consider eligibility criteria in full or the lack of documentation related to a student's eligibility for credit accommodations could result in a denial of the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). School divisions are required to report the use of credit accommodations as part of the student record collection (SRC) annually. To ensure compliance with this Board of Education policy, the Office of Federal Program Monitoring (OFPM) will begin conducting focused monitoring visits to school divisions beginning in June 2014. Approximately 26 school divisions will be chosen at random for this review. The selected school divisions will be contacted by OFPM staff to schedule the review.

Students with Disabilities Pursuing a Modified Standard Diploma

- Although the Modified Standard Diploma is being phased out, students with disabilities who entered the 9th grade for the first time prior to 2013-2014 may continue to pursue this diploma option.
- The grade 8 VMAST mathematics test and the grade 8 VMAST reading test will continue to be available for students pursuing the Modified Standard Diploma.
- Passing scores of 400 are needed on the VMAST grade 8 mathematics test and grade 8 reading assessment to fulfill the Modified Standard Diploma numeracy and literacy certification requirements.
- IEP teams must determine eligibility for the VMAST based on the VMAST participation criteria. The VMAST participation criteria and other resources are located on the VDOE Web site at http://doe.virginia.gov/testing/alternative_assessments/vmast_va_mod_achievement_stds_test/index.shtml

If you have any questions regarding credit accommodations, please contact Dr. Samantha Hollins, director, Special Education Program Improvement, at Samantha.Hollins@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 786-2900. If you have any questions, regarding the monitoring, reviews, please contact Dr. Sandra Ruffin, director, Office of Federal Program Monitoring, at Sandra.Ruffin@doe.virginia.gov, or by telephone at (804) 225-2768. Questions regarding the VMAST or the VSEP should be directed to student assessment staff by e-mail at Student_Assessment@doe.virginia.gov, or by telephone at (804) 225-2102.

