

## A VASSP Special Report: Revising the Principal Evaluation System in the Commonwealth

On October 19, 2011 the first meeting of the Virginia Principal Evaluation Work Group convened in Richmond. The work group was appointed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) “to gather input and guidance for the principal evaluation document.” The second – and final meeting – is scheduled for December 6, 2011.

The *Code of Virginia* requires the Virginia Board of Education to establish performance standards and evaluation criteria for teachers, principals, and superintendents to serve as guidelines for school divisions to use in implementing educator evaluation systems. On April 28, 2011, the Board of Education approved the revised guidance documents, *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* and the *Virginia Standards for the Professional Practice of Teachers*, to become effective on July 1, 2012. (This document is available on the VASSP website at [www.vapincipals.org](http://www.vapincipals.org).) The current phase of the Department of Education’s work is to develop proposed revisions to the Board’s guidelines for uniform performance standards and evaluation criteria for principals. The proposed principal evaluation guidelines will align with the approved teacher evaluation guidelines. Following the work on revising the principal evaluation guidelines, the Department will then turn to reviewing the evaluation guidelines for division superintendents. This will most likely occur in the fall of 2012.

Professor James Stronge of the College of William and Mary was instrumental in VDOE’s 1999 work in the development of *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers, Administrators, and Superintendents*. These guidelines were adopted by the Virginia Board of Education in January 2000. Dr. Stronge again was contracted by the VDOE to guide the work of the Teacher Evaluation Work Group last year and is leading the work group on principal evaluation.

The objective of the first meeting was to address the following two questions as presented by Dr. Stronge:

1. What should be the principal evaluation standards?
2. What should be the data sources for these standards?

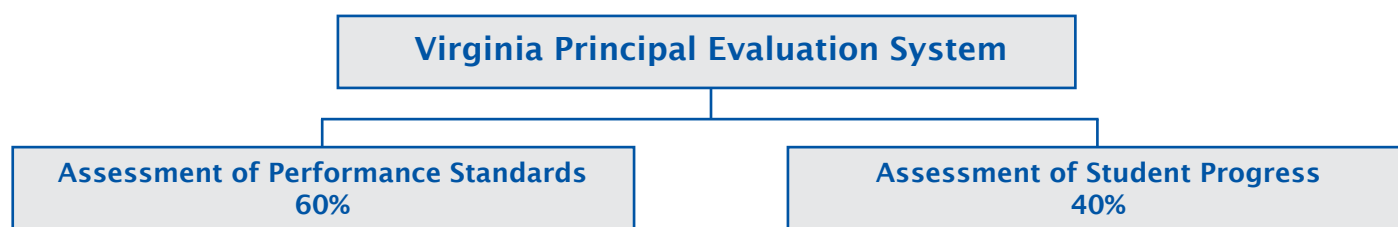
In answering these questions, the work group used as a reference the considerable work already done on this project including the *Discussion Draft for Virginia’s Principal Evaluation Work Group* written by Dr. James H. Stronge with Dr. Virginia Caine Tonneson from the College of William and Mary, and the *Research Synthesis of Virginia Principal Evaluation Competencies and Standards* also written by Dr. Stronge with Dr. Lauri M. Lepper from the College of William and Mary. (These documents are posted on the VASSP website at [www.vapincipals.org](http://www.vapincipals.org).)

### What should be the principal evaluation standards?

According to Dr. Stronge, the primary purposes of the principal evaluation system are to:

- Improve student achievement through the quality of school leadership by assuring accountability for school performance.
- Contribute to the successful achievement of the goals and objectives defined in a school division’s educational plans.
- Provide a basis for instructional improvement through productive instructional leadership.
- Share responsibility for evaluation between the principal and the evaluator in a collaborative process that promotes self-growth, instructional effectiveness, and improvement of overall job performance.

The flow chart below represents the proposed principal evaluation system:



Much has changed in education during the last decade. Dr. Stronge stated that he saw nothing wrong with the guidelines approved by the Virginia Board of Education in 2000 under which schools have been operating, with one exception: It simply is not feasible to collect meaningful data and evaluate principals across 20 distinct performance standards. He went on to say, however, over the past ten years, there has been a significant amount of research on effective leadership. This research can enhance the effectiveness of the principal evaluation system in Virginia. The consensus of the work group is that the classroom teacher is the most powerful, professional force in the education of a child. The second most influential force in a child's education is the building principal.

