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Contact: Charles B. Pyle, Director of Communications (804) 371-2420
 Julie C. Grimes, Communications Manager (804) 225-2775

Board of Education Approves Expedited Retakes of Elementary & Middle School SOLs *Parents Must Consent before Students are Retested*

The state Board of Education says that elementary and middle school students who fail Standards of Learning (SOL) tests by narrow margins or because of extenuating circumstances this spring may be retested before the end of the year — provided that school divisions first secure parental permission.

The board voted unanimously at its March 26 meeting in Richmond to adopt a resolution allowing expedited retakes of SOL tests in grades three through eight, with the exception of the eighth-grade writing test.

“The elementary and middle school SOLs are not high-stakes tests for students but the board wants to be responsive to students who want a second chance to demonstrate proficiency before the end of the school year,” Board of Education President Christian N. Braunlich said. “At the same time, after hearing stories of student anxiety over SOL testing, we want to ensure that we don’t add any further to student stress.”

In addition to failing by a narrow margin or having an extenuating circumstance, a student must have passed the associated subject or course to be eligible for an expedited retake. School divisions must also advise parents that a decision not to retake a test will not impact the child’s grade or academic record.

The 2015 General Assembly approved legislation directing the board to develop regulations to allow expedited retakes of all non-writing SOL tests, regardless of grade span. But the legislation, which was signed by Governor Terry McAuliffe, does not become effective until July 1, after the 2014-2015 school year. The Board of Education’s resolution permitting retakes became effective upon adoption.

“I am delighted that we were able to identify funds to make expedited retakes for elementary and middle school students possible this year,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples said.

Expedited retakes have been allowed since 2000 for high school students who narrowly fail the end-of-course SOL assessments that are linked to the commonwealth’s diploma requirements.

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