VASCD's
2024 General Assembly Priorities

VIRGINIA ASCD Advocacy

Virginia ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development), an affiliate of ASCD, is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to advancing excellence in Virginia's schools. We have 2,500+ members in Virginia who are teachers, superintendents, professors, school leaders, students, and central office administrators. We represent a variety of roles and share a single purpose - ensuring a world-class education for every Virginia student.

TABLE of CONTENTS



3 PURPOSE

4 PURPOSE OF EDUCATION AND STANDARDS OF LEARNING

8 VIRGINIA'S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

10 VIRGINIA'S ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

14 OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS FOR VIRGINIA'S STUDENTS

18 PERSONALIZED LEARNING FOR EDUCATORS

21 APPROPRIATE GUIDANCE FOR THE USE OF AI IN EDUCATION

23 GLOSSARY OF TERMS



VIRGINIA ASCD
Learn. Teach. Lead.

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to present legislators with guiding language that advances teaching and learning in education. Whether it is to introduce new legislation or make changes to existing law, VASCD aims to provide legislators with educational expertise supported by educators and support staff from across the Commonwealth. The language presented in this document is intended to help model legislation that would lead, support, and serve our public schools across Virginia. The positions presented within this document support those embedded in the 2023-2024 Policy Priorities for the Virginia Affiliate of ASCD. VASCD is ready and willing to work with legislators on drafting or amending legislation to align with the priorities identified in this brief.

- **Purpose of Education and Standards of Learning**
- **Virginia's Accountability System**
- **Virginia's Assessment System**
- **Outstanding Educators for Virginia's Students**
- **Personalized Learning for Educators**
- **Appropriate Guidance for the Use of AI in Education**

PURPOSE OF EDUCATION AND STANDARDS OF LEARNING

1

Virginia's law and policy makers must clearly define the purpose of education to guide important decisions.

The purposes of the Virginia Public School System are defined in myriad ways by state policy actors. This year, as accountability and several subjects are engaged in revising SOLs, it is important to develop a unified purpose of education before making those decisions. A unified purpose of education is necessary in order to ensure that policymakers, teachers, parents, and students are on the same page about what counts as student success. Aligning the priorities of the education system with accountability will ensure appropriate support is provided for schools to meet the given standards. To best support students in the development of the 5 Cs and durable skills, students' knowledge, academic skills, and holistic development, including character and civic engagement in a democratic society, should be considered in humanizing ways.



1 PURPOSE OF EDUCATION AND STANDARDS OF LEARNING

The Standards of Accreditation define the purpose of public education as: "The foremost purpose of public education in Virginia is to provide children with a high quality education giving them opportunities to meet their fullest potential in life." The Virginia Board of Education, Department of Education, and Virginia lawmakers should take time to explicitly define what is meant by "high quality education." These components include, but are not limited to,

- Teaching students cognitive and social skills.
- Teaching students the rights and responsibilities of contributing citizens.
- Developing students' character and decision-making skills.
- Helping students in a process of self-discovery and endowing them with the intellectual and ethical power to pursue their interests.
- Inspiring students through the study of humanity's great works (e.g. literature, the arts, technological advancements, etc.).
- Preparing students for productive careers.

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1 PURPOSE OF EDUCATION AND STANDARDS OF LEARNING

The SOLs in each subject of the Virginia Curriculum should be developed in a way that incorporates all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge to strengthen students' academic understanding, analysis, synthesis, and creation of new knowledge. All forms of literacy and mathematical fluency should be prioritized throughout the SOLs for preK-12.

The Profile of a Virginia Graduate, that focuses on the 5 C's (communication, collaboration, creative thinking, critical thinking, and citizenship skills), should be prioritized through inquiry-based approaches to the SOL content requirements, with an emphasis on cross-curricular connections and exposure to the 17 career clusters.

The student experience in Virginia's public schools should also include SOLs for holistic development, including but not limited to social skills, emotional intelligence, physical health, and mental well-being. Appropriate funding, human resources for support, and time for each student to develop these outcomes should be prioritized.



