

# Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) Performance Level Descriptors Review & Feedback Training

Virginia Department of Education  
and  
Behavioral Research & Teaching  
University of Oregon



Introductions:  
Thank you for working with us!

# Training Goals & Agenda

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**Goal 1:** Learn about Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) — What are PLDs and why are they important?

**Goal 2:** Learn about PLDs review and feedback process — Key tasks, review supports, documenting/returning feedback, & follow-up meeting

**Agenda:**

- (1) Whole-group training
- (2) Review and feedback process
- (3) Q & A and concluding remarks/reminders

# What Are PLDs?

- Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) outline expectations for student performance at each achievement level based on the Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning (VESOL) as assessed by the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP).

# Achievement Levels for VAAP

- Pass/Advanced
- Pass/Proficient
- Fail/Does Not Meet

# Purpose of PLDs

- PLDs provide clear, concise, concrete behavioral descriptions of what students should know and be able to demonstrate to achieve a given performance level based on the range of skills assessed by the VAAP tests.

# Three Major Functions (1 of 3)

1. Convey to parents, teachers, and the public what a typical student at a given performance level knows and can demonstrate via the assessment
  - Information is available on student score reports



# Three Major Functions (2 of 3)

2. Support meaningful interpretation of student performance on VAAP tests
  - Describe the knowledge, skills, and abilities typical of students within each performance level

# Three Major Functions (3 of 3)

## 3. Support standard setting

- Provide a qualitative description of the content- and skill-based performance expectations for each performance level
- Provide a common frame of reference for thinking about students at each performance level

# Background: PLDs and Standard Setting

# What is standard setting?

- Standard setting is a systematic way of making a professional judgment on the level of achievement required to signify that a student's performance is at a particular performance level (e.g., *does not meet*, *proficient*, or *advanced*).

# Standard Setting Process in Virginia (1 of 3)

- Committees of educators who have experience with the students who participate in VAAP and with teaching the VESOL are convened to recommend “cut scores” on the VAAP tests.
- Committee members begin by discussing Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) for each achievement level (i.e., *Fail/Does Not Meet*, *Pass/Proficient*, and *Pass/Advanced*).
  - This activity helps ensure a common understanding of what “not meet”, “proficient”, and “advanced” mean in terms of the VESOL.

# What are PLDs, & how are they used in standard setting?

We develop PLDs for each grade-level and content area tested and organize them by reporting category

e.g., Grade 3 • Reading • Fiction & Non-fiction

PLDs are a critical support for standard setting / recommending “cut scores”

Reporting Category	Fail/Does Not Meet <i>A student performing at this level demonstrates knowledge and skills related to Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning that <b>do not meet</b> proficiency:</i>	Pass/Proficient <i>A student performing at this level demonstrates knowledge and skills related to Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning that <b>meet</b> proficiency:</i>	Pass/Advanced <i>A student performing at this level demonstrates knowledge and skills related to Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning that <b>exceed</b> proficiency:</i>
Demonstrate comprehension of <i>nonfiction</i> texts and use word analysis strategies	Given sentences of 5 words or fewer read to the student, the student may be able to correctly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify a letter name, letter sound, or word,</li> <li>answer a comprehension question,</li> <li>answer a question about the main idea, and</li> <li>identify the beginning or end of the text.</li> </ul>	Given sentences of at least 6 words read to the student or that the student reads, the student is generally able to correctly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify and understand the meaning of some words,</li> <li>answer some comprehension questions,</li> <li>answer some questions about the main idea, and</li> <li>identify the beginning, middle, or end of the text.</li> </ul>	Given sentences of 7 words or more read to the student or that the student reads, the student is generally able to correctly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify and understand the meaning of most words,</li> <li>answer most comprehension questions,</li> <li>answer most questions about the main idea, and</li> <li>identify the beginning, middle, and end of the text.</li> </ul>

Reporting Category	Fail/Does Not Meet <i>A student performing at this level demonstrates knowledge and skills related to Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning that <b>do not meet</b> proficiency:</i>	Pass/Proficient <i>A student performing at this level demonstrates knowledge and skills related to Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning that <b>meet</b> proficiency:</i>	Pass/Advanced <i>A student performing at this level demonstrates knowledge and skills related to Virginia Essentialized Standards of Learning that <b>exceed</b> proficiency:</i>
Demonstrate comprehension of <i>fictional</i> texts and use word analysis strategies	Given sentences of 5 words or fewer read to the student, the student may be able to correctly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify a letter name, letter sound, or word,</li> <li>answer a comprehension question,</li> <li>identify an element such as an event, idea, or step,</li> <li>identify a character, and</li> <li>identify a setting.</li> </ul>	Given sentences of at least 6 words read to the student or that the student reads, the student is generally able to correctly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify and understand the meaning of some words,</li> <li>answer some comprehension questions,</li> <li>identify some elements such as events, ideas, or steps,</li> <li>identify some characters, and</li> <li>identify some settings.</li> </ul>	Given sentences of 7 words or more read to the student or that the student reads, the student is generally able to correctly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify and understand the meaning of most words,</li> <li>answer most comprehension questions,</li> <li>identify most elements such as events, ideas, or steps,</li> <li>identify most characters, and</li> <li>identify most settings.</li> </ul>

