Briefing Paper
Key Federal and State Updates
ESSA, Profile of a Graduate, and Diploma Requirements
September 2, 2016

Topic

Several key policy updates will have an impact on our schools and students over the next several years. The federal *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* coupled with the Virginia Department of Education focus on the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate* may impact decisions in accountability and reporting as well as high school diploma requirements. This briefing paper outlines some of the key elements of these shifts.

Background

Every Student Succeeds Act

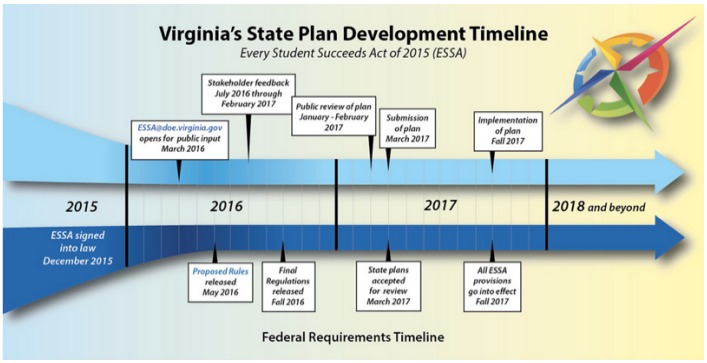
The *Every Student Succeeds Act*, signed in December of 2015, amended the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* and replaces the *No Child Left Behind Act* of *2001 (NCLB).* States will operate under the *NCLB* requirements for the 2016-17 school year with all provisions of *ESSA* taking effect in the 2017-18 school year. This act includes continued elements of accountability including:

- assessing reading/language arts and mathematics annually in grades 3-8 and once in high school;
- assessing science once in grades 3-5, once in grades 6-9, and once in grades 10-12; and
- disaggregating results of accountability indicators for all students and reporting groups

In addition to these assessments, our state accountability system must address:

- academic achievement: performance on state assessments,
- academic progress: growth or other academic indicator (elementary and middle),
- graduation rates: 4 year cohort rate,
- progress in English Learners gaining proficiency, and
- school quality.

The School Quality (Student Success) Indicator may measure student engagement, educator engagement, student access to and completion of advanced course work, postsecondary readiness, school climate and safety, or other indicators as chosen by the state. The Virginia Department of Education will submit their plan for implementation of these components to the U.S. Department of Education by March 2017. The timeline below further outlines the work of the VDOE in relationship to the key milestones of *ESSA*:



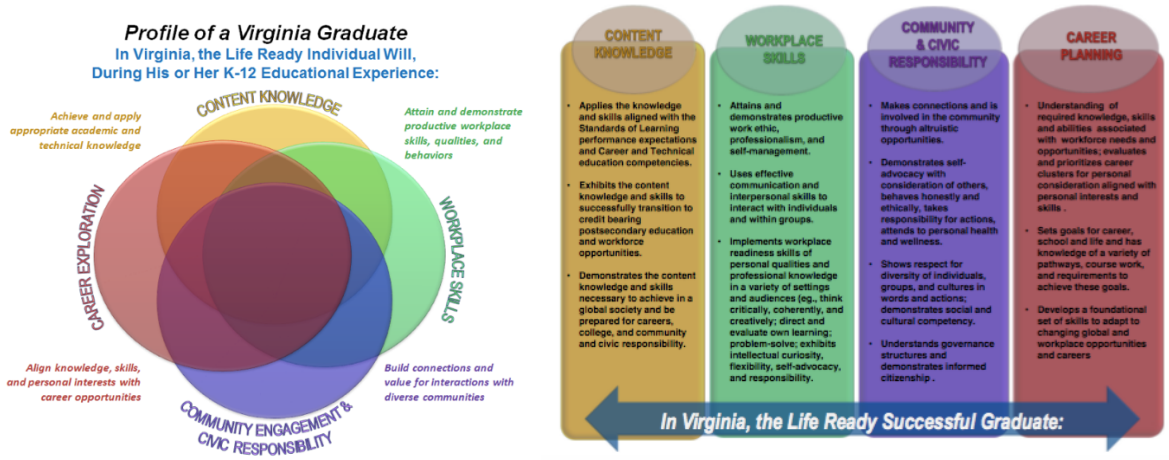
For additional specifics on key *ESSA* changes, please refer to the tables in Appendix A.

