**Implementation Support for Balanced Assessment Plans**

*Implementation Support for Balanced Assessment Plans* is provided to support school divisions in the development and implementation of Balanced Assessment Plans (BAPs) that adhere to the *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments: 2021-2022 and Beyond*, adopted by the Virginia Board of Education in June of 2021.

# **Requirements**

BAPs are to be developed for Grade 3 History, Grade 3 Science, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History: 1865 to the Present. These plans should reflect a move toward balanced assessment to inform instruction, must include performance assessments, and must indicate that content is being taught and assessed in each of these courses. The school division may develop separate BAPs for each of these courses or one BAP that addresses each of these areas.

The development of BAPs should be a collaborative effort as division leaders, content experts, and teachers look at the existing testing program across disciplines, target gaps and redundancy in current assessments, and develop a comprehensive assessment plan that uses a variety of assessments to determine content and skills mastery. School divisions have the flexibility to develop a system-wide plan for all schools to follow, or they may allow schools to develop different BAPs. If individual school-level plans are developed, a plan for division-level oversight is needed to ensure that expectations are met by each school-level plan.

BAPs should indicate the types of local alternative assessments (e.g., formative, diagnostic, summative) that will be used to measure students’ mastery of the content and skills in the Standards of Learning (SOL) for each entire course. BAPs are expected to describe the full variety of assessment and item formats (e.g., multiple-choice, short answer, performance assessments) that will be used as local alternative assessments. For example, a BAP may indicate that a constructed response performance assessment will serve as the local alternative assessment for one unit of instruction, as this type of assessment best allows students to demonstrate skills and content knowledge for that unit of instruction. The same BAP may also indicate that other skills and content knowledge, within the same reporting category or strand as that unit of instruction, are best measured through local alternative assessments composed of multiple-choice and short answer questions.

Detailed documentation of the daily formative assessment practices and strategies used during classroom instruction is not required, but the division’s plan for supporting the effective use of ongoing formative assessment should be described. Evidence of opportunities for students to demonstrate acquisition of Virginia’s 5 C’s (critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration and citizenship) is encouraged.

# **Considerations**

## Format

A specific format is not required for the BAPs. School divisions are encouraged to consider adjusting existing local documents that guide instructional planning and decision-making to reflect the assessments administered. For example, it may be possible to modify local documents describing the scope and/or sequence of instructional units within a content area to include the information needed in a BAP.

## Assessment Inventory

The [Assessment Inventory Tool](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showdocument?id=20586) was introduced during the “Supporting Instruction and Deeper Learning through Balanced Assessment” professional development events as a sample that school divisions may use to evaluate current assessment systems. More recently, the Virginia LEARNS workgroup recommended this tool as a useful resource for central office and school-based teams of educators, providing a systematic approach to review the assessments being administered and inform assessment decisions. Use of this Assessment Inventory Tool is not required; however, use of an assessment review process is encouraged to obtain a comprehensive picture of the assessment system currently in place. Analyzing the results of a completed assessment inventory can be helpful in making deliberate decisions about the continued use of each assessment administered to students in each course or content area.

School divisions are encouraged to use a team approach to consider the results of the Assessment Inventory and to make intentional and purposeful decisions about each assessment administered. The inventory may serve to: 1) identify assessments that do not effectively serve the intended purpose; 2) ensure that each assessment provides useful data that justifies the loss of instructional time required for its administration; 3) identify redundancies where assessments should be considered for elimination; and 4) identify gaps where measures are needed for certain content or skills. The results of this decision-making process can then inform the division’s BAPs.

## Additional Courses or Content Areas

School divisions that administered local alternative assessments in lieu of the Virginia Studies, Civics & Economics, and Grade 8 Writing Standards of Learning tests during the 2020-2021 school year are encouraged to continue to develop and use performance assessments and performance tasks in these content courses in 2021-2022 and beyond as part of best instructional practice and to document these practices in the BAPs. School divisions that have adopted balanced assessment practices that prompt innovative instruction and deeper learning in other courses or content areas are encouraged to develop BAPs to document these innovations.

# **Reporting to Students, Parents, and Families**

School divisions are expected to provide to the student and parents or guardians information regarding the outcome of each local alternative assessment administered. The format for this reporting is to be determined by the local school division. When reporting scores on performance assessments or performance tasks, it is best practice not only to report the score but also to provide a copy of the rubric, a description of the performance assessment/task, and the student’s response. School divisions are expected to report scores or grades but are not expected to report achievement levels associated with the scores achieved on SOL tests (e.g., Pass/Advanced, Pass/Proficient, Fail/Does Not Meet, etc.). Examples of formats for reporting based on samples shared by school divisions are included in the “Local Alternative Assessments: Reporting to Parents and Reminders for Scoring” presentation posted on the [Performance Assessments and Local Alternative Assessments](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/?navid=809) webpage.

# **Records Retention, Revision, and Virginia Department of Education Review**

## Records Retention

BAPs should be maintained for one year after the end of the academic year in which the plans were developed.

## Revision

BAPs are written for a particular school year; as such, annual review and revision are required. It is best practice to adopt a long-range approach with annual updates that promote continuous and targeted improvement of purposeful, balanced assessment practices.

**Virginia Department of Education Review**

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff from the Department of Learning and Innovation and the Office of Student Assessment will conduct annual site visits or “desk reviews” in a sample of school divisions representing each of the eight Superintendent’s Regions. The “desk reviews” will help VDOE staff identify best practices for sharing with other Virginia school divisions. Additionally, these reviews will be used to determine how local school divisions are verifying that the content is being taught and assessed, to determine the types of local alternative assessments that are being administered, to identify exemplars of performance assessments that may be shared with other school divisions, and to assist teachers, schools, and school divisions in strengthening their own local performance assessments and BAPs.

During these reviews, VDOE staff will examine the BAP for one or more content areas for which the SOL tests were eliminated in 2014; copies of each of the local alternative assessments administered, including but not limited to performance tasks; materials used by the school division to train teachers in the administration and scoring of these local assessments; and samples of student responses representing each of the various score points of the state common rubric. School divisions selected for these desk reviews will be notified by the Office of Student Assessment, and directions for submitting materials for review will be provided at that time. As part of the “desk review” process, school division staff who have assisted with the development of the BAP(s) and who oversee instruction for the associated content area(s) will be interviewed either by webinar or by telephone.