January 22, 2024

RE: Position Letter - Science Standards Review Timeline

Dear Members of the Board,

The coalition of teachers, supervisors, curriculum specialists, science field experts, and higher education representatives provides a unified voice in bringing to your attention the accelerated timeline for reviewing and implementing science standards. On February 2, 2023, VBOE approved an implementation timeline for the science standards in school year 2027-2028 (Agenda Item H from that meeting). The Virginia Department of Education has accelerated the timeline by 2 years for implementation in 2025-2026 (published HERE). The purpose of this letter is to alert you to the change and to outline the potential impact of accelerating the timeline. **Ultimately, our recommendation is that the Board uphold its decision to implement the science standards originally approved for 2027-2028.**

Potential impact of an accelerated timeline.

- **Students**. Although the immediate impact on students might seem to be minimal, the long-term impact has the potential to lead to lower student achievement outcomes, engagement in their science education, and a lower quality of instruction as teachers are required to become a 'master' of four content areas within the same time frame.
- **Teachers**. Our teachers, particularly at the elementary level, will have seen changes to curriculum, instruction, and assessment in all four core content areas over the span of two years. With the implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act and updated Mathematics standards in 2024-2025, followed by History and Social Science standards - with potentially updated Science standards - teachers would not be in the ideal position to provide the high-quality instruction every child in Virginia deserves. In a moment when there is a clear crisis with the teacher shortage, this would not be a recommended retention strategy.
- **Fiscal responsibility**. Accelerating the timeline by a full two years is fiscally irresponsible. With updated standards comes a process for textbook adoption and the provision of resources with a fiscal attachment. With VLA, Math, History and Social Science, and Science (potentially) all having changes within two years, the fiscal impact could be a hardship for local school divisions, particularly those with limited resources. Additionally, the textbook and curricular resources purchased for the 2018 science standards would not live out the lifecycle of the planned seven years, cutting two full years of purchased materials short.

- **Human resources.** Accelerating the timeline will also have a detrimental effect on the human resources in our local school divisions. All 132 school divisions will be responsible for revising the curriculum and assessments to align with revised standards and moving through the process of adopting new materials, including time-intensive committee work. Revisions, even small ones, result in many hours of updating the necessary resources for students to be successful. The impact will be most significant on school divisions with limited resources.

The below-signed organizations are prepared to serve as a source of input on any and all decisions affecting the education of Virginia's students moving forward.

Respectfully,

Virginia Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development	Virginia Association of Science Teachers	Virginia Science Education Leadership Association
Virginia Mathematics and Science Coalition	Virginia Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators	Virginia Counselors Association