1 PURPOSE OF EDUCATION AND STANDARDS OF LEARNING

Virginia's lawmakers should clearly articulate the purpose of education. Legislation that outlines the purpose of education, along with defining "high-quality" is an important step before developing further revisions to standards, accountability system, and the assessment by which we determine student learning at a state level.
Potential Language: *Before developing legislation, we can only recommend a baseline to get started. This must be a collaborative discussion to reach consensus on the primary purpose of education.*

- *Teaching students cognitive and social skills.*
- *Teaching students the rights and responsibilities of contributing citizens.*
- *Developing students' character and decision-making skills.*
- *Helping students in a process of self-discovery and endowing them with the intellectual and ethical power to pursue their interests.*
- *Inspiring students through the study of humanity's great works (e.g. literature, the arts, technological advancements, etc.).*
- *Preparing students for productive careers.*

The process for Standards of Learning revisions and consolidation and re-organization of courses, content, and the standards themselves should be reflected in Virginia code.
Potential language: *The process for developing, revising, and reviewing the standards of learning must be a collaborative endeavor between field practitioners and content experts. Gathering input from diverse perspectives and multiple stakeholder groups in the initial draft of content, courses, and standards followed by rigorous opportunities for comment is paramount to a viable curriculum.*

VIRGINIA'S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

2

The system to which schools are held accountable must have coherence and alignment between the purpose, the standards, and the assessments.

Virginia's accountability system is under review by the Board of Education in the 2023-2024 year. The current system includes indicators that are outside of the control of teachers and school systems, and there are considerations of retrenching from the inclusion of growth in the system which promotes considerations of all students within the system of education rather than only those currently achieving in the middle and at the top.

- The indicators for Virginia's Accountability system should align with the unified purpose of education. Once BOE, DOE, and the General Assembly agree upon the purpose(s) of education, indicators can be more readily decided.
- Each indicator should have an appropriate, reliable, and valid measurement tool to determine whether or not students are meeting those educational outcomes. The process to develop indicators, and the accompanying resources and materials to support implementation, in the new accountability system should also include the removal of indicators that are outside the control of the school (e.g. Chronic Absenteeism). These indicators should be replaced with measures of student engagement, achievement, and citizenship.
- For an in-depth exploration and analysis, see **VASCD's CONSIDERATIONS BRIEF**.

VIRGINIA'S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

2

There is currently work at the Virginia Board of Education level to separate accreditation from accountability and to construct an accountability system based on performance of certain indicators. We recommend policymakers review **THIS CONSIDERATIONS BRIEF** from VASCD to legislate the indicators in § 22.1-253.13:3. Standard 3. Accreditation, other standards, assessments, and releases from state regulations.

Recommended Indicators:

- *Achievement in English, Math, Science (3-12)*
- *Growth in English, Math (3-12)*
- *Growth in PALS/VALLS and Math (K-2)*
- *Performance-Based Assessment (K-12)*
- *Student Engagement or School Climate and Safety (K-12)*
- *Retention Rate (K-12)*
- *On-Time Graduation Rate (K-12)*
- *College, Career, and Civic Readiness (9-12)*

As part of the VBOE's work, there is a summary rating (A-F or 5 Stars) on the table for use in the accountability system. We do not recommend using a summary rating, which often creates problematic narratives around schools without the necessary support for improved success. Instead, we recommend using a rating for each indicator, in order to give more specific information to families as well as feedback for the flow of resources and support.

VIRGINIA'S ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

3

Virginia's student assessment system should support and align with today's student learning goals.

Virginia's Profile of a Graduate raises expectations for the student learning by requiring the demonstration of both academic knowledge and a broader range of skills necessary for success in the workplace and community. To measure these outcomes, a comprehensive and aligned assessment and accountability system is essential and should include multiple measures of proficiency, growth, and performance.

- Virginia's assessment system should be revised to include a balance of achievement, performance, and growth measures over the course of students' K-12 experience, reflecting an emphasis on future-ready skills.
- The statewide assessment system should yield adequate data for accountability purposes without supplanting excessive instructional time.
- While maintaining validity and reliability, the system should be modernized to incorporate methodologies such as on-demand testing, as well as interdisciplinary, portfolio, and performance-based assessments.

