

**LOCAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM:
YEAR-ONE IMPLEMENTATION
EVALUATION**

VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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LOCAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM: YEAR-ONE IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The purpose of this Year-One Implementation Evaluation Report is to provide the Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) School Board with information about the ongoing implementation of an enhanced Local Assessment Program. The School Board approved the recommendation from the Local Assessment Program Evaluation Readiness Report Update on October 20, 2009, in which the Local Assessment Program was recommended for an Implementation Evaluation during the 2010-2011 school year. The implementation evaluation focused on components of the Local Assessment Program, changes to the Local Assessment Program, plans for continued enhancement of the program, the benefits and challenges of the program, and the cost of the program during the 2010-2011 school year.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

- The primary data sources for the year-one evaluation included focus groups with staff from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and the Department of Educational Leadership and Assessment, as well as document analysis.
- The Local Assessment Program underwent multiple changes during the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years in an effort to reflect the balanced assessment initiative of the Strategic Plan, *Compass to 2015*. Changes included the development (or purchase) and implementation of multiple performance-based assessments, and a significant decrease in the use of required multiple-choice local assessments.
- Focus group participants consistently reported that the defining characteristics of local assessments include: 1) they are locally required and are external from state requirements, 2) they are an important part of working towards a balanced assessment system, 3) they are given divisionwide, 4) they include formative as well as summative assessments that guide instruction and measure the success of the curriculum, and 5) they are sometimes purchased and sometimes developed locally.
- The description of the current Local Assessment Program provided by focus group participants during 2010-2011 is markedly different than the Local Assessment Program from two years ago. As described in the Local Assessment Program Evaluation Readiness Report Update, the prior Local Assessment Program consisted primarily of mandatory multiple-choice assessments developed by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

Conversely, the current Local Assessment Program consists of both multiple-choice and performance-based assessments, and supports a balanced assessment system. The current Local Assessment Program has been designed to align with the Strategic Plan, *Compass to 2015*.

- The current components of the Local Assessment Program as derived from the focus groups include:
 - Developmental Reading Assessment, 2nd Edition (DRA2)
 - Department of Curriculum and Instruction local assessments
 - Stanford Achievement Test, 10th Edition (SAT10)
 - Integrated Performance Task (IPT)
 - Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)
 - EXPLORE
 - Preliminary SAT (PSAT)
 - College and Work Readiness Assessment (CWRA)
- Other resources that were mentioned as supporting the Local Assessment Program included the Educational Testing Service (ETS) item bank and the Assess component of Schoolnet, which is an online curriculum management system.
- Local assessments that were described as components of the Local Assessment Program varied by department. For example, participants from the Department of Educational Leadership and Assessment mainly discussed the Stanford Achievement Test, 10th Edition (SAT10), EXPLORE, College and Work Readiness Assessment (CWRA), Integrated Performance Task (IPT), and Preliminary SAT (PSAT), while participants from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction mainly discussed the multiple-choice assessments while briefly mentioning the Developmental Reading Assessment, 2nd Edition (DRA2), IPT, and Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). This was likely due to the departments' level of involvement in managing or overseeing the various components of the program.
- Currently, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Department of Educational Leadership and Assessment, and Department of Technology play instrumental roles in the oversight of the Local Assessment Program. The Department of Curriculum and Instruction is responsible for creating the multiple-choice local assessments and ensuring that they are aligned with the curriculum. In addition, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction manages or oversees the administration of several divisionwide assessments (e.g., Developmental Reading Assessment, 2nd Edition, Scholastic Reading Inventory). The Department of Educational Leadership and Assessment is also responsible for managing the administration of several assessments, such as the Stanford Achievement Test, 10th Edition, and the College and Work Readiness Assessment. The Department of Technology provides support needed for online administration of local assessments.
- After reviewing the goals of the program, participants reported that the goals were too focused on the multiple-choice local assessments and not enough on the recently-added performance assessments. They also noted that the goals were developed before the Strategic

Plan was approved and implemented, so there are issues with alignment with the balanced assessment initiative within the Strategic Plan. However, participants reported that the current local assessments support the Strategic Plan Objective 2, which states “VBCPS will develop and implement a balanced assessment system that accurately reflects student demonstration and mastery of VBCPS outcomes for student success.”

