

December 12, 2020

Dear VA Board of Education and other Key groups:

Thank you for your time. As an educator and a pro-bono advocate on a key technology-testing-curriculum item in Virginia, I wanted to make sure that the VA Board of Education received this, and that this information goes on Public Record.

- At a Fairfax Public Hearing in January 2017 I submitted a concern over WHY there was additional funding for the ARDT (\$400K) while the new G3-8 CAT math had advanced reporting capabilities via the VATestnav8 Platform for testing and for G3-8 CAT math. This amendment was NOT funded, and there has been a change through 2022. It is VERY clear from key information that the "back button" is a PROGRAMMABLE Tool based on key information, based on documented reports of "turning on" the back button for select students doing better in math at key schools in Fairfax and Loudoun. Please see page 7:
<https://dpb.virginia.gov/budget/buddoc20/partb/OfficeOfEducation.pdf?fbclid=IwAR2j7gg6NwVB9AN9QMyruZmfB7-9mpQgahHCtHPttMPyGf7ld4c8PQsXcMk>
- While key press releases from 2016 onwards have shared that the software REQUIRED removing the back button, recently, I learned some new information. VA has had or continues a partnership with Vantage learning. Vantage Learning CLEARLY states on one of its reports that there is a TOOL feature which allows students to check their work and still maintain the integrity of the CAT experience. Key testing, technology, and curriculum people have NOT shared this information with the VA public.
- HB833. In 2016, there was a key person who tried to pass a LAW to time tests for elementary school students. This bill did not become a law; however, it is very clear that this BILL happened at the same time as the development of the CAT software. It is very CLEAR that there has been a VERY directed and intentional PLAN to CONTROL time on tests via the COMMUNICATION (press releases), PROGRAMMING, and delivery of a software, which had misinformation to the public, impacting students' time by removal of the back button.
- It is noted that there is another item with a County diagnostic software in Fairfax, I-Ready. While there had been a PAST decision to NOT provide itemized subscores for Fairfax County public, there is new legislation working to have subscores; however, I-Ready shares a general timeframe of 21 days for students, yet many Fairfax schools do in 2 days.
- There is a key group, SOLPass charging schools (an Annual Charge) for 2014 OLD SOLS. It is my understanding key person in testing needed to approve this. It is also noted that the person in SOLPass does have a background at one point tracking high school drop out rates, which also affects School Grading.

For all the information listed above, I will share who I believe all some of the key contacts; in addition, there maybe more people.

Sincerely,



Ms. Carolyn Murphy

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: April 27, 2016

Contact: [Charles Pyle](#), Director of Communications, 804-371-2420
[Michelle Stoll](#), Communications Coordinator 804-225-2543

Computer Adaptive Technology Means Shorter Math Tests for Students

RICHMOND, Va. - The expansion of computer adaptive testing will result in approximately 380,000 Virginia elementary and middle school students taking shorter Standards of Learning (SOL) mathematics tests this spring. For example, the computer-adaptive version of the online test third graders are taking has 32 items, 18 fewer than the 50-item tests grade-3 students took last year.

The computer-adaptive versions of the grade-7 and grade-8 math tests - also new this year - each have 53 items, seven fewer than the 60 questions on the traditional versions of the tests. Computer adaptive SOL testing was first introduced during 2014-2015, with the debut of a 53-item computer-adaptive version of the sixth-grade math test.

"Computer adaptive testing can help reduce stress and frustration for students, teachers and parents," Governor Terry McAuliffe said. "No student should spend hours struggling through a standardized test."

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. The General Assembly has approved requests from the governor totaling \$7.2 million to convert all math and reading SOL tests in grades 3-8 to the computer adaptive format by fall 2017.

"When this change is fully implemented, elementary and middle school students will experience significant reductions in test-taking times and most will complete their math and reading SOLs in less than two hours," Secretary of Education Anne Holton said.

"Computer adaptive testing is a win-win: Students benefit from a customized assessment with fewer test items, while schools and the commonwealth get a more precise measurement of content mastery and growth, especially for high performing students," Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples said. "Also, the new federal Every Student Succeeds Act expressly permits the use of computer adaptive testing as part of state accountability systems."

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. Because student responses on a computer adaptive test are scored in the sequence in which they are presented, students are not able to skip items or return to previous answers. All students must answer the same number of items to complete a test.

Computer adaptive testing is a scientifically validated and widely used assessment format. The Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test, which Virginia students have been taking since 2002, is administered in a computer adaptive format. In addition, computer adaptive testing is used by professional boards, the military and other organizations.

https://www.doe.virginia.gov/news/news_releases/2016/04_apr27.shtml

Notes

Key people - Shelley Loving-Ryder (Assessment),
Maria Cosby-Allen (SOL Pass), Former Delegate
Tag Greason (SOL Innovation, NVTC-Board,
Other people inc. Key person VA is for Teachers
(Double Acceleration Program)



VANTAGE LEARNING
Measuring Success One Student at a Time



"During the process of customizing the Vantage Learning Platform ...we have found Vantage Learning to be extremely well-versed in the area of educational technology."