### 2000 Virginia Principal Categories and Standards

Categories	Standards
Planning and Assessment	4
Instructional Leadership	5
Safety and Organizational Management for Learning	4
Communication and Community Relations	3
Professionalism	4
<b>5 Categories</b>	<b>20 Standards</b>

During the October meeting, the work group reviewed the 20 standards used in the 2000 Guidelines and the proposed standards for 2012. Considerable work had been done by the VDOE to narrow the standards to nine. The work of the committee was to determine whether the new number should be nine or narrowed further. The work group agreed on seven standards based on the rationale that the new standards encapsulated the spirit of the 20 from the 2000 Guidelines, while also being in line with the measurement tools used with the recently approved teacher evaluation system. The consensus of the work group was to parallel as much as possible the number of standards and criteria approved by the Virginia Board of Education for the evaluation of teachers.

### 2012 Proposed Principal Standards Initially Recommended by the Work Group

1. Instructional Leadership
2. School Climate
3. Human Resources Management
4. Organizational Management
5. Communications and Community Relations
6. Professionalism
7. Student Progress

*Alternative Set of Standards includes:*

- Teacher/Staff Evaluation
- Planning and Assessment

### *The seven proposed standards that were discussed are as follows:*

#### **Principal Standard 1: Instructional Leadership**

*The principal fosters the success of all students by facilitating the development, communication, implementation, and evaluation of a shared vision of teaching and learning that leads to school improvement.*

#### **Principal Standard 2: School Climate**

*The principal promotes the success of all students by developing, advocating, and sustaining an academically rigorous, positive, and safe school climate for all stakeholders.*

#### **Principal Standard 3: Human Resources Management**

*The principal fosters effective human resources management through the selection, induction, support, evaluation, and retention of quality instructional and support personnel.*

#### **Principal Standard 4: Organizational Management**

*The principal fosters the success of all students by supporting, managing, and overseeing the school's organization, operation, and use of resources.*

#### **Principal Standard 5: Communications and Community Relations**

*The principal fosters the success of all students by communicating and collaborating effectively with stakeholders.*

#### **Principal Standard 6: Professionalism**

*The principal fosters the success of students by demonstrating professional standards and ethics, engaging in continuous professional development, and contributing to the profession.*

#### **Principal Standard 7: Student Progress**

*The principal's leadership results in acceptable, measurable student progress based on established standards.*

The wording of titles of the above standards, as well as some modifications to the descriptors, will be reviewed again at the December 6, 2011 meeting. In addition, the work group will be developing "look for" indicators for each standard.

In the initial meeting, Standard 3 and Standard 7 received the most discussion. The concern expressed by the VASSP representatives and others was that Standard 3 was practically a "misnomer" for principals in Virginia. Principals have limited control over the hiring and firing of teachers. Human Resources Management is a central office function in most school divisions – except, perhaps, for the very small divisions. Principals can only recommend a teacher be hired, and they can gather documentation to make a case in recommending that a teacher be dismissed. Principals need to know how to write a plan of assistance for teachers that is instructionally sound and legally defensible. To establish a standard where the school principal can be held accountable for the expectations of "selection, induction, and retention" and be judged in these areas is not appropriate given the restraints of state law and practice in Virginia's public school divisions. The work group thought it was important to integrate contextual views and discussed how some smaller rural divisions may not have a large pool of candidates from which to select teachers and principals. The question was left open-ended about how much, if at all, context should be factored into the evaluation process. The work group did agree that teacher evaluation is a significant focus for this particular standard and, therefore, should be reflected in some way in its title. The work group also agreed that the principal's responsibility to evaluate teachers is a primary responsibility given the research indication that the teacher is the number one most effective influence on a student's learning.

The work group decided that the teacher evaluation should be where emphasis was placed and not necessarily staff evaluation; however, it is implied that principals are also responsible for evaluation of custodians and cafeteria-type positions. Indeed, many school divisions require the principal to evaluate *all* personnel in the building. The work group expressed that the best use of a principal's time was in instructional evaluation and not necessarily the evaluation of every employee in the principal's building.