Virginia Department of Education Profile of a Graduate

Approximately concurrently, but without a direct interrelationship to *ESSA*, the Virginia General Assembly has been working on and passing legislation that will result in the redesign of high schools. This redesign will occur due to a greater emphasis on:

- expanding the use of performance assessments and reducing the number of credits verified by SOL tests;
- increasing internships and work-based learning experiences;
- increasing career exposure, exploration, and planning; and
- emphasizing critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship.

These areas of consensus are captured in the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate* as defined in the graphics below:



The *Profile of a Virginia Graduate* has been developed to describe the knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences students should have in order to align with the expectations of higher education and businesses.

Diploma Requirements

The focus on the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate* will further impact our students as it leads to a shift in diploma requirements. These shifts, although not yet finalized (see the timeline below), have led to a review of the following diploma expectations by the Virginia Board of Education:

- Potential New Requirements
  - Applied knowledge and experiential learning
  - Capstone project
  - Demonstration of critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship
  - Career exploration decision-making points and career investigation course
- Establishment of one Virginia diploma (versus the current two including a Standard and Advanced Studies Diploma)
- Increase in Mathematics requirements
- Establishment of alternative options for Science

Additionally, a review of the number of standard units and verified credits is occurring. The proposal is to keep the requirement around verified credits to a minimum of 4 credits, one each in the areas of English, Math, Science, and Social Studies irrespective of the decision to have one or two types of diplomas. Finally, the Board of Education accepted a proposal to expand the use of

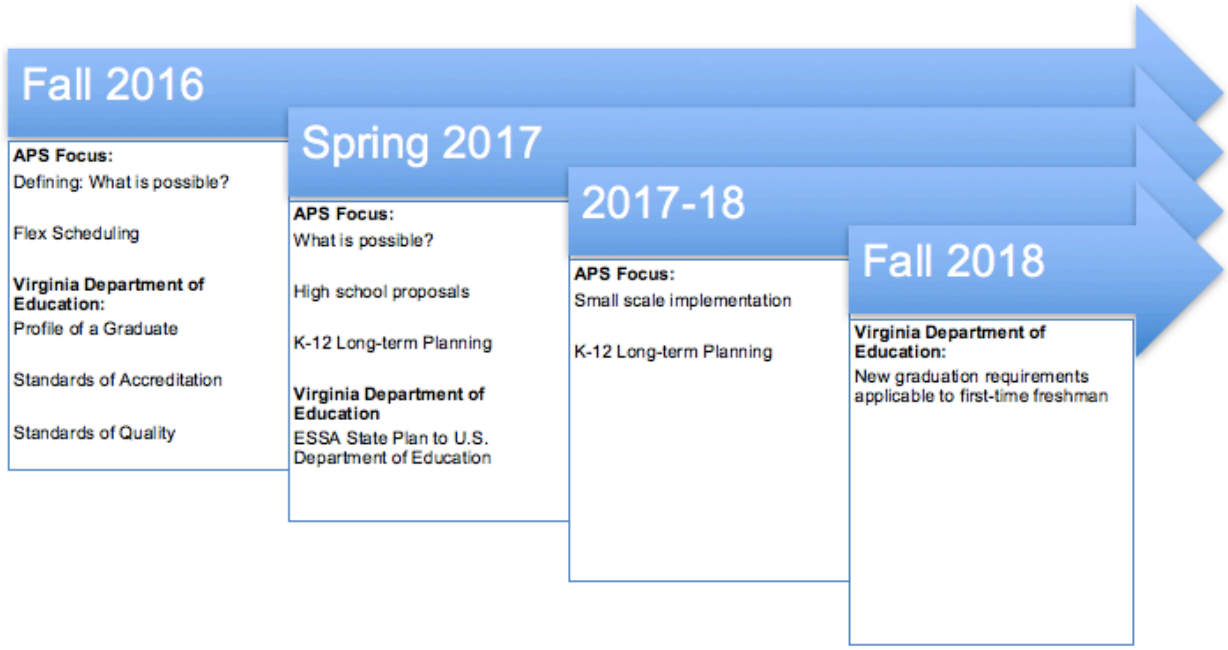
locally-developed performance assessments to verify history/social science credits. The specifics of the recommendations are captured in the table below.