VIRGINIA'S ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

3

Since 2013, the Virginia General Assembly has introduced legislation aimed at creating an assessment and accountability system that more accurately reflects student learning goals and accounts for the demands that Virginia's current assessment and accountability system puts upon schools, teachers, and students. VASCD's extensive work in collaboration with educators in preK–12 and higher education provides guidance to the work group identified in the most recent legislation, the Uncodified Act from the 2022 Regular Session, **Chapter 760 from HB 585**.



VIRGINIA'S ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

3

Amend current language in the code to reduce the number of required tests in Virginia to more closely align with federal requirement of 17 tests versus Virginia's requirement of 27.

Current language:

§ 22.1-253.13:3. Standard 3. Accreditation, other standards, assessments, and releases from state regulations.

C. The Board shall include in the student outcome and growth measures that are required by the standards of accreditation the required assessments for various grade levels and classes, including the completion of the alternative assessments implemented by each local school board, in accordance with the Standards of Learning. These assessments shall include end-of-course or end-of-grade tests for English, mathematics, science, and history and social science and may be integrated to include multiple subject areas. The Standards of Learning assessments administered to students in grades three through eight shall not exceed (i) reading and mathematics in grades three and four; (ii) reading, mathematics, and science in grade five; (iii) reading and mathematics in grades six and seven; (iv) reading, writing, and mathematics in grade eight; (v) science after the student receives instruction in the grade six science, life science, and physical science Standards of Learning and before the student completes grade eight; and (vi) Virginia Studies and Civics and Economics once each at the grade levels deemed appropriate by each local school board. The reading and mathematics assessments administered to students in grades three through eight shall be through-year growth assessments.

VIRGINIA'S ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

3

Include language from the **Assessment Summit Executive Summary** as well as **THIS LETTER** from VASCD re: through-year growth assessments.

§ 2. In developing such revised assessments and plan, the work group shall consider (i) best practices and innovations in summative assessments of proficiency from across the nation; (ii) alternative approaches to current and new assessment items, including subject areas and methods of grading such items; (iii) assessment items that include open-ended questions, long-form writing, and other tasks, with student responses scored by the Department according to statewide scoring rubrics; (iv) a comprehensive accountability system that includes multiple measures from a variety of sources that capture a student's proficiency, growth, and performance to include Virginia's 5 Cs and durable skills within the Profile of a Virginia Graduate; (v) plan for pilot implementation of such assessment items prior to the 2027–2028 school year as necessary to determine the validity of such items; (vi) the process for the development of a bank of vetted sample assessment items that include a comprehensive representation of knowledge and skills being assessed; (vii) the legislative and regulatory changes and funding necessary to implement alternative approaches considered by the work group; and (iix) a proposed timeline for implementation of such new assessments, giving consideration to implementation prior to the 2027–2028 school year. Nothing in this act shall prohibit the work group from looking at all forms of assessment. Such work group shall not be responsible for implementation of such revised assessment items unless there is further action from the General Assembly.

OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS FOR VIRGINIA'S STUDENTS

4

We must elevate the profession and champion autonomy with integrity. This requires changes in policy to instill trust and agency in the practitioner.

Recruiting and retaining the very best educators requires coordinated efforts among policymakers and the education community. Although we appreciate the recent attention to Virginia's teacher shortage, we urge decision-makers to align their actions with evidence regarding the factors that actually influence teachers' decisions to enter, stay, and grow in their positions.

- Teachers deserve compensation that allows them to support themselves and their families while living in the communities in which they work. Changes in VRS benefits have removed a significant incentive to accept the low salary that teaching offers in Virginia.
- An environment in which teachers are free to teach and assess the Standards in innovative and creative ways is a factor in teacher recruitment and retention.
- Student needs vary widely and change constantly. Educators need greater flexibility to make decisions in the interests of students while aligning their teaching with the Standards of Learning and must be trusted as assessors of student learning.

OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS FOR VIRGINIA'S STUDENTS

4

Recent attention to the teacher shortage has provided reactive measures to address recruitment with little attention to retention. VASCD appreciates the efforts from the governor within Executive Directive 3 and is positioned to support implementation through alternative pathways to licensure. In addition to the governor's directive to address recruitment, we are concerned with the lack of attention paid to retention through teacher compensation, professional learning, and working conditions. We believe legislation that addresses these three fundamental issues will support a strong workforce now and in the future.



OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS FOR VIRGINIA'S STUDENTS

4

Consider **Administrative Code 8VAC20-23: Licensure Regulations for School Personnel**, which grants regulatory authority to the Virginia Board of Education, and introduce legislation that directs the Virginia Board of Education to implement a competency-based model for license renewal versus the current points-based system. Such competencies should be aligned to the **Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers**.

- Potential Language: *By 2034, VDOE, with direction from VBOE, shall implement a competency-based model for license renewal. Each of the competencies shall be aligned to the Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers. Licensed personnel will be required to demonstrate proficiency in each competency defined a maximum of every 10 years. Between 2023 and 2033, VDOE, with direction from VBOE, shall develop a point-equivalent model to help crosswalk the transition from points to competency for each year of renewal until all renewals have cycled through the last year of the points-based system for renewal.*

Consider the **Fund Our Schools Memo** from September 2022 to develop language that increases compensation for educators in Virginia. Funding directly from the state will offset the issue that some school divisions experience with local match; it is a barrier and prevents some divisions from fully supporting the compensation increases.

- VASCD recommends allocating money in the budget that increases teacher compensation by 8% over the next two years in order to close the existing gap.

4 OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS FOR VIRGINIA'S STUDENTS

We must give careful consideration to the demographic differences between the workforce and our students. We recommend directly addressing each school's disparities between Workforce Demographics and Student Demographics, including incentives for hard-to-staff schools and divisions under a VDOE Memorandum of Understanding.

- Potential Language: *Local schools boards shall evaluate the demographic differences between instructional staff and students in Virginia schools and develop a plan to respond to any differences. VDOE, with direction from VBOE, shall allocate resources to support school divisions in the development and implementation of their plans to address demographic differences between instructional staff and students. Additionally, VDOE shall work with school divisions to create and implement Grow-Your-Own programs such as the Virginia Teachers for Tomorrow to recruit and prepare high school students to return to their school divisions as teachers.*
- Budget Language: VASCD recommends creating a line item that funds apprenticeships and fellowships to create a pipeline from high school participation to classroom teaching.

Aside from teacher compensation, working conditions are the most influential factors in whether or not our educators stay and leave the profession. For the purposes of this document, we define working conditions through infrastructure (facilities), climate, and culture (addressed under *Personalized Learning*).

- Budget Language: VASCD recommends allocating funds to fully address the state-assessed school infrastructure backlog.

PERSONALIZED LEARNING FOR EDUCATORS

5

Educators must have relevant, competency-based professional learning opportunities.

Throughout the Commonwealth, there is an increased emphasis on students' actual demonstration of learning in real-world contexts. In the same way, educators should be able to learn in ways that are immediately relevant to their jobs and able to be demonstrated in the ways they plan, deliver, and assess learning for their students.

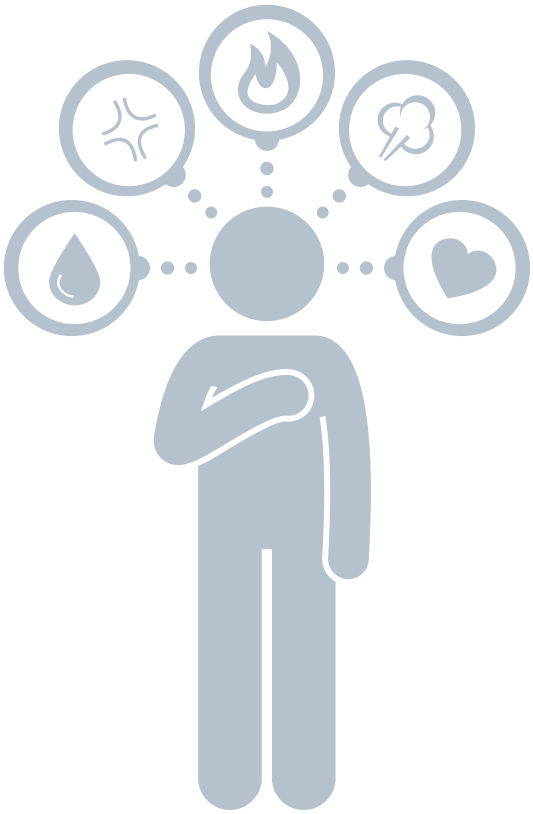
- Competency-based models such as micro-credentialing should be valued as pathways to recertification.
- Educators' professional learning plans should address school-wide priorities while accommodating educators' individual needs and choices.

