



#214-21

Commonwealth of Virginia
Virginia Department of Education
Superintendent's Memo #214-21

DATE: August 6, 2021
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Updated *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments: 2021-2022 and Beyond***

On June 17, 2021, the Virginia Board of Education adopted the *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments: 2021-2022 and Beyond* to provide guidance to school division staff regarding continued implementation of local alternative assessments in Grade 3 History, Grade 3 Science, Grade 5 Writing, United States History to 1865, and United States History: 1865 to the Present. As a reminder, legislation passed by the 2014 Virginia General Assembly eliminated the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments in the content areas listed above and required school divisions to administer local alternative assessments, consistent with Virginia Board of Education guidelines, to students in each of these content areas.

The *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments: 2021-2022 and Beyond* replaces the *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments for 2018-2019 through 2019-2020*, which remained in place during 2020-2021 due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The updated guidelines extend the expectation that school divisions continue to progress toward implementation of performance assessments as part of a balanced assessment system and continue to emphasize the use of the *Virginia Quality Criteria Tool for Performance Assessments*.

School divisions are required to continue to develop Balanced Assessment Plans for each course in which local alternative assessments are administered and to continue to utilize resources provided by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) that promote consistency across the Commonwealth of Virginia. In order to provide consistent achievement expectations for all Virginia students, the updated guidelines require the use of the finalized common rubrics for each of these content areas. Please refer to the full text of the *Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments: 2021-2022 and Beyond*, **Attachment A**, for additional details regarding the requirements for local alternative assessments.

In conjunction with these updated guidelines, the *Implementation Support for Balanced Assessment Plans* is provided, as **Attachment B**, to further clarify details regarding the requirements and considerations when developing Balanced Assessment Plans. The Balanced Assessment Plans should document implementation of a balanced approach to assessment that informs instruction and includes performance assessments.

For more information

If you have questions about the new local alternative assessment guidelines, please contact the Office of Student Assessment at Student_Assessment@doe.virginia.gov or (804) 225-2102 or the Department of Learning and Innovation at Instruction@doe.virginia.gov or (804) 225-2034.

JFL/SLR/tm

- A. Attachment: [Guidelines for Local Alternative Assessments: 2021-2022 and Beyond](#) (DOCX)
- B. Attachment: [Implementation Support for Balanced Assessment Plans](#) (DOCX)