



For Immediate Release  
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## SUPERINTENDENT SEIBERT ADDRESSES STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

*URGING MEMBERS TO USE  
21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY TOOLS IN THE  
VIRGINIA ASSESSMENT SYSTEM*

Salem School Division Superintendent, Alan Seibert, was in Richmond this morning addressing the Virginia Board of Education on behalf of the nearly 4000 students in Salem, who traditionally perform well on standardized tests.

Still, Seibert felt it was important to make the trek to the state capital to speak to members of the State Board because he and other educational leaders in the Commonwealth believe the state needs to focus more on the achievement of individual children when it comes to measuring the progress of students in end of the school year tests such as the SOLs.

Here are Dr. Seibert's comments as delivered this morning in the Jefferson Conference Room of the James Monroe building.

***"Virginia was a national leader when the current accountability system was crafted. A decade and a half of adding pieces here and there to the system has kept it functional as a means of labeling schools and completing federal reports, but it is of very limited use to those who most need meaningful feedback...the children we serve.***

***Yes, our tests are online, but they are still one-shot summative assessments given at one moment in time. Children either cross the bar by a little or a lot or they fail to cross it all together. In Virginia, most data analysis of the SOL tests examines the last group of students in the hopes of doing a better job for the next. This is the educational equivalent of an autopsy.***

***In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, summative assessments will still have a role, especially when comparing our students to other states and nations, but it is only with a measure of growth that we can get a true picture of a child's progress and the effectiveness of our instruction.***

***In Salem City Schools, we are not waiting for end-of-grade or end-of-course SOL tests or even a periodic "benchmark assessment." Instead, we are instituting a division-wide emphasis on formative assessment so that the needs of every child can be met every day...like a doctor using lab results from this morning to prescribe treatment for this afternoon.***

***With just a little bit of forethought and the use of existing tools such as Virginia's success with online assessments and the advent of the Student Test Identifier, Virginia is poised for a migration to an accountability system that measures the progress of every student in the Commonwealth.***

***Currently, a student who worked hard and learned a lot but happened to earn a 398 on the 7<sup>th</sup> grade math SOL test in Virginia is likely told, "You were so close! Just one question would have made the difference!" but what he heard and felt was failure. In a value added system, that same child with the same progress in one year would hear and feel, "Terrific! You exceeded your learning goal! You learned 14 months of mathematics in just one school year!"***

***The same success could be experienced by the academically gifted student, who instead of getting yet another "passed advanced," would get a comparison of her learning goal from the start of the year with where she actually finished...becoming a participant in rather than a recipient of the assessment process, and ensuring that all students of all ability levels grow every year.***

***Instead of merely labeling schools, we could celebrate and motivate individual children and their teachers. You see, SOLs in Virginia and AYP in our nation report pass rates as percentages, but we don't teach percentages, we teach children!***

***Clearly, there is no money available now to implement to a new accountability system, but in this time of economic scarcity, there is an opportunity. Even if you cannot afford to build a new house, you can use your time wisely and begin to design one.***

***The technology is available, the assessment techniques are proven, and all we need is the resolve. It will take time, so please start the process now!***

***We strongly encourage the State Board and the Department to explore methods for migrating Virginia's accountability system toward a growth model, as many other states are doing. We have no doubt that Virginia can do it even better!***

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