Because both climate and culture are critical components in working conditions for teachers, VASCD recommends language that requires an evaluation and response to professional learning in their school divisions, along with an intentional focus on climate and culture for the professional learning of educational leaders.

PERSONALIZED LEARNING FOR EDUCATORS

5

A critical component to improving student learning outcomes in Virginia is the growth and development of its educators. Educators must be provided with opportunities to personalize, customize, and individualize their professional learning experiences. This will help them meet the unique demands of their contexts, including the particular students and families in their school communities. Therefore, VASCD recommends a sharp contrast to the traditional one-size-fits-all approach to professional learning for educators.



PERSONALIZED LEARNING FOR EDUCATORS

5

Because both climate and culture are critical components in working conditions for teachers, VASCD recommends language that requires an evaluation and response to professional learning in their school divisions, along with an intentional focus on climate and culture for the professional learning of educational leaders. The substitute shortage has negatively impacted teachers' ability to actively participate in professional learning. Additionally, we believe careful consideration should be given to educator wellness, particularly as a response to the lack of substitutes. Beyond the inability to attend professional learning, the lack of substitute support creates added stress and time constraints due to the need for educators to perform additional duties. We recommend changes in VRS requirements that would allow retired educators to substitute immediately and not require the 30 day separation; this would also apply to long-term substitutes and filling critical needs positions.

- Potential Language: *Local school boards shall evaluate the professional learning in their school divisions and develop a plan to address any deficiencies in quality and/or personalization.*
- Potential Language: *School and Division Leaders shall engage in professional learning for best practices in climate and culture and demonstrate proficiency to create healthy and optimal working conditions as part of their license renewal requirements. This requirement should be created and facilitated collaboratively between VDOE and organizations responsible for supporting Virginia's school leaders.*

AI IN EDUCATION

All of Virginia's stakeholders must have recommendations for implementation and appropriate guardrails for use of AI in classrooms.

As schools and school divisions throughout the Commonwealth are navigating the availability of AI tools and looking for resources to help develop regulations, policies, and best practices, additional means are essential to help jumpstart those conversations and provide valuable insight to develop the next steps. Virginia has an opportunity to be a nation-wide leader in developing key resources to maximize the potential of AI and guidance to protect our stakeholders. Considerations, briefs, guidance documents, and model policies are essential for decision makers at the local level and should reflect the following:

- Students should be able to think freely, cite sources, follow academic honesty policies, maximize technology, and learn to use AI as a partner and co-constructor of content.
- AI will assist this and future generations with learning, creating content, and communicating. Therefore, we recognize without hesitation that AI will have an impact on teaching and learning in Virginia's classrooms. With appropriate guardrails for protection, we position ourselves and our students to engage and co-exist with AI.
- For an in-depth exploration, analysis, and implications, see **VASCD's POSITION BRIEF**.

AI IN EDUCATION

6

Policy makers will need guidance on collaboratively developing acceptable use policies to protect student privacy and guardrails to protect academic integrity. Legislators are in a position to encourage educators, students, and families to maximize this potential for learning opportunities and purposes.

- Exploration of AI Tools*: The first step is to understand the tool(s) by using and exploring the capabilities, limitations, and potential pitfalls. All efforts to educate users should be made before encouraging the use and exploration of the tool(s).*
- Principles*: Develop policies and procedures that are rooted in the principles and values of school divisions, focusing on* principles *as opposed to specific tools. In many cases, these policies and procedures exist and will only need minor adjustments given the new technologies associated with AI.*
- Expectations: *Frame policies and procedures with expectations by creating the guidelines within which communities can work. Avoiding approaches cent within which communities can work. Avoiding approaches centered on ered on* can't, no, *and* don't *will be helpful for moving forward to maximize and protect our students and educators.*

