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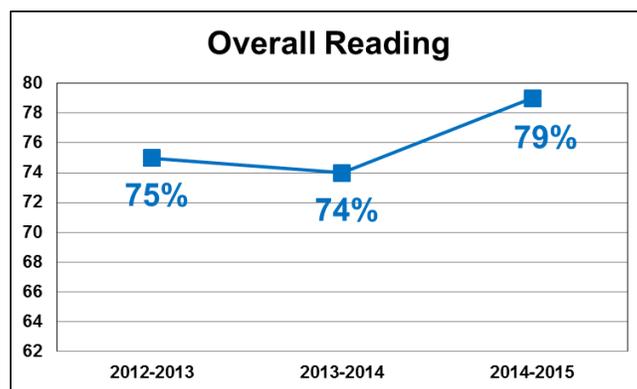
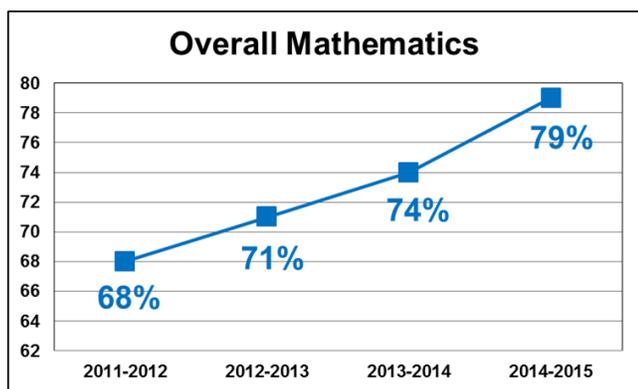
Students Make Across-the-Board Gains on SOLs *Retakes Provide Second Chance for Elementary and Middle School Students*

Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples says student achievement in 2014-2015 on Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in English, mathematics, history and science represents significant progress in the commonwealth’s effort to better prepare students for success in college and careers. Statewide, students posted five-point overall gains in reading and mathematics, while achievement increased by two points each in writing, science and history.

“Virginia teachers and students are adapting to the more rigorous standards implemented by the state Board of Education several years ago,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples said. “The positive trend lines confirm that meeting these new standards is possible, although it will take time for schools to complete the adjustment.”

The 2014-2015 school year was the first during which students in grades 3-8 were allowed to retake SOL tests in reading, mathematics, science and history. On average, the performance of students on expedited retakes increased pass rates by about four points on each test.

“By providing a second chance, we get a more complete picture of the performance of schools in preparing students to meet the commonwealth’s high expectations for learning and achievement,” Staples said. “We all understand the limitations of a single, point-in-time test. Some students who initially do not pass may have just had a bad day. And there are students who barely miss the benchmark and just need a little extra instruction in a particular area to achieve proficiency. For these students, an expedited retake offers another opportunity to demonstrate success before the end of the year.”



Statewide, 79 percent of students passed the mathematics test for their grade level or course, compared with 74 percent during 2013-2014, and 68 percent in 2011-2012, when Virginia introduced new mathematics tests that require students to apply critical-thinking skills and their knowledge of grade-level or course content to solve multistep problems.

Students posted gains on all nine individual grade-level and end-of-course mathematics tests and achieved pass rates of 80 percent or higher on five of the assessments.

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Students in grades 3, 6, 7 and 8 led the way with seven-point improvements, followed by a six-point gain by fifth graders. Students achieved pass rates of 80 percent or higher on the Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry end-of-course tests that are tied to the commonwealth's diploma requirements.

“The state Board of Education increased the rigor of the SOLs — of both the standards and of the assessments — so students will be better prepared for college and for opportunities in the 21st-century workforce,” Board President Billy K. Cannaday Jr. said. “Teachers, principals, division superintendents and other educators deserve great credit for the progress students are making toward achieving these higher expectations.”

Mathematics: Percent of Students Proficient or Above				
Grade or Course	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Grade 3 Mathematics	64	65	67	74
Grade 4 Mathematics	70	74	80	84
Grade 5 Mathematics	67	69	73	79
Grade 6 Mathematics	74	77	76	83
Grade 7 Mathematics	58	61	65	72
Grade 8 Mathematics	60	61	67	74
Algebra I	75	76	79	82
Geometry	74	76	77	80
Algebra II	69	76	82	87
Overall Mathematics	68	71	74	79

In reading, 79 percent of students passed the test for their grade level, an increase of five points over 2013-2014, and 77 percent passed in writing, an increase of two points. More challenging English reading and writing SOL tests were introduced in 2012-2013.

