



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

October 24, 2014

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: The Learning Enhanced through the Nature of Science (LENS) Project – Cornerstone Assessments

I am pleased to announce the availability of an exciting new technical assistance and professional development tool designed for secondary Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics teachers. Through the Virginia Department of Education's Mathematics and Science Partnership program, Old Dominion University (ODU) has developed the "Cornerstone Assessments," a robust package of **performance-based assessments** and associated tools for classroom use.

Over the last two years, the ODU program, entitled "The Learning Enhanced through the Nature of Science (LENS) Project," has developed these assessments with a team of secondary science teachers, curriculum and instruction experts, and cognitive psychologists. The Cornerstone Assessments use knowledge and skills related to scientific investigation to inform instruction, inform student learning, and measure student progress and growth over time (beginning-, middle-, and end-of-the-year performances).

The [LENS Cornerstone Assessment](#) Web site provides technical assistance in the form of tutorial and sample assessments. The [LENS Cornerstone Assessment Download \(LCAD\)](#) is a secure portal that allows school division leaders and designated teachers to download the performance assessments and associated tools, including assessment keys and rubrics. The LENS tools also include an integrated set of spreadsheet templates with powerful analytic capacity to graphically examine student achievement, in detail and over time.

The LENS Cornerstone Assessments are available to use as a part of your division's formal curriculum and assessment efforts or as a supplemental tool at the discretion of individual schools and teachers. Please review the Cornerstone Assessments to determine how they may support your division's efforts to improve student learning and achievement in secondary science.

For additional information, please contact Eric M. Rhoades, director, Office of Science and Health Education, by e-mail at Eric.Rhoades@doe.virginia.gov, or by telephone at (804) 786-2481.

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