Standard 7 focuses on "acceptable, measurable student academic progress based on established standards." Nothing in this written standard would suggest that 40 percent of the weighted criteria would not be totally based on Standards of Learning school scores and Adequate Yearly Progress. VASSP representatives and others expressed a concern over the fact that principals are often moved from school to school with some frequency and could find

themselves being evaluated on their career by how well they become a school turn-around specialist. In addition, principals have no say in where they will be assigned or for how long. Effective change takes time. Principals who are good at their jobs could be frequently moved around. Our concern is burnout and the likelihood of not being able to build principal leadership capacity in school divisions. Some assurances should be built in to protect principals from becoming “revolving door administrators.”

The work group acknowledged that this standard is not optional nor should it be. The emphasis on growth versus achievement is prudent and necessary. The work group felt strongly that there should be some suggestions in the description of the indicator that there will be multiple sources to establish student growth and that the principal, along with the evaluator, will determine those sources.

In discussing how a principal would go about addressing evidence of performance in an evaluation, the topic of personal dossiers became apparent. A concern was expressed that, should a dossier be required, it could be a rather time consuming document to maintain. One comment was that a principal’s dossier could indeed become a daily journal. The time factor for this was discussed as a major concern considering all the daily responsibilities of a school principal.

### What should be the data sources for these standards?

VASSP members are encouraged to review figure 8, Performance Standards for Principals, page 19 of the *Discussion Draft for Virginia’s Principal Evaluation Work Group* –posted on the VASSP website, [www.vaprincipals.org](http://www.vaprincipals.org). In addition, principals are encouraged to review the performance appraisal rubrics discussed on pages 24 through 38.

In addressing the second question, *What should the data sources be for these standards?*, the work group discussed the following multiple data sources listed below. (Although school goals are noted, it is the VASSP representatives’ view that the division goals are the most important.)

#### Data sources for “student growth” are:

- % of students taking the SAT
- % of students who are advanced proficient on SOL assessments (college ready)
- % increase in minority students taking AP/dual enrollment courses
- % students meeting industry standards in career tech
- % increase in students taking more academically rigorous classes
- % increase in Graduation and Completion Index
- % student athletes on the honor roll during competitive season
- % students in band/theatre, etc. on honor roll during season or rehearsal period
- % decrease in school suspensions
- % students involved in community service

### Multiple Data Sources

The conversation on data sources was preliminary with the understanding that additional discussion is needed. In general, the group agreed that multiple sources are important. Furthermore, the group agreed that it is important for the principal and the evaluator to discuss the data sources that will be referenced and agree upon them at the onset of the evaluation cycle. Group members agreed that the principal’s evaluation data sources could be similar to those used for the School Improvement Plan and that the goals in that plan should be a part of the conversation during the evaluation process.

REQUIRED by <i>The Code of Virginia</i>	OPTIONS for inclusion in <i>2012 Guidelines</i>
Measures of Academic Progress	Student Growth Percentiles Student Achievement Goals
Measures of School Goals	School Goals
Skills and Knowledge	Teacher/Staff Surveys Community Surveys Portfolios/Document Logs Observation/Shadowing
Safety and Student Discipline	Teacher/Staff Surveys Community Surveys Portfolios/Document Logs Observation/Shadowing
	Personal Goals Self-Evaluation

Group members agreed that it is important to solicit input from all stakeholder groups. This data should be taken in context and the results should be shared in context (i.e., number of respondents to a survey, etc.) so that it is clear whether or not the data can be considered a reliable reflection of the stakeholders’ perception of the principal’s performance. The group did not have a logistical discussion about the number of respondents they think will be necessary to have an adequate survey, how much weight should be assigned to surveys, and the construction and delivery of surveys.

There was concern shared by the work group over the “Student Achievement Goals” data source with further explanation needed regarding the sources of goals, how data on the goals will be represented, etc. The group assumed this area of concern would be discussed at its next meeting.

The group did agree that any use of “Observation/Shadowing” would be contingent on division resources, etc. Again, school context was a major concern.