# Standard Setting Process in Virginia (2 of 3)

- Committee members independently examine each item on the test, thinking of students who are “just” *proficient* and estimating whether these students would answer each item correctly MOST of the time (2/3 of the time).
- Committee members then use the same procedure for the *advanced* level.
- When this activity is completed, each committee member has recorded “yes” or “no” for each question on the test for “proficient” and “advanced.”
- Each committee member’s ratings on the questions are converted to a cut score.
- A cut score is defined as the number of test items that a student must answer correctly to be classified in a particular performance level.
- This activity constitutes “round 1.”

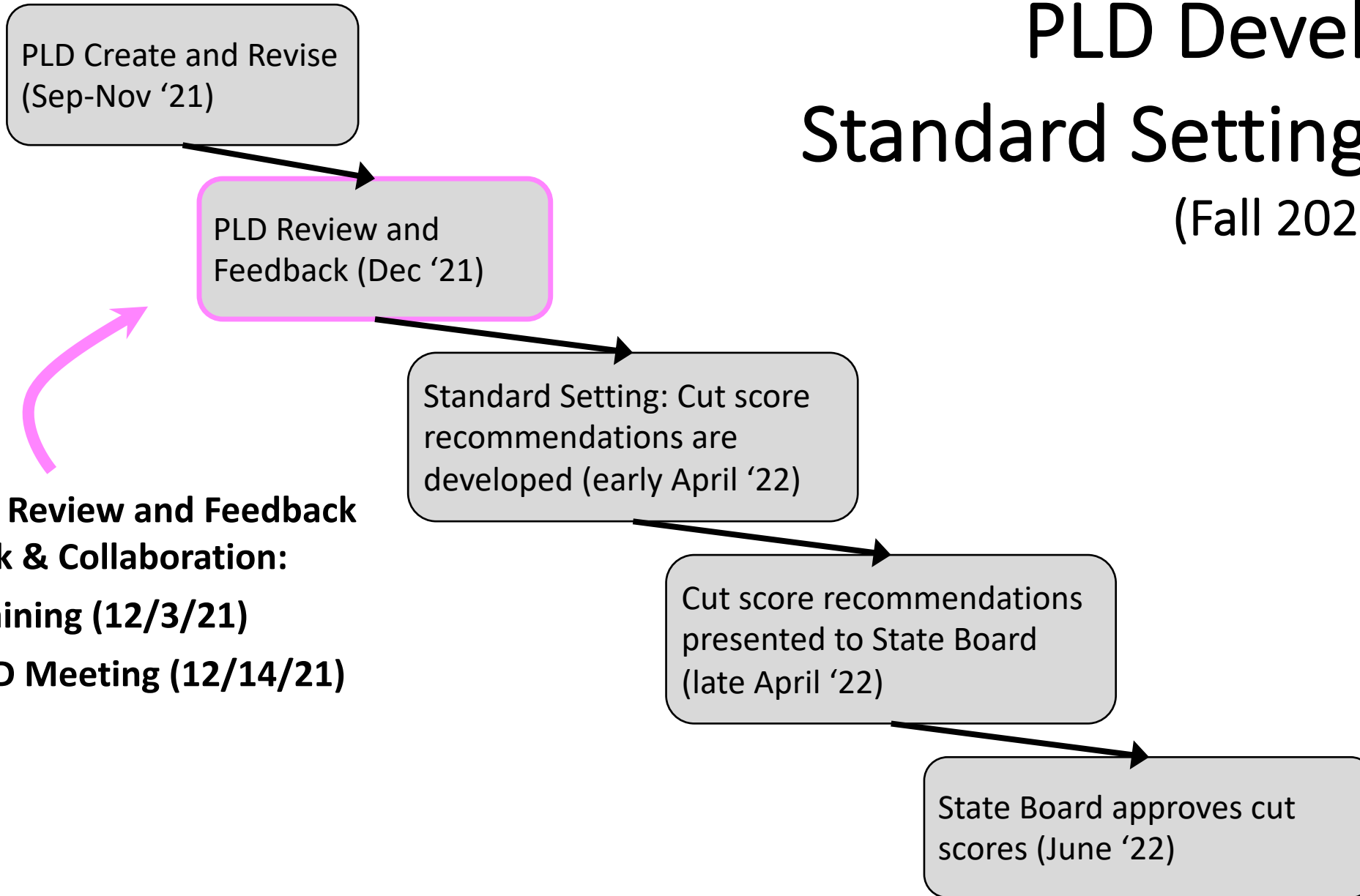
# Standard Setting Process in Virginia (3 of 3)

- Following “round 1,” committee members discuss test items where there was disagreement as to whether a “proficient” student would answer the question correctly “most of the time.” In this discussion, committee members are asked to use the language of the PLDs.
- The same activity occurs for items with disagreement for the “advanced” level.
- After discussion, the committee members rate the items again as described in “round 1.”
- This activity constitutes “round 2,” and results in the committee members’ “cut scores” recommendation on the VAAP tests.



