**Assessment Modernization: Amend Current DOE Through-Year Growth Assessment Requirements**





Current Reality: Efforts to increase the availability and use of growth measures by the Commonwealth are appreciated, but doing using existing achievement measures is flawed and proved to be unwieldy and unhelpful at the division-level and did not deliver the outcomes intended by [HB 2027 of the 2021 General Assembly](https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?211+sum+HB2027) as codified in § 22.1-253.13:3 (C).

The current through-year growth assessments are only designed to measure grade level progress, one grade below, or one grade level above current grade level. This range is insufficient when students are exhibiting academic achievement levels that are significantly below or above grade level. While many students will show growth on the assessment, its usefulness as a tool to inform future instruction is severely lacking and does not provide needed information related to below or above grade level instructional needs.

The average student took approximately 2-3 hours to complete a DOE mathematics growth assessment and 3-4 hours to complete a DOE reading growth assessment. For one assessment period, this is a loss of 5-7 instructional hours for a typical elementary class, not including time lost logging into the test system and other related issues. At the upper range, a typical elementary instructor will lose approximately 1.5-2 days of instruction for each fall and winter assessment period. This equates to 3-4 full days of lost instructional time for the typical student during the year. Given that students already lose an additional 3-4 full days of instruction for spring SOL assessments, the typical student will lose approximately 6-8 days of instruction in a given school year due to SOL assessments. For any student, this is a significant amount of time dedicated to one type of test with limited use to inform instruction. For a student who is achieving far below grade level, for whom the assessment is least informative, this lost instructional time is especially detrimental.

Other growth assessments already in use my many divisions (such as NWEA MAP Growth assessments, iReady, etc.) are far superior and more useful in identifying current level of academic need, informing instructional needs for each student. These assessments generate reports that are aligned with Virginia’s SOLs that pinpoint where on the continuum of all grade level SOLs a particular student is performing in mathematics or reading. Using these reports, teachers can provide targeted small group remediation that supports students no matter their current level of academic achievement.

These assessments are designed to take 45 – 60 minutes to administer in the regular classroom setting, which means that students will lose far less instructional time to take these assessments than to take the SOL growth assessments. Students would lose less than three hours total of instructional time for one administration, and less than 1 day of instruction for fall, winter, and spring administrations combined.

These assessments are valid. In RCPS in SY 21-22, the NWEA MAP Growth assessments predicted the correct outcome, pass or fail, on the SOL grades 3-8 assessments for approximately 85% of our students. This demonstrates that these assessments are very closely aligned with the DOE assessment system and represent a less time-consuming assessment that provides more instructionally relevant reports to teachers than our current SOL growth assessment system.

RCPS recommends the General Assembly:

Permit local school divisions to utilize a DOE approved, commercially available growth measures (such as NWEA MAP, iReady, etc.) as an alternative to the through-year growth assessment system established by the DOE for the administration of reading and mathematics assessments in grades three through eight, provided that such program is aligned to the Standards of Learning.