



August 22, 2014

2014-2015 Virginia Assessment Program Changes

Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in reading, writing, mathematics, science and history/social science measure the success of students in meeting the state Board of Education's expectations for learning and achievement. The tests are a critical component of the board's effort to promote college and career readiness among Virginia students.

Today's SOL assessments challenge students to apply what they have learned in ways not possible with traditional, paper-and-pencil, multiple-choice tests. For example, the online reading, writing, mathematics and science assessments most students take include items that require students to demonstrate critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, much as they do in response to classroom assignments from teachers.

Virginia teachers play a major role in the development of the SOL tests. Teachers review all test items for accuracy and fairness and they also assist the state Board of Education in setting proficiency standards for the assessments.

Computer Adaptive Testing

Computer adaptive testing provides a customized assessment experience for each student. How a student responds to a question or problem on a computer adaptive test determines the relative difficulty of the next item. A correct response leads to a more challenging item, while an incorrect response results in the selection of an item at a more engaging level of difficulty for the student.

In 2014-2015, students will take a computer adaptive version of the grade-6 SOL mathematics test. The Virginia Department of Education will expand computer adaptive testing to additional grade levels and subject areas as resources become available.

Discontinued Tests

Legislation approved by the 2014 General Assembly (House Bill 930 and Senate Bill 306) eliminated five SOL tests, effective with the 2014-2015 school year. The discontinued tests are as follows:

- Grade-3 History/Social Science
- Grade-3 Science
- Grade-5 Writing
- U.S. History I (typically administered in grade 5 or grade 6)
- U.S. History II (typically administered in grade 6 or grade 7)

The performance of students on the now-discontinued tests during 2013-2014 will factor into the calculation of state accreditation ratings for the 2014-2015 school year.

House Bill 930 and Senate Bill 306 also require school divisions to certify annually that they have provided instruction and administered an alternative assessment, consistent with Board of Education guidelines, to students in grades three through eight in each subject area in which an SOL assessment was discontinued.

2014-2015 SOL Tests for Grades 3-8

Most SOL tests in grades 3-8 are administered at particular grade levels. However, students who are *(more)*

accelerated may take the test associated with the content they are learning. For example, a grade-6 student who is being taught seventh-grade mathematics could take the grade-7 assessment instead of the grade-6 test. State Board of Education regulations prohibit school divisions from requiring students to take more than one test per content area during a year or — in the case of a middle or high school following a block schedule — semester.

The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known since 2001 as No Child Left Behind, requires states to test all students annually in grades 3-8 in reading and mathematics and at least once in both subjects during high school. The law also requires testing in science at least once during elementary school, middle school and high school. State assessments used to comply with the law must meet federal standards for reliability, validity and technical quality.

Grade	Mathematics	Reading	Writing	Science	History/Social Science
3rd	SOL ¹	SOL ¹		Local test; SOL discontinued	Local test; SOL discontinued
4th	SOL ¹	SOL ¹			School divisions have flexibility in when they assess the history/social science content listed below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Studies (SOL) • U.S. History I (Local test; SOL discontinued) • U.S. History II (Local Test; SOL discontinued) • Civics and Economics (SOL) Content covered by these tests is usually taught and tested in grades 4-7.
5th	SOL ¹	SOL ¹	Local test; SOL discontinued	SOL ²	
6th	SOL ¹	SOL ¹			
7th	SOL ¹	SOL ¹			
8th	SOL ¹	SOL ¹	SOL	SOL ²	
Content specific SOL or local test listed above or SOL end-of-course test					
¹ Mathematics and reading tests required by ESEA. ² ESEA requires science tests to be administered at least once during each of the elementary, middle and high school levels.					

2014-2015 End-of-Course SOL Tests

End-of-course (EOC) SOL tests are administered to students when they finish credit-bearing course instruction, usually in middle school or in high school. As such, these tests are not tied to any particular grade level. For example, a student who completes Algebra I in grade 8 would take the EOC Algebra I test at that time while a student who completes Algebra I as a sophomore would take the EOC Algebra I test in grade 10.

EOC tests are associated with the “verified credits” that students must accrue to earn a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma. To earn a verified credit, a student must pass the course and the associated EOC test or a substitute test approved by the Virginia Board of Education. The board has approved 87 independently graded tests — including Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate examinations — for use as substitute assessments for verified credit.

A Standard Diploma requires six verified credits and an Advanced Studies Diploma requires nine verified credits. The end-of-course SOL tests available to students are listed below; students take the tests associated with classes in which they enroll.

(more)

Mathematics	Reading	Writing	Science	History/Social Science
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Algebra I³ • Geometry³ • Algebra II³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 10 or 11³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 10 or 11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earth Science³ • Biology³ • Chemistry³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia and U.S. History • World History to 1500 • World History: 1500 to the Present • World Geography
³ Tests used for federal accountability.				

ESEA requires that states test students in reading, mathematics and science at least once during high school. EOC tests that are used for federal accountability are identified with footnotes.

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