Fourth graders achieved a seven-point gain in reading, while third graders and fifth graders each achieved six-point improvements.

Students improved on six of the seven reading tests and achieved pass rates of 80 percent or higher on two of the assessments, including the high school reading test students must pass to graduate.

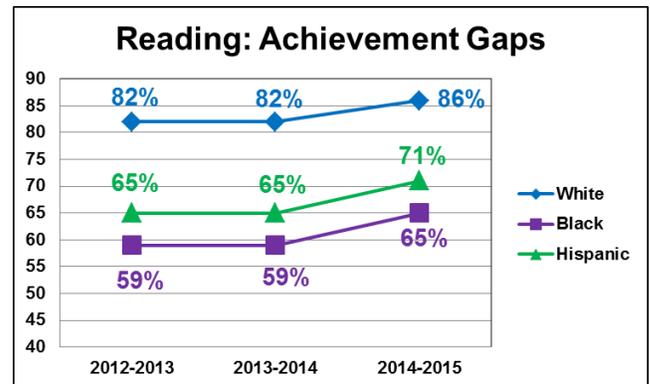
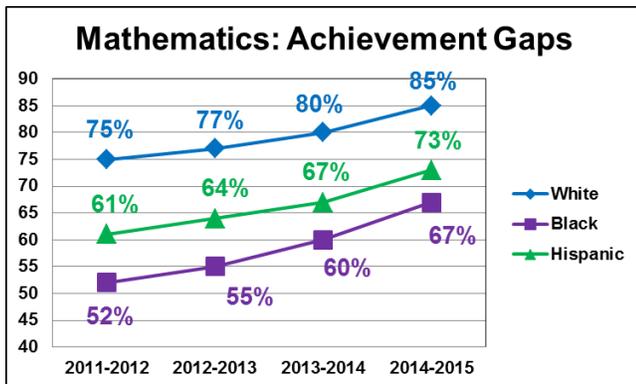
Reading: Percent of Students Proficient or Above			
Grade or Course	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Grade 3 Reading	72	69	75
Grade 4 Reading	70	70	77
Grade 5 Reading	73	73	79
Grade 6 Reading	73	73	76
Grade 7 Reading	74	76	81
Grade 8 Reading	71	70	75
End-of-Course Reading	89	90	89
Overall Reading	75	74	79

Writing: Percent of Students Proficient or Above			
Grade or Course	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Grade 8 Writing	70	70	72
End-of-Course Writing	87	84	83
Overall Writing	76	75	77

African-American and Hispanic students made progress toward closing achievement gaps in both mathematics and reading.

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Overall performance of African-American students in mathematics improved by seven points in 2014-2015. Since 2011-2012 — when the new mathematics SOL tests were first administered — black students have narrowed the achievement gap with white students in the subject by five points. Black students achieved a six-point gain in reading in 2014-2015. The gap in reading between black and white students has narrowed by two points since more challenging reading tests were introduced.



Hispanic students achieved six-point gains in both mathematics and reading, and have narrowed the achievement gap with white students by two points in both subjects since the introduction of more challenging assessments.

Achievement increased on four of the five SOL science tests and was up by two points overall. Fifth-grade students achieved the largest gain at six points. Eighth graders achieved a four-point gain. Achievement was up by one point on the Biology and Chemistry end-of-course tests and was flat in Earth Science. Science tests introduced in 2012-2013 also include items that require students to apply content knowledge in solving multistep problems.

Science: Percent of Students Proficient or Above			
Grade or Course	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Grade 5 Science	75	73	79
Grade 8 Science	76	74	78
Biology	83	83	84
Chemistry	86	87	88
Earth Science	83	83	83
Overall Science	81	80	82

Achievement increased on three of the six SOL tests in history and social science and was up by two points overall in the subject area.

History/Social Science: Percent of Students Proficient or Above				
Course	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
VA Studies	89	87	85	87
Civics & Economics	84	85	83	86
Geography	85	86	86	86
World History I	85	84	85	85
World History II	85	85	86	87
VA & US History	85	86	87	87
Overall History	85	85	84	86

State accreditation ratings will be issued this fall, following the adoption by the Board of Education of revised accreditation standards aligned with legislation approved by the 2015 General Assembly.