



For Immediate Release: August 16, 2016

Contact: Charles B. Pyle, Director of Communications, (804) 371-2420
Michelle Stoll, Communications Projects Coordinator, (804) 225-2543

Students Continue to Improve in Reading, Math and Science on 2015-2016 SOLs

RICHMOND, Va. — The percentage of students achieving at the proficient or advanced level on Standards of Learning assessments in reading, mathematics and science increased by one-point statewide during 2015-2016, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) reported today.

Eighty percent of students achieved proficient or advanced scores in reading, and the same percentage passed tests in mathematics, compared with 79 percent in both subjects in 2014-2015. Eighty-three percent passed grade-level or end-of-course SOL tests in science, compared with 82 percent previously.

“A one-point improvement in mathematics means that approximately 11,500 more students met or exceeded the benchmark for proficiency for their grade or course,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples said. “In reading, a one-point increase equals approximately 8,000 students, and in science, more than 6,000. The success of these students – many of whom have struggled in the past – reflects great credit on our teachers, especially given Virginia’s rigorous standards and challenging online assessments.”

Larger gains were made by third graders, fifth graders and high school students on specific grade- and course-level tests, as follows:

- 77 percent of third graders earned proficient or advanced scores in mathematics, a three-point gain compared with achievement during 2014-2015;
- 82 percent of fifth-graders achieved proficient or advanced scores in reading, a two-point gain over 2014-2015; and
- 89 percent of high school students taking the Algebra II test achieved proficient or advanced scores, also a two-point gain.

Student achievement in English writing and history/social science was unchanged. In writing, 77 percent of students met or exceeded the standard for proficiency, the same percentage as in 2014-2015. Eighty-six percent achieved at the proficient or advanced level in history/social science, also the same percentage as previously.

The highest pass rates in English, mathematics and science were on the end-of-course tests high school students must pass to earn credit toward graduation, with results as follows:

- 89 percent passed the end-of-course reading test and 83 percent passed the high school writing assessment;
- 83 percent passed the Algebra I test, 80 percent passed the Geometry test and 89 percent passed the Algebra II test; and
- 84 percent passed the Earth Science test, 84 percent passed the Biology assessment and 88 percent passed the Chemistry test.

Of the commonwealth’s 1,822 public schools, 915 improved in mathematics, 904 in reading and 939 in science.

(more)

Noting the gaps that continue to separate the achievement of black and Hispanic students from that of white students, Board of Education President Billy K. Cannaday Jr. said that narrowing and ultimately closing these gaps will remain the state board’s top priority.

English Reading	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
All Students	74	79	80
Asian	87	90	91
Black	59	65	66
Economically Disadvantaged	59	66	66
English Learners	54	61	61
Hispanic	65	71	71
Students with Disabilities	43	45	46
White	82	86	86

English Writing	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
All Students	75	77	77
Asian	89	90	90
Black	60	63	63
Economically Disadvantaged	59	63	63
English Learners	54	50	47
Hispanic	69	70	70
Students with Disabilities	39	40	40
White	81	83	83

Mathematics	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
All Students	74	79	80
Asian	90	93	93
Black	60	67	67
Economically Disadvantaged	61	68	69
English Learners	62	67	66
Hispanic	67	73	72
Students with Disabilities	43	48	49
White	80	85	86

Science	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
All Students	80	82	83
Asian	91	92	93
Black	64	68	70
Economically Disadvantaged	66	69	70
English Learners	59	56	57
Hispanic	70	71	72
Students with Disabilities	51	51	53
White	87	89	90

“Under our current accreditation system, relatively high overall achievement in fully accredited schools can mask underperformance by certain groups of students,” Cannaday said. “The board is committed to implementing reforms that will shine a light on achievement gaps and hold all schools accountable for raising the achievement of students who historically have struggled to meet Virginia’s high expectations.”

(more)

History/Social Science	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
All Students	84	86	86
Asian	94	95	95
Black	73	76	74
Economically Disadvantaged	73	76	75
English Learners	70	69	69
Hispanic	78	79	80
Students with Disabilities	58	60	60
White	89	91	91

Virginia’s online SOL tests in English, mathematics and science require students to apply critical-thinking skills as well as their knowledge of grade-level or course content to solve multistep problems. The mathematics tests taken by most students in grades 3, and 6-8 in 2015-2016 were computer adaptive assessments.

Computer adaptive SOL tests begin with a question or problem of moderate difficulty. If a student answers the item correctly, the computer selects a slightly more challenging problem as the next item. Conversely, an incorrect response results in the selection of a slightly less difficult item. Students’ scores are determined by the number of questions answered correctly and the relative difficulty of the correctly answered items.

Governor Terry McAuliffe and the state Board of Education have advocated the expansion of computer adaptive testing as a means of better measuring academic growth and improving the assessment experience of students. VDOE expects to convert all mathematics and reading SOL tests in grades 3-8 to the computer adaptive format by fall 2017.

Additional information on the performance of students on SOL tests during 2015-2016 is available on the [VDOE website](#) and on the [online report cards for schools and divisions](#).

VDOE will announce 2016-2017 state accreditation ratings in mid-September. Accreditation ratings may reflect achievement over three years and include adjustments to reward schools for successful interventions and allowances for certain transfer students and English learners.

###

2015-2016 Statewide Test-by-Test Results (All Students)

Subject	Test	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
English: Reading	Grade-3 Reading	69	75	76
	Grade-4 Reading	70	77	77
	Grade-5 Reading	73	79	81
	Grade-6 Reading	73	76	77
	Grade-7 Reading	76	81	82
	Grade-8 Reading	70	75	75
	End-of-Course Reading	90	89	89
English: Writing	Grade-8 Writing	70	72	71
	End-of-Course Writing	84	83	83
History/Social Science	VA Studies	85	87	87
	Civics & Economics	83	86	87
	Geography	86	86	86
	World History I	85	85	84
	World History II	86	87	86
	VA & US History	87	87	86
Mathematics	Grade-3 Mathematics	67	74	77
	Grade-4 Mathematics	80	84	83
	Grade-5 Mathematics	73	79	79
	Grade-6 Mathematics	76	83	82
	Grade-7 Mathematics	65	72	72
	Grade-8 Mathematics	67	74	73
	Algebra I	79	82	83
	Algebra II	82	87	89
	Geometry	77	80	80
Science	Grade-5 Science	73	79	81
	Grade-8 Science	74	78	79
	Earth Science	83	83	84
	Biology	83	84	84
	Chemistry	87	88	88