Joe Farmer, Executive Director, Region 10, Texas

The Vantage Learning Platform (VLP)[™]

Advanced Assessment Technologies to Meet our Clients' Needs

The Challenge – How can you meet the demands of timely testing and immediate scoring, analysis and reporting?

The cost of traditional paper and pencil testing is high and waiting weeks and sometimes months for test results is unacceptable if we are to meet strict federal and state guidelines. Identification of student academic strengths and weaknesses requires immediate scoring, instant analysis and powerful reports in order to impact Adequate Yearly Progress.

The Solution – The Vantage Learning Platform (VLP)

VLP is a fully customizable suite of tools for the complete assessment process, from initial scheduling and registration through detailed score reporting. It is the only application of its kind, able to deliver and score both selected response (random, pre-selected sequence, computer adaptive, etc.) and constructed response (open-ended, essay, etc.) questions online in real time.

VLP provides a proven and reliable way to deliver a high quality, feature-rich assessment system quickly and at the lowest cost. Our suite of tools combines the benefits of both commercial off-the-shelf and customized solutions to meet your specific needs.

The Vantage Learning Platform supports all phases of the assessment process from registration through score reporting with the following tools:

CONTENT MANAGER

Analyst[™] maintains and reports item and test data for analysis.

Architect[™] enables users to design both web-based and paper and pencil tests and create test specifications and blueprints. All items are stored with relevant content parameters, statistics and other important criteria.

Author[™] is a complete item authoring and editing tool to create a range of item types including traditional multiple choice, drag and drop, point and click, click and highlight, short answer and extended response.

Banker[™] allows item management, banking and collaborative test construction from one or many item banks.

Critic[™] supports the review of test questions through a web-based interface. Locally or remotely, multiple reviewers can view items and provide ratings and comments for use in revising test questions.

Item Treasury[™] is comprised of a series of tools to create a repository for assessment items, psychometric data and scoring information, including traditional and non-traditional forms, true/false, multiple choice, matching, short and long constructed response essays, drag and drop and hot spot assessments.

Vantage Learning Platform Clients:

ACCUPLACER[™] & WritePlacer[™] - The College Board's web-delivered, computer-adaptive, online placement assessments. More than five million ACCUPLACER and 200,000 WritePlacer assessments are delivered annually.

International Computer Driver's License (ICDL)[™] - Suite of online certification tests that measure computer literacy and competency in fundamental computer skills.

MY Access![™] - Vantage Learning's online student writing practice with instant scoring, diagnostic assessment, constructive feedback and instructional intervention.

Learning Access![™] - Vantage Learning's integrated suite of web-based diagnostic and instructional assessment tools providing immediate scoring, analysis and reporting online or near immediate in scannable paper format. Modules include Reading Access[™], Math Access[™], Writing Access[™] and Science Access[™] (social studies coming soon!).

Oregon Technology Enhanced Student Assessment System (TESA)[™] - Computer-adaptive assessments in reading, writing and mathematics for placement in K-12 schools.

Texas Region 10 Web-based Comprehensive Curriculum Assessment Tool (WebCCAT)[™] - Online item banking and test creation system.

Texas Mathematics Diagnostic System (TMDS)[™] - Online math and algebra assessment aligned to TEKS for use by grade-level institutions.

Virginia Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test (ARDT)[™] - Computer-adaptive tests cover all grade-level proficiencies in minutes, delivering immediate information on strand-level mathematic strengths and weakness to drive differentiated, one-to-one instructional intervention.

DELIVERY & SCORING MANAGER

Audible™ allows the delivery of clear and consistent audio files without the use of streaming media for listening items and audio stimuli.

Consultant™ investigates, evaluates and reports on the settings within the testing environment and the capabilities of the instructional computer network in use, and automatically recommends optimum hardware and software configurations.

Courier™ provides test delivery for selection-type, constructed response and essay questions in a grouped or blended format.

DOT™ (Dynamically Optimized Testing) is the first computer-adaptive tool that allows examinees to change a response to a previously seen item but still maintain the reliability of the assessment experience.

VANCAT™ is the first truly flexible Computer Adaptive Test engine that supports both computer adaptive and linear test forms over the Internet. VANCAT can deliver tests in one, two and three parameter Item Response Theory modes.

VANGuard™ creates a secure environment to assure test validity by eliminating access to online and desktop information on both Mac and PC platforms.

VANKey™ is a suite of software and hardware designed to accommodate students with disabilities and those who rely on assistive technologies.

