

Frequently Asked Questions

Virginia Grade Level Alternative



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Frequently Asked Questions by Teachers

Q1. What kind of student would take the VGLA?

The VGLA is an appropriate assessment for a student with a disability who has a current IEP or 504 Plan. The impact of the student's disability demonstrates to the IEP team or 504 committee that he or she will not be able to access the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments even with accommodations.

Based on the WIDA English language proficiency levels, limited English proficient (LEP) students in grades 3 through 8 who have an overall proficiency level of 1 (entering) or 2 (beginning) are eligible to participate in the VGLA reading assessment only. (Refer to Section 4.2 of the VGLA manual for details.)

Q2. In which grade-level and content areas can the VGLA be used as an alternative to the SOL assessments?

The VGLA is available for students with disabilities and certain LEP students in grades 3 through 8. It is available for students with disabilities in the content areas of reading, mathematics, science, history/social science, and writing. It is available for eligible students with limited English proficiency in the content area of reading only.

Q3. Can materials that are below grade level be used as evidence in the VGLA collection of evidence?

As a grade-level alternative to the SOL assessment, the VGLA requires materials to be appropriate to the grade level of the student's enrollment. If materials are submitted that are clearly below grade level, the evidence cannot receive the highest score point.

Q4. Can students use accommodations on VGLA evidence?

Yes. A student may submit evidence using accommodations as specified within the student's current IEP, 504 plan, or *LEP Student Assessment Participation Plan*. It should be noted, however, that students with disabilities should only use the read-aloud or audio accommodation on the reading test if they have been determined eligible for the accommodation by the local school division. Likewise, students with disabilities may use a calculator with additional functions and/or use a calculator on sections of the SOL mathematics assessments in which a calculator is not allowed if they have been determined eligible for the accommodation in accordance with Testing Memo Number 720, dated July 31, 2008. This accommodation must be documented in the student's IEP or 504 plan.

Q5. Collecting samples of work for students submitting a VGLA takes a great deal of effort. Why do teachers have to prepare collections of evidence of student's work for this assessment?

Collecting work samples and student products are a routine part of the ongoing instructional process. Although additional work is required to organize the collection of evidence and to prepare it for submission, the VGLA provides students with disabilities a method of demonstrating their knowledge of SOL content through non-traditional means. Given the broad range of methods available to students participating in the VGLA, a collection of evidence is the most flexible and efficient method for examining student performance.

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Q6. Can the VGLA Collection of Evidence be reviewed by parents and other school personnel?

Yes. The Collection of Evidence is available for review and feedback by the student, parents, and other school personnel as needed; however, the collection must not be changed or altered in any way. In addition, the collection must be reviewed in the presence of school personnel according to the method established by the local school division. The Collection of Evidence should never be sent home for review prior to submission for scoring.

Q7. How is the VGLA scored?

The VGLA is submitted to the school division and scored by locally maintained scorers or scoring teams. Scorers receive training on the process of applying the scoring rubric to submitted evidence, use of the online scoring system, and other information pertinent to scoring the VGLA. The VGLA rubric, rubric addendum, and scoring rules are available in Section 7 of the VGLA Implementation Manual.

Q8. Why is my local school division scoring the VGLA and what is the online system?

The scoring process will involve local scorers or scoring teams examining submitted evidence for specific content area standards and applying a scoring rubric, rubric addendum, and scoring rules in order to assign a value to the evidence presented in a holistic manner. Once all evidence submitted for a specific VGLA entry has been scored, scorers or scoring teams will enter their ratings of student performance or upload a file of students scores in the online scoring system. The online scoring system will then generate a final score and proficiency level.

Q9. What is a VGLA audit?

After the submission window for VGLA entries, the testing contractor will randomly select submitted entries for audit. The purpose of the VGLA audit is to ensure that scorers or scoring teams are correctly applying the scoring rubric to submitted evidence.

Q10. How will I know if my school or student has been selected for an audit of his or her VGLA?

The Division Director of Testing will be notified within the web-based PearsonAccess system that the students' collections of evidence within the division have been selected for VGLA audit. Audited entries will be generated at random for all submitted entries for a given administration.

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Q11. Can VGLA evidence be collected across more than one school year?

Yes. It is acceptable to collect evidence across more than one school year or term in cases where the course or instruction covers more than one year or term or the Standards of Learning test blueprint includes standards for multiple grade levels. The IEP team or 504 committee must determine VGLA participation during the year that the student begins to receive instruction in the content area for which the VGLA will assess. Local school divisions should ensure that teachers and school staff involved in collecting evidence across more than one year or term are adequately trained on VGLA implementation and that they sign affidavits indicating that the work is solely that of the student. Additionally, the school division must ensure that the collection of evidence is secured and appropriately transferred from staff person to staff person until the time of submission.

Q12. What should I do if a student taking the VGLA transfers between school divisions during the school year?

In accordance with Testing Memo Number 689, dated February 14, 2008, the transfer of a student's education record should be formally requested by the school division enrolling the student. The Collection of Evidence should also be requested by the school division enrolling the student. Once the education record has been requested, the transferring division should forward the student's COE to the school division enrolling the student. Care should be taken to ensure that all student work samples include:

- grading with correct and incorrect answers indicated;
- completed SEI Tags on each piece of evidence; and
- a completed affidavit signed by school staff to verify that all student work was completed under the supervision of school staff and is the student's individual work.

The school division transferring the student may wish to maintain a copy of all student work and supporting documentation sent to the school division enrolling the student. Copies should be maintained as determined by the Division Director of Testing and Records Manager until the end of the assessment period.