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

5 Cs	Directed by the 2016 General Assembly House Bill 895 and Senate Bill 336 to become a part of the Profile of a Virginia Graduate. Concepts of critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship are interwoven throughout the Virginia Standards of Learning. Commonly referred to as "Virginia's 5Cs" or the "5 Cs". https://www.doe.virginia.gov/parents-students/for-students/graduation/policy-initiatives/profile-of-a-virginia-graduate
Accountability	In Virginia public schools, accountability is currently a dual measurement with different calculations for Accreditation and Federal Accountability. Some of the annual measurements are the based on similar data with different annual targets for each of the accountability systems.
Accreditation	In Virginia public schools, an annual process to measure school performance using Standards of Learning Assessment data, chronic absenteeism, graduation, drop-out, and career, college and civic readiness indicators. Schools in Virginia are rated "Accredited" or "Accredited with Conditions" based on three levels of performance. https://www.doe.virginia.gov/data-policy-funding/data-reports/statistics-reports/accreditation-federal-reports/school-accreditation-ratings
AI in Education	Artificial Intelligence used in the educational setting designed to enhance learning experiences, while maintaining integrity and protecting student privacy.
Bloom's Taxonomy	Developed to provide a common language for teachers to discuss learning expectations in any content area based on a hierarchy of skills to include: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create.
Career Cluster	Organization of Virginia's career and technical education programs that help students create a plan of study throughout high school. There are 17 career clusters that represent 83 career pathways for students. https://www.cteresource.org/career-clusters/
Competency-based Model for License Renewal	Proposed change to teacher license renewal which would consider a collection of competencies that represent skill and knowledge attainment that contribute to the overall professional growth of an educator and that are aligned to Virginia's Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers.
Federal Accountability	An accountability measurement required by the United States Department of Education, as authorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and guided by Virginia's Consilidated State Plan. Federal Accountabiity indicators include student achievement and growth in reading and mathematics, English Learner (EL) progress, chronic absenteeism, federal graduation rates, and English reading and mathematics participation. https://www.doe.virginia.gov/data-policy-funding/data-reports/statistics-reports/accreditation-federal-reports/federal-accountability
Professional Learning Plans	Method of professional learning for educators which considers the strengths and needs of the individual and is aligned to professional growth goals outlined in annual performance evaluations.
Profile of a Virginia Graduate	Directed by the 2016 General Assembly House Bill 895 and Senate Bill 336. Describes the knowledge, skills, experiences, and attributes that students must attain to be successful in college, the work force and to be "life ready", and sets the minimum requirements for Virginia graduates to earn a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma. https://www.doe.virginia.gov/parents-students/for-students/graduation/policy-initiatives/profile-of-a-virginia-graduate
Standards of Accreditation	Virginia Administrative Code Chapter 131. Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia; Serves as a basis for the accreditation system of all Virginia public schools last revised in January, 2018; commonly referred to as the "SOA" https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter131/
Standards of Learning	Virginia Board of Education-approved guiding instructional documents for classroom instruction in Virginia's public schools for most content areas (Computer Science, Digital Learning Integration, Driver Education, Economics and Personal Finance, *English, Family Life Education, Fine Arts, Health Education, History and Social Science, *Mathematics, Physical Education, *Science, World Language). Content areas marked * are included in Virginia's accreditation system. Commonly referred to as the SOL. https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/instruction
Standards of Learning Assessments	Online student assessments that measure the success of students in English, mathematics, science and history and social science at certain grade levels based on the expectations set in the Standards of Learning (SOL). https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/student-assessment/virginia-sol-assessment-program
Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers	Teacher performance evaluation system in Virginia which rates teachers on eight performance standards, including: professional knowledge, instructional planning, instructional delivery, assessment of/for student learning, the learning environment, culturally responsive teaching and equitable practices, professionalism, and student academic performance. https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/teaching-in-virginia/performance-evaluation/teachers
VDOE Memorandum of Understanding	An agreement between the Virginia Board of Education and select school division school boards which outlines responsibilities of each party to take actions to support the school division's efforts for all schools in the division to become Accredited without conditions. The school division must create a corrective action plan that is closely monitored by the Virginia Department of Education's Office of School Quality as prescribed by the MOU.
Webb's Depth of Knowledge	A framework used to categorize instructional tasks based on cognitive demand based on four levels of knowledge: recall, skills and concepts, strategic thinking, extended thinking.

VIRGINIA ASCD
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