High School Testing Expectations

Content Area	ESSA Testing	Standard Diploma		Advanced Studies Diploma		Proposed
		Standard Units	Verified Credits	Standard Units	Verified Credits	Verified Credits
English	1	4	2	4	2	1
Math	1	3	1	4	2	1
Science	1	3	1	4	2	1
History/Social Science		3	1	4	2	1
Student-selected			1		1	
Health and P.E.		2		2		
Foreign Language, Fine Arts or CTE		2				
Foreign Language				3		
Fine Arts or CTE				1		
Economics and Personal Finance		1		1		
Electives		4		3		
TOTAL	**3**	**22**	**6**	**26**	**9**	**4**

Timeline and Next Steps

The timeline below captures some of the key benchmarks in the *ESSA*, *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*, and diploma requirements work that will be taking place over the next couple of years.



As this work continues, we will be developing a detailed plan for high school redesign and collaborating across and within departments as well as with a variety of school and community members to support the many facets of these shifts.

Appendix A

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Key Changes from NCLB	Definition Changes
• 2017-18 implementation year (2016-17 to remain under *NCLB*) • State regulated with more authority to make decisions, choose standards and assessments, goals, and means of accountability • State responsible for enforcing many requirements (though subject to Department of Education regulation) • AYP, AMAOs, HQT, 100% proficiency requirement and SES have been eliminated	• Core Academic Subjects to Well-Rounded Education • Scientifically Research Based to Evidenced-Based • Highly Qualified to Highly Effective • Parent Engagement to Parent and Family Engagement • English Language Learners (ELLs) to English Learners (ELs)

Accountability and Reporting	
State Considerations	District Considerations
• Includes performance goals for each reporting group • Annually measure student growth (or another valid and reliable statewide academic indicator) • Includes one other indicator of school quality or student success that allows for meaningful differentiation • Measures English language proficiency annually in grades 3-8, and once in High School • Three additional reporting groups: homeless status (if statistically significant), military-connected children, and students in foster care • Two levels of improvement (Comprehensive Support and Improvement; Targeted Support and Improvement)	• EL accountability frozen until 2017-18 • Report per pupil expenditures for federal, state, and local funds

Teacher Qualifications and Effectiveness	
State Considerations	District Considerations
• State plans provide assurance that all teachers and paraprofessionals meet state certification and licensure requirements • Creates new teacher, principal and school leader academies • Creates new teacher residency programs	• Professional Development definition updated to ensure personalized, ongoing and job-embedded activities • Title II funds to prepare, recruit and retain teachers and principals formula changes to 20% based on school-aged population and 80% based on school-age population living in poverty, phased in over 4 years • Allows use of Title II funds to reform certification systems; improve alternate routes to certification; and improve recruitment and retention

Standards and Assessments	
State Considerations	District Considerations
• Must provide an assurance that challenging academic content standards (in reading, math and science) and aligned academic achievement standards (with three levels of achievement) have been adopted • Must adopt English language proficiency assessment • Allows states to administer alternate test for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities; however, alternate tests may be used by no more than 1% of the total number of students being assessed (must provide notice and justification to SEA if 1% is exceeded) • States can establish their own laws governing 'opt-outs' and requires parents to be notified regarding their children's participation rights in assessments • May use single annual summative assessment or multiple statewide interim assessments throughout the year that result in one summative score • May use computer adaptive assessments • May set a target limit on amount of time used for testing	• Maintains requirement that assessments be administered to at least 95% of all students • Consequences for schools that miss the 95% threshold are determined by states and districts

Well-Rounded Education	
State Considerations	District Considerations
• Eliminates 50 programs that support physical education, STEM, and school counseling • New Title IV A block grant (must fund at least one academic activity, one non-academic activity and one activity expanding the use of technology) • New early childhood education program • Requires state plans to identify how they are reducing bullying and the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom	• Requires districts to allocate 20% of Title IV funds to programs that support well-rounded education • Requires districts to allocate 20% of Title IV funds to programs that support safe and healthy students • Remaining 60% of Title IV funds allocated based on needs assessment

Adapted from Brustein & Manasevit, PLLC, *ESSA'Bout Time* and
ASCD *Elementary and Secondary Education Act Comparison of the No Child Left Behind Act to the Every Student Succeeds Act*