

# **LOCAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM: EVALUATION READINESS REPORT UPDATE**

**VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment  
2512 George Mason Drive  
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**AUTHOR:** Douglas G. Wren, Ed.D., Assessment Specialist  
Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment

**OTHER CONTACT PERSON:** Jared A. Cotton, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent  
Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment

The purpose of this Evaluation Readiness Report Update is to provide the Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) School Board with an update on the Local Assessment Program Evaluation Readiness Report process. The School Board approved the 2007-2008 Program Evaluation Schedule on January 22, 2008, in which the Local Assessment Program was recommended for an Evaluation Readiness Report. An Evaluation Readiness Report is the process for preparing an existing program for evaluation.

The Evaluation Readiness Report for the Local Assessment Program—which included the proposed program goals and objectives, evaluation plan, and recommendations for evaluation—was approved by the School Board on September 23, 2008. One of the approved recommendations was to continue the evaluation readiness process through the 2008-2009 school year in order to collect baseline data to establish targets for each of the measurable objectives. In compliance with this recommendation and School Board Policy 6-26, the present report is focused on providing an update on the evaluation readiness process during 2008-2009, including actions taken regarding the recommendations approved by the School Board for the evaluation of the Local Assessment Program.

## **RESULTS OF EVALUATION READINESS REPORT PROCESS**

The Local Assessment Program Evaluation Readiness Report, approved by the School Board in September 2008, included six recommendations. An update on these recommendations is described as follows:

- The first recommendation specified that a Local Assessment Program Committee be established to “develop procedures and recommendations for a local assessment system that is aligned with the new strategic plan, *Compass to 2015*.” The formation of the Action Team for Strategic Objective 2 (SO2) in October 2008 was in accordance with this recommendation. The SO2 Action Team is continuing its work on developing procedures and recommendations for the Local Assessment Program during the 2009-2010 school year.
- The second recommendation was to continue the Evaluation Readiness Report process through the 2008-2009 school year to collect baseline data to establish targets for the program objectives. Based on an examination of the baseline data, performance targets were established for the reliability of the multiple-choice local assessments and for the use of

information from the local assessments by teachers, building administrators, and core curriculum coordinators and specialists from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

- The third and fourth recommendations of the 2008 Evaluation Readiness Report stated that input should be obtained from “teachers, school-level administrators, and core curriculum coordinators and specialists ... concerning specific local assessment needs and the pragmatic use of data from the Local Assessment Program,” and that input from these personnel should be used to “implement an enhanced system of local assessments on a staggered schedule over a period of four years.” Surveys for teachers, building administrators, and core curriculum coordinators and specialists were administered during the 2008-2009 school year in accordance with these recommendations. The survey results are summarized in the following bulleted points:
  - The most common uses of local assessment information, based on the number of teachers who responded either “Often” or “Sometimes” to these survey items, were to analyze their instructional strategies and practices and to modify instruction to assist students in meeting instructional objectives. More than 80 percent of over 1,300 teachers who responded to the survey indicated that they used the information for these purposes.
  - Over three fourths of the teachers indicated that they used information from the local assessments to monitor class or group progress in meeting instructional objectives and to identify students who are not meeting grade-level or course objectives.
  - Approximately 85 percent of over 165 building administrators who responded to the survey reported using local assessment information to monitor grade-level and class progress in meeting instructional objectives.
  - All 19 curriculum coordinators/specialists who responded to the survey indicated that they used information from the local assessments to monitor class or group progress in meeting instructional objectives.
  - The least frequent use of local assessment information was related to student demonstration of 21st century skills. About 42 percent of the teachers, 39 percent of the principals/assistant principals, and exactly 50 percent of the coordinators/specialists who responded to this item reported “Seldom” or “Never” using information from the local assessments for purposes related to student demonstration of 21st century skills.
  - Teachers reported that the local assessments “adequately addressed” both the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) objectives and the Virginia Beach Objectives (VBOs), with at least 79 percent of the teachers agreeing with these survey items. Approximately 65 percent of the teachers agreed that the local assessments were effective in assessing student knowledge for the subjects they taught during 2007-2008. Over 51 percent of the teachers disagreed that the local assessments were effective in assessing higher-order thinking skills.

- Over 89 percent of the curriculum coordinators and specialists indicated that the local assessments adequately addressed the SOL objectives and the VBOs for the subject areas to which they had been assigned during the 2007-2008 school year, and that the assessments were effective in assessing student knowledge in these subjects. Approximately 26 percent of the coordinators and specialists disagreed that the local assessments were effective in assessing higher-order thinking skills.
- An analysis of optional open-ended responses revealed that over 30 percent of 839 teachers indicated some test items on the local assessments could be improved (e.g., rewording items, finding/correcting errors, improving graphics). Over 140 teachers also reported that local assessment scheduling or pacing issues should be addressed. The scheduling/pacing concern was the most common theme among the building administrators who responded to this survey item, as 17 percent of 106 respondents mentioned scheduling and/or pacing issues.
- Another common response theme for improving the local assessments, mentioned by 133 teachers, was to eliminate some or all of the tests. Many of these teachers expressed concerns about the loss of instructional time and/or that students were being tested too often.
- Two general themes concerning improvements emerged from the responses of 17 core curriculum coordinators and specialists. Over 41 percent of the curriculum coordinators and specialists suggested that the Local Assessment Program should include more assessments with student-constructed responses, while over 35 percent indicated that local assessment results should be easier to access and returned to schools in a timelier manner.
- In response to an open-ended item inquiring about the most important attributes of an effective divisionwide system of local assessments, the two most frequently mentioned attributes from all three respondent groups—teachers, building administrators, and core curriculum coordinators and specialists—were that an effective local assessment system should provide data for evaluating student achievement and planning instruction.
- The fifth and sixth recommendations of the Evaluation Readiness Report were to conduct Program Implementation Evaluations of the Local Assessment Program during 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, with a Comprehensive Evaluation scheduled for the 2011-2012 school year. However, based on information gathered during this update, it is recommended that this evaluation schedule be revised.

## RECOMMENDATION

One recommendation resulted from this Evaluation Readiness Report Update for the Local Assessment Program:

*Recommendation:* Conduct the initial Program Implementation Evaluation of the Local Assessment Program during the 2010-2011 school year.

*Rationale:* Plans for the development of new assessments and rubrics to measure the outcomes for student success as specified by *Compass to 2015* have been ongoing and will continue through the 2009-2010 school year. In addition, input from Virginia Beach educators and other stakeholders will be considered during the 2009-2010 school year by the SO2 Action Team as preparations for a modified Local Assessment Program are being finalized. The implementation of these changes to enhance the Local Assessment Program will not occur until the 2010-2011 school year. Therefore, it is proposed that the initial Program Implementation Evaluation of the Local Assessment Program be conducted during the 2010-2011 school year. The implementation evaluation process would continue until the enhanced Local Assessment Program is fully implemented, as determined by the SO2 Action Team.