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New Testing Rules and Standards Impact SOL Results ***State Superintendent: Rigorous Content Key to Strong Reading Skills***

RICHMOND, Va. — The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) today released data on the performance of students on Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments in reading, writing, mathematics, science and history/social science during the 2018-2019 school year. The results reflect changes in student test-taking patterns last year caused by revisions to the commonwealth's diploma and school accountability standards, and the introduction of new mathematics tests in all grade levels.

Overall pass rates in the five tested content areas are as follows:

- 78% of students taking reading tests passed, compared with 79% during 2017-2018;
- 76% passed in English writing, compared with 78% previously;
- 82% passed new mathematics tests introduced during 2018-2019, compared with 77% on the previous tests in 2017-2018;
- 81% passed in science, which was unchanged from the previous year; and
- 80% of students tested in history/social science passed, compared with 84% in 2017-2018.

Revisions to the Standards of Accreditation that were approved by the state Board of Education in 2017 and became effective last year reduced the number of SOL tests high school students must pass in order to graduate. Under the revised regulations, students who meet the testing requirement in a content area do not have to take another test in the subject unless additional testing is required for the school to comply with federal testing requirements. Previously, high school students continued to take end-of-course tests even if they had already earned the credits in the content area necessary to graduate.

The 2018-2019 school year also saw the introduction of new math SOL tests reflecting revisions to the state mathematics standards approved by the state Board of Education in 2016. The introduction of the new tests marked the end of the three-year transition to the revised standards.

“The achievement in a school, a division or in the commonwealth as a whole must be viewed in the context of these changes in student test-taking patterns, standards and assessments,” Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane said. “These changes were significant and performance on last year’s SOL tests marks the beginning of new trend lines in mathematics, science and history.”

Lane said VDOE staff will collaborate with school divisions to focus on improving reading skills for all students and to address widening achievement gaps in reading, especially in the elementary grades. Department staff will work with schools and divisions that did not see declines in reading performance in order to identify best practices and successful strategies for improving reading skills. The effort will include a review of the effectiveness of interventions to assist young readers not reading at grade level.

(more)

“School divisions must ensure that all children receive research-based reading instruction — beginning in kindergarten — that addresses their specific needs, and that students are reading at grade level by the end of the third grade,” Lane said. “This includes making sure that students read a variety of challenging content, including non-fiction and literature that expands vistas and vocabularies. We must meet students where they are, but we must also move them to where they need to be: reading at grade level or above and ready for success in the 21st century.”

“The reading results underscore the importance of the Board of Education’s current discussion about promoting equity — providing the assistance students need when they need it — by including early reading intervention in the Standards of Quality,” Board of Education President Daniel Gecker said. “This would provide a dedicated state funding stream for reading specialists in elementary schools based in part on the percentage of students not reading on grade level by the end of the third grade.”

Currently, school divisions are required to provide reading intervention services to students in grades K-3 who demonstrate deficiencies on diagnostic tests. The Standards of Quality, however, do not mandate that school divisions provide reading specialists. Rather, the SOQ recommends that one reading specialist be provided in each elementary school, at the discretion of the local school board.

Additional information on the performance of students on SOL tests during 2018-2019 — including pass rates for schools and school divisions — is available on the [VDOE website](#) and on the online [School Quality Profiles](#).

VDOE will announce school accreditation ratings for the 2019-2020 school year in September. Accreditation ratings reflect achievement in English, mathematics and science; student growth toward proficiency in reading and mathematics; progress toward closing achievement gaps in English and mathematics; and other school quality indicators.

2018-2019 SOL Pass Rates by Subject Area

Table 1: Reading

Student Group	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
All Students	80	79	78
Asian	91	90	89
Black	67	67	65
Economically Disadvantaged	67	66	65
English Learners	64	36	35
Hispanic	71	67	66
Students with Disabilities	47	48	47
White	86	86	85

Table 2: English Writing

Student Group	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
All Students	79	78	76
Asian	92	91	91
Black	65	64	61
Economically Disadvantaged	64	64	61
English Learners	52	27	23
Hispanic	70	70	67
Students with Disabilities	42	42	39
White	85	84	83

Table 3: Mathematics

Student Group	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
All Students	79	77	82
Asian	93	92	94
Black	66	64	70
Economically Disadvantaged	68	66	72
English Learners	68	49	59
Hispanic	71	68	74
Students with Disabilities	48	47	55
White	86	84	88

Table 4: Science

Student Group	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
All Students	82	81	81
Asian	92	92	93
Black	68	67	67
Economically Disadvantaged	69	69	68
English Learners	58	36	38
Hispanic	71	70	70
Students with Disabilities	52	50	51
White	89	89	89

Table 5: History/Social Science

Student Group	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
All Students	86	84	80
Asian	95	95	93
Black	75	72	66
Economically Disadvantaged	75	73	68
English Learners	72	52	47
Hispanic	80	77	72
Students with Disabilities	59	57	52
White	91	90	87

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