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## Students Make Gains on All Mathematics SOLs *New Reading, Writing & Science Tests begin New Trend Lines*

Student achievement improved during 2012-2013 on challenging mathematics Standards of Learning (SOL) tests first introduced two years ago, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) reported today.

Statewide, 71 percent of students passed the mathematics assessment for their grade level or course, compared with 68 percent during 2011-2012. Students posted gains on all of the individual grade-level and end-of-course mathematics SOL tests, with the biggest increases in grades 4, 6, 7 and Algebra II.

“I am so proud of the thousands of teachers in school divisions across this diverse state whose focus on critical thinking and problem solving — as well as mathematics content knowledge — prepared students to increase their achievement on these rigorous assessments,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said. “Raising standards is difficult, but well worth the effort. We are asking students to meet higher expectations so that when they graduate, they will be ready for college and the work force.”

“The improved performance of students on these challenging and innovative tests shows that we are moving in the right direction,” Board of Education President David M. Foster said. “The higher pass rates achieved by students in many rural, urban and suburban divisions suggest that the state board has not put the bar out of reach. I believe we would be selling our students short if we were to retreat by weakening the SOL program.”

Statewide Mathematics SOL Pass Rates			
Test	2011-2012	2012-2013	Change
Algebra I	75	76	+1
Geometry	74	76	+2
Algebra II	69	76	+7
Grade 8	60	61	+1
Grade 7	58	61	+3
Grade 6	74	77	+3
Grade 5	67	69	+2
Grade 4	70	74	+4
Grade 3	64	65	+1

The online mathematics SOL tests taken by most Virginia students include technology-enhanced items that mirror classroom instruction and assignments. The items require students to apply mathematical knowledge and critical-thinking skills in solving multistep problems. Multiple-choice items on the tests also reflect the increased rigor of the mathematics standards adopted by the Board of Education in 2009.

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On each of the nine mathematics SOL tests, more than half of Virginia’s 132 school divisions saw increases in student achievement, including on the end-of-course tests (Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II) students must pass to earn diplomas.

- Algebra I — 75 divisions improved, 40 divisions had pass rates of 80 percent or higher and 87 had pass rates of 70 percent or higher.
- Algebra II —102 divisions improved, 48 divisions had pass rates of 80 percent or higher and 90 had pass rates of 70 percent or higher.
- Geometry — 83 divisions improved, 33 divisions had pass rates of 80 percent or higher and 83 had pass rates of 70 percent or higher.

The English and science SOL tests students took during 2012-2013 were the first to reflect the increased rigor of revised standards adopted in these subject areas by the Board of Education in 2010. Last year also marked the debut of online SOL writing tests, although all schools participated in a statewide field test of the assessments during 2011-2012. As expected, pass rates on the new tests were lower than in 2011-2012 on the now-retired assessments based on the 2002 English SOL and 2003 Science SOL.

“The results of the new English and science tests begin new trend lines,” Wright said. “Students are now being challenged by the standards to achieve new levels of mastery at each grade level and to apply what they have learned on assessments that are very different from the traditional multiple-choice tests people often associate with the SOL program.”

Seventy-five percent of students passed the reading test for their grade level, and 76 percent passed in writing. The highest pass rates were on the reading and writing tests most high school students take in their junior year. Students must pass these two tests to earn a Standard or Advanced Studies diploma. There is no limit on the number of times a student may take a test he or she needs to pass to earn a diploma.

- On the high school reading test, students in 118 divisions achieved pass rates of 80 percent or higher, and all divisions administering the test achieved pass rates of 70 percent or higher.
- On the high school writing test, students in 107 divisions achieved pass rates of 80 percent or higher, and 128 achieved pass rates of 70 percent or higher.

<b>Statewide Reading &amp; Writing SOL Pass Rates</b>		
<b>Test</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>
High School Reading	94	89
High School Writing	93	87
Grade-8 Reading	89	71
Grade-8 Writing	88	70
Grade-7 Reading	88	74
Grade-6 Reading	89	73
Grade-5 Reading	89	73
Grade-5 Writing	87	71
Grade-4 Reading	88	70
Grade-3 Reading	86	72

In the elementary and middle school grades, at least seven out of 10 students earned passing scores in reading and writing. The state superintendent predicted that reading and writing achievement will increase as schools align curriculum and instruction with the new standards.

“Strengthening early reading and adolescent literacy will impact learning in all areas.” Wright said.

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In science, 81 percent of students passed their grade-level or end-of-course tests (Biology, Chemistry and Earth Science). The highest pass rates were on the grade-3 test and the high school tests. Students must pass at least one end-of-course science test to earn a Standard Diploma and at least two for an Advanced Studies Diploma.

- On the Earth Science end-of-course test, 93 school divisions had pass rates of at least 80 percent and 116 had pass rates of 70 percent or higher.
- On the Chemistry test, 94 divisions had pass rates of 80 percent or higher and 119 had pass rates of 70 percent or higher.
- On the Biology test, 81 divisions had pass rates of 80 percent or higher and 115 had pass rates of 70 percent or higher.

<b>Statewide Science SOL Pass Rates</b>		
<b>Test</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>
Biology	92	83
Chemistry	93	86
Earth Science	90	83
Grade 8	92	76
Grade 5	88	75
Grade 3	90	84

The percentage of students statewide passing grade-level or end-of-course tests in history/social science during 2012-2013 was 85 percent, the same as in 2011-2012. The Board of Education’s adoption of revised history/social science standards in 2008 and the introduction of more rigorous history/social science tests in 2010-2011 marked the beginning of the change of focus of the SOL program from minimum grade-level standards to college and career readiness.

Statewide, achievement increased by one point on two of the four end-of-course tests (Virginia and US History, Geography, World History I and World History II) high school students take to earn verified credits for graduation.

<b>Statewide History/Social Science SOL Pass Rates</b>		
<b>Test</b>	<b>2011-2012</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>
Virginia & US History	85	86
World History II	85	85
World History I	84	84
Geography	85	86
Civics & Economics	84	85
US History II	84	82
US History I	81	83
Virginia Studies	89	87
Grade 3	87	87

State accreditation and federal accountability reports will be issued next month, along with updated school and division report cards.

"Even with three-year averaging mitigating the impact of the new tests, we will see some schools slip from Fully Accredited to Accredited with Warning," Wright predicted. "I hope parents will view these accreditation changes in the context of the state raising standards so that their children — regardless of where they live — will be better prepared for the challenges of postsecondary education and the realities of global competition."

Wright said VDOE will continue to provide training and resources related to the revised standards and assessments in all content areas. This includes weekly TeacherDirect email alerts to teachers about new SOL-related resources and professional development opportunities.

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