VANScan™ allows paper and pencil delivery of web-based assessments using scannable answer sheets and scanning software to provide near immediate scoring, analysis and reporting.

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Accountant™ keeps track of customer orders, billing and related accounting functions.

Executive™ provides testing program administrators and clients with multiple levels of control over most major functions of the assessment and instructional environments.

Scheduler™ provides online test registration, scheduling and site mapping to accommodate an unlimited number of locations and workstations.

PERSONAL PROFILE MANAGER

Envoy™ communicates relevant information immediately via email to administrators, examinees, teachers, parents and other invested parties.

INTELLIGENT AGENTS MANAGER

Alert™ & Sleuth™, respectively, aide to increase the validity of examinee responses by identifying responses indicating examinees may do harm to themselves or others and by detecting signs of collaboration and plagiarism.

Individualized Educational Pathway (IEP)™ generates a customized learning pathway to enable the student and teacher to focus on the areas of greatest need. The pathway is based on the heuristics generated by the teacher, using data gleaned from student assessments, instructional exercises and demographic data.

DATA MINING MANAGER

Reporter™ produces a variety of stock and customized report formats for individuals and groups and provides easy aggregation and disaggregation of data at virtually any level.

The Vantage Learning Reporting Platform (VLRP)™ is a family of reporting tools that allows a user to ask natural language based questions in over 20 different languages against either unstructured (text-based) or structured (database-driven) data.



About Vantage

Vantage provides services in all 50 states, and contracts directly with the state educational agencies in Pennsylvania, Mississippi, Virginia, Oregon and Texas. Vantage also creates products for The College Board, ACT, Harcourt Educational Measurement, CTB/McGraw Hill and Thomson Learning, and industry giants such as Microsoft, Apple Computer, AOL and Sun Microsystems.

Vantage Learning

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www.vantagelearning.com

[253.13:2](#) and all pupil/teacher ratios and class size maximums set forth in subsection C of § [22.1-253.13:2](#) are met. The school board shall provide in its request a description of how the waivers from specific Standards of Quality staffing standards are designed to increase the quality of instruction and improve the achievement of students in the affected school or schools. The waivers may be renewed in up to five-year increments, or revoked, based on student achievement results in the affected school or schools.

2. That the Board of Education shall adopt regulations to implement the provisions of this act no later than July 1, 2017. The Board's initial adoption of regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this act shall be exempt from the Administrative Process Act (§ [2.2-4000](#) et seq. of the Code of Virginia), except that the Department of Education shall submit proposed regulations to the Chairmen of the House Committee on Education and Senate Committee on Education and Health for review and provide an opportunity for public comment on the regulations prior to adoption.

2016 SESSION

[another bill](#) | [print version](#)

HB 833 Standards of Learning; elementary school assessments; time length.

Introduced by: [Thomas A. "Tag" Greason](#) | [all patrons](#) ... [notes](#) | [add to my profiles](#)

SUMMARY AS INTRODUCED:

Elementary school Standards of Learning assessments; time length. Requires the Board to establish and, as it deems necessary, update guidelines for the time length of each elementary school Standards of Learning assessment, including an appropriate cut-off time for each such assessment.

FULL TEXT

- [01/12/16 House: Prefiled and ordered printed; offered 01/13/16 16102605D pdf](#)

HISTORY

- [01/12/16 House: Prefiled and ordered printed; offered 01/13/16 16102605D](#)
- [01/12/16 House: Referred to Committee on Education](#)
- [01/18/16 House: Assigned Education sub: Education Innovation](#)
- [01/19/16 House: Subcommittee recommends laying on the table by voice vote](#)
- [02/16/16 House: Left in Education](#)

<https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?161+sum+HB833>

Addendum to
Ms. Carolyn Murphy's
Public Comment-December 2020

December 16, 2020

Items already on Public Record

- There are some additional items which are either on Public Record with the Virginia Board of Education, Public Record in 2016 on the last day for SOL CAT math Hearing, Public Record at Prince William County Public hearing, and/or Fairfax County Public Record. As there has been a LOT of information, if the anyone needed to see these references, I wanted to include again.