- Cornerstone assessments were identified by focus group participants as the main component of the continued enhancement and implementation of the Local Assessment Program. Cornerstone assessments will be associated with each of the main content areas, but their main purpose will be to assess the 21st century skills of communication, critical thinking, information literacy, and problem solving. Cornerstone assessments are expected to be field tested in middle and high schools during the 2011-2012 school year and implemented during the 2012-2013 school year. Elementary schools will stagger the implementation of the Cornerstone assessments, with kindergarten and first grade implementing in 2012-2013, second and third grade implementing in 2013-2014, and fourth and fifth grade implementing in 2014-2015. Digital portfolios are also a planned component of the program.
- Focus group participants questioned if, and to what extent, moving towards a more balanced assessment system (which encompasses the Local Assessment Program) would impact performance on the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments. To assess this, the SOL pass rates of six balanced assessment Vanguard schools were compared with those from six comparison schools pre- and postintroduction of the Vanguard initiative. Balanced assessment Vanguard and comparison schools both experienced slight decreases in combined SOL pass rates over the last two years, with balanced assessment Vanguard schools having an average loss of 1.1 points and comparison schools having an average loss of 0.87. These results indicate that the Local Assessment Program has not substantially impacted students’ performance on the SOL tests, as the pattern of results was similar for both groups of schools.
- Focus group participants discussed many benefits and challenges of the Local Assessment Program. Specifically, benefits include: 1) the combined measurement of the transfer of content knowledge and mastery of 21st century skills, 2) constant assessment, and 3) the extent to which instruction is guided by the assessments. On the other hand, challenges include: 1) the assessments are external of state requirements, 2) the time involved in scoring the performance-based assessments, 3) getting teachers to understand the value of the assessments and that instruction must change, 4) digital portfolios, and 5) testing windows.
- The total cost of the Local Assessment Program for the 2010-2011 school year was approximately \$626,000. It is important to note that nearly \$150,000 in salary costs were not included in this figure because these are not costs that are accrued solely as a result of the Local Assessment Program. The biggest expenses were the ETS item bank (\$164,400) and the CWRA assessment (\$158,616.60). Overall, the largest amount of money was spent on the actual assessments or licenses rather than costs related to training or development of assessments, test administration, or scoring.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The information garnered from the implementation evaluation of the Local Assessment Program led to the formulation of the following recommendations. A rationale is also presented for each recommendation.

Recommendation 1: Revise the goals and objectives of the Local Assessment Program. (SO2 Action Team, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, and Department of Educational Leadership and Assessment)

Rationale: Information gathered from focus groups indicate that the Local Assessment Program has undergone many changes since the current goals and objectives were developed. In addition, the current goals and objectives, which were developed prior to the current Strategic Plan, are not completely aligned with the Strategic Plan. Therefore, the SO2 Action Team should revise the goals and objectives so that they align with the Strategic Plan and reflect the move towards a model of balanced assessment.

Recommendation 2: Ensure that the description, purpose, and components of the Local Assessment Program are communicated divisionwide. (SO2 Action Team)

Rationale: Results of this implementation evaluation indicate that due to the changes to the Local Assessment Program over the last two years, there was some variation in how the Local Assessment Program, and its components, were described. In order to rectify this and encourage a shared understanding of the program, the SO2 Action Team should produce a document that briefly describes the Local Assessment Program, states its purpose, and lists its components. This document should then be distributed to all schools and instructional staff.

Recommendation 3: Conduct the Year-Two Implementation Evaluation of the Local Assessment Program during the 2011-2012 school year. (Department of Educational Leadership and Assessment)

Rationale: The Local Assessment Program has undergone substantial changes that continue to affect the program. Per the recommendation of the Local Assessment Program Readiness Report Update approved by the School Board in October 2009, the implementation evaluation will continue until the implementation of the Local Assessment Program is fully implemented as determined by the SO2 Action Team. During the 2011-2012 school year, stakeholders (principals, instructional staff, relevant central office staff, and students) will be surveyed regarding their perceptions of the Local Assessment Program. The surveys will be collected following the revision of the Local Assessment Program goals and following the communication of the description, purpose, and components of the Local Assessment Program. This will allow stakeholders to provide feedback that is related to the current Local Assessment Program, including revised goals that are more aligned with the Strategic Plan.

Recommendation 4: After the completion of the Year-Two Implementation Evaluation, determine the next step regarding the evaluation of the Local Assessment Program. (SO2 Action Team)

Rationale: Because the Local Assessment Program is expected to continue to undergo changes beyond the 2011-2012 school year (especially regarding the implementation of Cornerstone assessments and the digital portfolio), it is recommended that the SO2 Action Team, which encompasses the Local Assessment Program, determine the appropriate next step after the Year-Two Implementation Evaluation has been completed. Specifically, the SO2 Action Team should provide feedback on the type of information needed and whether the Local Assessment Program should undergo: 1) no further evaluation at that time, 2) an evaluation update focused on specific aspects of the program, or 3) a year-three implementation evaluation.