



## Virginia Association of School Superintendents

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June 8, 2017

Dr. Billy K. Cannaday, Jr.  
President, Virginia Board of Education  
P.O. Box 2120  
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Dr. Cannaday:

Virginia superintendents have been most appreciative of the Virginia Board of Education and VDOE staff for the numerous opportunities to provide input on the Profile of a Virginia Graduate and the proposed revisions to the Standards of Accreditation. As a follow-up to the Board's Retreat on May 24, please consider the following:

- As published in VASS' Blueprint 2014, public school students must be successfully prepared for citizenship, enrollment in post-secondary education and training, employment, and/or enlistment when they graduate from high school. Appropriate changes to Virginia's testing and accreditation practices will help to ensure successful graduates.
- VASS believes that school divisions should use a variety of assessments to document and enhance student growth and achievement, and to ensure that students are given sufficient opportunities to demonstrate their acquisition of required knowledge and skills. The Board's support of the expansion of performance based assessments, with the assistance of grant funding to ensure performance based assessments are successfully implemented and maintain the level of rigor expected in Virginia's assessment program, is much appreciated.
- As you know, Virginia requires more state assessments than required in ESSA. Superintendents do not believe that state assessments are the only means to ensure that curriculum is taught and students learn. As Virginia moves forward with the Profile of a Virginia Graduate and the new accreditation matrix, it is VASS' hope that consideration is given to further reducing the number of state required assessments or at a minimum creating more performance-based assessments.
- The proposed Profile of a Virginia Graduate includes the reduction of verified credits for graduation. VASS encourages the Board to support this proposal so that school districts will have more flexibility in providing opportunities for civic engagement and career exposure.
- VASS supports the proposed Accreditation Matrix, not because it is a perfect accountability system, but because it is a step in the right direction. ESSA allows for state flexibility, the accommodation of student growth, and the inclusion of indicators beyond state assessments. VASS supports the Board's efforts in allowing for flexibility, student growth, and multiple indicators.
- Even with the proposed matrix, multiple indicators are limited by the available data required for documentation. Superintendents want the opportunity in the future to consider new ways to measure

the effectiveness of schools as new data become available. VASS continues to be willing to work with VDOE staff and the Board in exploring new indicators.

- Again, VASS supports the new accreditation matrix but concerns exist with the proposed expectations for schools that fall in Level 2: Near Standard or Improvement from Level 3. Draft language includes onerous requirements for improvement that mirror the requirements schools will face if they fall in Level 3: Below Standard. School divisions with Level 2 schools should solely evaluate, plan, and implement appropriate actions to address weak performance indicators rather than facing specific requirements from the Board.
- Finally, it is the hope of superintendents that if they have schools at Level 3, they will be able to work collaboratively with VDOE staff as they determine how best to improve their indicators and therefore, schools.

Thank you for all you do and your consideration of the above.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Howard B. Kiser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Howard B. Kiser  
Executive Director, VASS