# PLD Development & Standard Setting Roadmap

(Fall 2021 – Spring 2022)



## Your Review and Feedback Work & Collaboration:

- Training (12/3/21)
- PLD Meeting (12/14/21)

# PLD Review & Feedback Process

# Guiding Questions

- Are the PLDs understandable and useful for all stakeholders?
- Do the PLDs clearly differentiate among performance levels?
- Are the PLDs focused on learning?
  - Are they phrased with respect to what students *should* be able to do, not what they *cannot* do?

# Documenting & Returning Feedback

1. Provide PLD feedback in Word docs provided — edits and/or suggestions can be made directly in each document.
2. Please save as and append your initials to the end of each filename:
  - Grade-3\_Reading\_PLD\_draft\_v12.docx
  - [Grade-3\\_Reading\\_PLD\\_draft\\_v12\\_si.docx](#)
3. Please send all files for a given content area in a single email.
4. Feedback for all PLDs is due to Shawn and Sharon by noon on Friday, Dec. 10:
  - Shawn Irvin = [pirvin@uoregon.edu](mailto:pirvin@uoregon.edu)
  - Sharon Siler = [sharon.siler@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:sharon.siler@doe.virginia.gov)
5. Suggested timeline:
  - Reading and Math, Wednesday, Dec. 8
  - Science, Friday, Dec. 10

# Review Resources & Supports

1. **PLDs** — Separate Word docs for each grade / content area
  - Reading = Grades 3-8 & HS = [7 Word docs](#)
  - Math = Grades 3-8 & HS = [7 Word docs](#)
  - Science = Grades 5, 8, & HS = [3 Word docs](#)
2. **VESOL** — [vesol-2021-2022.pdf](#)
3. **One-page Review Guide** — [pld-reviewadviseguide-fall2021.pdf](#)
4. **Training Slides** — [VAAP\\_PLD\\_PanelReview\\_Training\\_Dec2021\\_v2.pptx](#)
5. **VDOE and BRT** —
  - Shawn Irvin = [pirvin@uoregon.edu](mailto:pirvin@uoregon.edu)
  - Sharon Siler = [sharon.siler@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:sharon.siler@doe.virginia.gov)

# Follow-up PLD Meeting & Reconciliation

- Tuesday, December 14 at 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. EST
- Individuals' feedback will be summarized into key takeaways and questions that will serve as a basis for discussing each set of grade-level / content area PLDs.
- VDOE and BRT will document discussion and recommendations.
- We will use your feedback to think critically about and refine PLDs as a basis for standard setting in spring '22.

# Deeper Look with Discussion

# Deeper Look

Goals: Get a feel for how PLDs are developed and derived from VESOLs, and how you will go about reviewing and providing feedback.

1. Examine PLDs in Grade 3 Reading and Math in reference to VESOLs.
  - VESOL defines middle column (*Proficient*)
  - Complexity increases in last column, using VESOL complexity continuum (*Advanced*)
  - “Some” (*Proficient*) vs. “Many” / “Most” (*Advanced*)
  - Knowledge/skills reduced in depth, breadth, and complexity, and nouns to largely singular form for first column (*Does Not Meet*)
2. Discuss knowledge/skills and range in complexity across performance levels for a given PLD (row) in each content area.
3. Discuss guiding questions (slide 19) — extent to which PLDs: (a) are understandable and useful for all stakeholders, (b) clearly differentiate the three performance levels, (c) focused on student learning.



# Q & A and Closing Remarks/Reminders

Do you have any questions or  
comments to share?





# Wrap-up and Reminders

**Thank you!! We enjoyed working with you today!**

- Remember, PLDs are due to Shawn and Sharon by noon EST, Dec. 10:
  - Shawn Irvin = [pirvin@uoregon.edu](mailto:pirvin@uoregon.edu)
  - Sharon Siler = [sharon.siler@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:sharon.siler@doe.virginia.gov)
- See you on December 14<sup>th</sup> at 9am EST!
- Your work is crucial to building a VAAP system that meets peer review and works for students—giving them an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency toward grade-level performance expectations.