



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
Department of Education

October 24, 2014

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: Alternative Assessment Assistance Incentive Grant**

As part of the Commonwealth's ongoing assistance to school divisions in implementing the Virginia Board of Education's recently-approved **Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments** (attached), I am pleased to announce a regional collaborative funding opportunity to enhance local professional development efforts on this important new direction for learning and assessing. House Bill 930 and Senate Bill 306, passed by the 2014 General Assembly and signed into law by Governor McAuliffe, amended the *Code of Virginia*, [§ 22.1-253.13:3](#), to eliminate several Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. These changes require school divisions to administer alternative assessments to students in grades three through eight in each Standards of Learning subject area in which a Standards of Learning assessment was not administered during the school year.

The Department of Education is seeking applications from each of the eight Superintendents' Regional Study Groups for the **Alternative Assessment Assistance Incentive Grant**. The incentive funding for regional professional development planning and implementation will be awarded to partnerships of school divisions within a region to work collaboratively to meet the intent of the legislation. Two or more regions may work together to form larger consortia, and school divisions with existing alternative partnerships may participate outside their traditional regional structure. Among the acceptable uses of the funding are:

- regionally-conducted, high-quality professional development workshops, seminars, and conferences with sustained follow-up support at the division level;
- honoraria for consultants to assist teachers and division curriculum leaders in understanding and designing alternative assessments;
- support funding for teacher release time, substitute payments, assessment development work, and regional travel reimbursement;
- teacher and curriculum leader development of regional alternative assessment batteries and banks;
- materials used specifically in professional development sessions, not to exceed five percent of the regional incentive award;
- regional alternative assessment "sharefairs" to disseminate products, ideas, and practices; and
- other professional development supports in alignment with the intent of the incentive funding.

Regional school division partnerships are encouraged to work collaboratively with their local two- and four-year institutions of higher education (IHE) and with state professional education associations in the key curriculum and leadership areas that have the capacity to assist with professional development.

Each Superintendents' Regional Study Group may apply to receive one Alternative Assessment Assistance Incentive Grant. History and social sciences, science, and English/writing and research are the Standards of Learning areas impacted by the 2014 legislation and changes to the *Code of Virginia*, so all activity must be

targeted toward alternative assessments in these discipline areas. Incentive proposals should range from \$6,000 to \$14,000, and regional consortia should identify local funds and in-kind resources that will be part of the implemented plan. Incentives awarded to regional partnerships will vary based upon the model presented, the scope of services rendered, and the number of teachers and school divisions impacted by the specific application. One school division must be designated and function as the fiscal agent for each award. No more than one incentive application from a region will be accepted. Individual school divisions are **not** eligible to apply.

The final incentive awards will be based upon approval of the proposal, including all required forms and signatures, and meeting the submission deadlines. The funds will be disbursed on a cost reimbursement basis using the Online Management of Education Grant Awards (OMEGA) system. Monthly reimbursements are requested beginning at the end of February 2015. All professional development activities under this incentive award must be completed by June 15, 2015, and reimbursements must be requested no later than June 15, 2015.

**The completed Alternative Assessment Assistance Incentive Grant applications must be sent electronically in .pdf format by 4 p.m., December 12, 2014, to John W. "Billy" Haun, Ed.D., chief academic officer, Division of Instruction, by e-mail to [Billy.Haun@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Billy.Haun@doe.virginia.gov).** For additional information, please contact Dr. Haun, by e-mail at the address above or by telephone at (804) 225-2034.

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Attachments:

- A. [Alternative Assessment Assistance Incentive Grant – Program Application](#) (Word)
- B. [Guidelines Local Alternative Assessments 2014-2015](#) (PDF)