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Dear Board Members,

As we conclude winter growth testing this week, I would like to provide you some updated information on this new testing process. The 2022-2023 school year is the first year we have given the Winter Growth Assessments in grades 3-8. These assessments are similar to the Fall Growth Assessments: they are computer adaptive, based on grade-level material, and provide [Student Detail by Question \(SDBQ\) reports](#) of student learning. The fall and winter growth tests will also be parts of a growth calculation used in the Virginia Department of Education's accreditation system; however, how they will be used is unclear at this time.

In preparing localities to review the fall and winter growth assessments the DOE has provided training in which they focused on using the SDBQ report to help understand what concepts students have mastered. Additionally, the DOE encourages teachers to use the fall and winter growth SDBQ reports in tandem with other elements of a balanced assessment model such as teacher observations, formative assessments, and summative assessments.

While the student is assigned a vertical scaled score based on their performance on the growth assessments, and those vertical scaled scores are listed on the student report, the DOE has provided limited guidance about using or understanding vertical scaled scores. The DOE has indicated that they will be used for growth calculations, but has yet to provide more specific guidance about how they will be used.

We are sharing this information with the Board because we have noticed that some students have had increases or decreases in their vertical scaled score that do not seem to correspond to their overall performance on the assessment. The DOE has advised that the score is not an indicator of student proficiency, and we are advising schools of this information, but constituents may reach out to you for additional information or to express their concerns.

To support all students and families, the State has created the website, "[Parent and Caregiver Resources for Virginia Assessments](#)." This site contains the most up-to-date guidance from the DOE on these new assessments. This site also [contains a video to support the interpretation of vertical scaled scores](#) which underscores that they are not an indicator of content proficiency. ACPS is in the process of developing a similar informational website about growth testing, including resources for reading and understanding the SDBQ, answers to frequently asked questions, and video resources provided by the DOE. We encourage you to explore these sites, and recommend them to any constituents who have questions or concerns.

As always, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions.

Respectfully,

Patrick J. McLaughlin, Ed. D.  
Assistant Superintendent for Strategic Planning