The principal’s evaluation rating levels discussed at the meeting would address four categories – (1.) exemplary, (2.) proficient, (3.) developing/needs improvement, and (4.) unacceptable. *Proficient* is the expected level of performance. These categories are similar to those proposed for the teacher evaluation guidelines. See chart below.

<b>Exemplary</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Developing/ Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>
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In addressing the methods that could be used for connecting principal performance to academic progress, principals of grades K through 8 would have 20 percent of their evaluation based on student growth percentiles and 20 percent based on other student academic progress measures. For high school principals, 40 percent would be based on other student academic progress measures. The work group did not discuss what other measures would entail. The work group is expected to address this area of the evaluation system at the next meeting and go into some detail as to how scores for the Standards of Learning tests, Adequate Yearly Progress, graduation index, and other possible measures will be addressed.

The work group was briefly exposed to the decision rules for summative evaluation and the summative assessment score (see charts below). No discussion ensued, and it is anticipated that these issues will be addressed at the next meeting.

### Summative Assessment

<b>Exemplary (3 pts.)</b> <i>In addition to meeting requirements for proficient.</i>	<b>Proficient (2 pts.)</b> <i>proficient is the expected level of performance</i>	<b>Developing/Needs Improvement (1 pt.)</b>	<b>Unacceptable (0 pts.)</b>
The principal actively and consistently employs innovative and effective leadership strategies that maximize student learning and result in a shared vision of teaching and learning that reflects excellence.	The principal fosters the success of all students by facilitating the development, communication, and evaluation of a shared vision of teaching and learning that leads to school improvement.	The principal is inconsistent in fostering the success of students by facilitating the development, communication, or evaluation of a shared vision of teaching and learning that leads to school improvement.	The principal does not foster the success of all students by facilitating the development, communication, or evaluation of a shared vision of teaching and learning that leads to school improvement.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Summative Assessment Score

Rating	Point Value	# of Standards Rated at Level	Computation
Exemplary	3		3 x _____ = _____
Proficient	2		3 x _____ = _____
Developing/Needs Improvement	1		3 x _____ = _____
Unacceptable	0		3 x _____ = _____
Add the four numbers in the computation column to get final summative score.			<b>TOTAL =</b> <input type="text"/>

Writers of this report have tried to stay cautious and not reveal any possible preconceived notions and perhaps biases. However, the research on this project is quite clear and well presented in Dr. Stronge's documents. Principal evaluation systems are changing in almost every state and the standards and evaluation criteria are somewhat similar in every state throughout the country.

It is critical for public school principals to carefully review the documents now under discussion and posted on the VASSP website. You need to express your concerns, suggestions, ideas, and recommendations to your middle level and high school representatives on the committee. The sooner principals begin to discuss revising the Virginia Principal Evaluation System in Virginia, the better. Our window of input into the decision making process for the 2012 uniform performance standards and evaluation criteria is limited. Everyone needs to remember that the VDOE is an administrative agency of the Commonwealth, and, as such, is not required to accept the work group's recommendations. The final approval rests with the Virginia Board of Education.

### Summary

Much of the work of the Virginia Principals Evaluation Work Group was already vetted and compiled by Dr. James Stronge and was presented for review by the appointed group. The first meeting focused on two questions: 1. What should be the principal evaluation standards? and, 2. What should be the data sources for these standards?

The work group spent time reviewing Dr. Stronge's preliminary work and discussing the principal evaluation process. The group entertained steps that should be included in the principal evaluation process. These discussions were preliminary, and there was no specific indication from the work group facilitator as to whether or not the group would make recommendations on the process in its final report.

On the issue of student growth the measure is 40 percent. "Student growth" is consistent with the latest Elementary and Secondary Education Act Reauthorization language. The Virginia and National Associations of Secondary School Principals were focused on this terminology change rather than "student achievement."

For up-to-date Virginia school principal news, please visit VASSP's blog,

**PRINCIPAL INSIGHT EduLog at:**  
<http://news.vassp.org>

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Please review the documents addressed on the VASSP website, and let us hear from you! Your suggestions, ideas, and concerns will be considered useful feedback, and we will share all that we receive with the work group at our next meeting on December 6, 2011. Thank you.

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