

# VIRGINIA PUBLIC EDUCATION COALITION



Virginia Association of Colleges for  
Education Association  
Virginia Association of Elementary School  
Principals  
Virginia Association of School  
Superintendents  
Virginia Association of Secondary School  
Principals  
Virginia Congress of Parents and Teachers

Virginia Counselors Association  
Virginia Education Association  
Virginia Middle School Association  
Virginia Professors of Educational  
Leadership  
Virginia School Boards Association  
Virginia School Counselors Association  
Virginia Association for Supervision and  
Curriculum Development

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November 28, 2016

Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr.  
President, Virginia Board of Education  
Richmond, Virginia

Dear Dr. Cannaday:

The Virginia Public Education Coalition (VPEC) has reviewed the State Board's recommendations for changes to the Standards of Quality. VPEC is particularly interested in the Board's effort to adjust the SOQ to better align with the actual needs of public schools throughout the Commonwealth. VPEC members, as noted on this letterhead, represent a broad coalition of public education stakeholders, and collectively agree that the State Board is fulfilling its constitutional responsibility to determine and prescribe standards that will ensure a high quality educational program.

VPEC is also pleased that the State Board is reviewing prevailing practice in schools and encouraging innovation through initiatives such as redesigning the high school. VPEC wishes to continue to be partners with the State Board in the important work of implementing the Profile of a Virginia Graduate.

Regarding the proposed revisions to the Standards of Accreditation, VPEC supports much of what the State Board is considering. VPEC believes that it is important for communities to understand that the overall quality and full story of a school cannot be captured entirely by test scores.

Regarding proposed revisions to the Standards of Accreditation, VPEC supports the continued reduction of SOL state assessments and the expansion of locally-developed performance-based assessments, our members are concerned about the unintended consequences of reducing the number of verified credits and its impact on state accreditation under the reauthorized Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Should many students who have met the verified credit requirements decide to "opt-out" of corresponding SOL tests, it is conceivable that this could negatively skew a school's accreditation. VPEC does support the use of locally-developed performance-based assessments to verify content credit for graduation.

VPEC supports the recognition of community and work-based experiences, internships, externships, apprenticeships, etc. as a reflection of students' full experiences while in high school. As

schools develop protocols for coordinating and documenting these experiences, appropriate resources and staffing flexibility need to be considered.

VPEC supports the use of multiple measures in the proposed accreditation matrix for the State Board to determine the accreditation status of schools in Virginia. VPEC believes that the use of multiple measures will more accurately reflect the good work being accomplished in schools, as opposed to the sole use of Standards of Learning test data for school accreditation. Accreditation should reflect a process of school improvement over time recognizing strengths and areas for growth.

Due to the current correlation of SOL test data with indicators of poverty, VPEC encourages the use of indicators in the new accreditation matrix that are not highly correlated with poverty. This may include indicators that the Department is not currently collecting data but VPEC is certainly willing to assist VDOE in finalizing appropriate indices. VPEC recommends that the VDOE run the matrix data for school divisions on proposed indices, using actual student data, to determine the impact on the accreditation status for individual schools. This will provide an opportunity to assess any unintended consequences that may arise in using the new methodology. Recognizing the required indices specified in ESSA, there are other indices that may offer a more comprehensive profile of a school (i.e. school climate, school engagement, parent engagement, extra-curricular participation, etc.).

It should go without saying, but professional development must be considered in all aspects of revisions to the Standards of Quality and Standards of Accreditation. Time, access, and resources for quality professional development will be necessary to assist dedicated educators as they progress into a new era of delivering public education in Virginia.

Again, VPEC supports accountability and accreditation as a process of school improvement over time and not as a label based solely on the Standards of Learning test scores at a single point in time. VPEC is ready to be engaged as partners in determining the indicators and finalizing the accreditation protocol for schools in Virginia.

Sincerely,

*Ben Kiser*

Ben Kiser  
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Co-Chair VPEC

*Tom Smith*

Tom Smith  
Legislative Liaison, VASS  
Co-Chair, VPEC