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Board of Education Reaffirms Support for SOLs; Opposes Imposition of National Standards

The Board of Education unanimously adopted the following statement at its June 24, 2010, meeting in Richmond:

“The Board of Education is committed to the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) program and opposed to adoption of the newly developed Common Core State Standards as a prerequisite for participation in federal competitive grant and entitlement programs.

“The Standards of Learning are clear and rigorous and have won the acceptance and trust of Virginia educators. Whatever adjustments might be warranted to ensure alignment of the SOL with the Common Core State Standards can be made within the process through which the Board of Education exercises its constitutional authority to establish standards for the commonwealth’s public schools.

“The board believes this approach makes the most sense for Virginia for the following reasons:

- Virginia’s system of accountability and support is founded on the Standards of Learning.
- The commonwealth is in the process of implementing recently revised Standards of Learning in English and mathematics that meet national benchmarks for college- and career-ready content.
- The revised English and mathematics SOL and the Common Core are comparable in content and rigor. The board’s established process for revising and adopting standards is ideally suited to incorporating Common Core content into the SOL where warranted.
- The subtle differences between the SOL and the Common Core do not justify the disruption to instruction, accountability, professional development and teacher preparation that would follow word-for-word adoption.
- Adoption of the Common Core would leave teachers without curriculum frameworks, scope and sequence guides and other materials specifically aligned with the standards students are expected to meet. Experience shows that these supports are critical to successful standards-based reform.
- Virginia’s accountability program is built on a validated assessment system aligned with the SOL; validated assessments aligned with the Common Core do not exist.
- Virginia’s investment in the Standards of Learning since 1995 far exceeds the \$250 million Virginia potentially could have received by abandoning the SOL and competing in phase two of Race to the Top.

“The Board of Education supported — and continues to support — the development of internationally benchmarked standards for states to adopt outright or to use as models to improve their own standards. The board, however, opposes the use of federal rulemaking and the peer review process as leverage to compel word-for-word adoption of the Common Core State Standards.”

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