G3, SOL CAT math no field test

- I am the FIRST to put on Public Record that there was NO field test of the Grade 3 SOL-CAT math before removing the back button.
 - **Pilot testing of Grade 3 math
April 12, 2016 email-no**
- Ms. Carolyn-
-
- To date, no 3rd grade students have taken the Grade 3 Mathematics CAT test. This spring is the first time students in third grade will test in this format; therefore, we will begin to have students taking this test during the statewide Spring Non-Writing test administration window which runs from April 11, 2016 through June 24, 2016. Information about Grade 3 Mathematics testing beginning in spring 2016 was conveyed to you in earlier email responses on February 25, 2016 and March 25, 2016.
-
- Thanks,
Mr. F (Assessment Specialist)

December 2016 memo – CAT graded immediately

- CAT email: Thursday, December 29, 2016
- Ms. Murphy,
-
- I am an assessment specialist with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). Your query concerning the change to Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) was forwarded to me. A CAT is an assessment that is customized for every student. How a student responds to a question determines the difficulty of the next item. A correct response leads to a more difficult item, while an incorrect response results in the selection of a less difficult item for the student. The format of CAT prevents the use of the previous button because each question is scored immediately and the subsequent questions are based upon how the student has performed on those questions already answered.
-
- More information about the CAT system may be found on the Virginia Department of Education website:
- http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/test_administration/cat/index.shtml
-
- I hope this information is helpful.
-
-
- Ms. A
- Virginia Department of Education
- Assessment Specialist

Expedited Retakes: The “retest” button

- There have been numerous reports of needing additional funding for Expedited Retakes.
- This video and a call with Pearson shares that the “retest button” is part of the software. In addition, key Pearson contact shares that the cost for contracts is usually based on student license fee (which includes the retest button) as long as done within the testing window for that school year.
- It would seem that the cost would be for schools needing PAPER.

Expedited Retakes

. A Key person at Pearson shares that cost is usually based on PER STUDENT LICENSE FEE (which INCLUDES THE "retest" button" as long as the expedited retakes are done within that school year's TESTING WINDOW.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVUOKL1p8z4>

Groups

- We are in the Tech age. I have also put on Public record the School Efficiency Protocols which include the proper use of technology.
- Clearly, there needs more on technology and standards.
- I have wanted to share some of this with VPSA.
- Due to key inconsistencies, I feel that the Student/Teacher/Administration Rights and Responsibilities Manual needs some key updates for each person to sign.
- I do feel that key groups deserve to know more about this: VPSA, Lottery, Governor's Lottery Council. As we are in a pandemic (and the importance of allocations), I do feel that Emergency Management and HHS deserve to know.

DoDEA...ASVAB-CAT

The CAT software looked at was for the ASVAB-CAT (G10 and above). During this time (2016), I received a high level referral to a key person at DoDEA. While key press releases stated that the military supported this software, this person shared that no one had contacted this person about a new software. This is concerning as DoDEA works with the SAME target population. Furthermore, DoDEA shared that DoDEA wants students to have ALL Online tools and supports all customized reporting options.

It is also noted that at this time at least two grades, potentially more, had the math problems all together. This would NOT be following ASVAB-CAT format for one section math and one section math word problems. There was reform done; **however, I am not sure the status of G8.**

DoDEA

- **Competitive award provides access to high quality educational resources**

- October 21, 2015 – The Department of Defense Education Activity, the organization in charge of pre-kindergarten through 12th grade educational programs on behalf of the Department of Defense, entered into a membership agreement with the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and will serve as a liaison to the consortium’s governing board.

“We are excited about the opportunity to support the success of the children of service men and women attending Department of Defense Education Activity schools in the United States and across the globe,” said Laura Slover, CEO of Parcc Inc., the nonprofit organization that manages the assessment project for the PARCC consortium.

DoDEA is responsible for planning, directing, coordinating, and managing pre-K through 12th grade educational programs on behalf of the Department of Defense. DoDEA operates 172 accredited schools in 14 districts in 11 foreign countries, seven states, Guam, and Puerto Rico. The agency employs approximately 15,000 employees who serve more than 74,000 children of active duty military and Department of Defense civilian families. DoDEA is committed to ensuring that all school-aged children of military families are provided a world-class education that prepares them for postsecondary education and/or career success, and to be leading contributors in their communities.

Earlier this year, DoDEA issued a formal request for proposals for assessment services and awarded a one-year renewable contract with a period of performance up to six years to Parcc Inc. to provide the assessment system and services such as professional development programs for educators and access to instructional tools. The value of the contract is estimated at over \$20 million.

“This is an important step for PARCC as the consortium moves into the expansion and sustainability phase, providing more students with access to high quality assessment items and tools,” said Hanna Skandera, Secretary of Education in New Mexico, a PARCC state. “DoDEA is the first to use PARCC content in this new phase of expanded participation and continues our goal of improving instruction and assessments for more students and allowing them to reach their full potential. PARCC can help meet the diverse needs of states and other educational agencies across the country and we welcome their participation.”

- <http://www.parconline.org/news-and-video/press-releases/336-department-of-defense-education-activity-joins-parcc>

ASVAB-CAT

<http://www.asvabpracticetests.com>

- **ASVAB Practice Tests**
- Welcome to ASVAB Practice Tests, a free website that is designed to help you with your ASVAB test prep and review. Each of our free ASVAB practice tests includes challenging practice questions along with detailed explanations. Whether you are preparing for a career in the Army, Navy, Air Force, or the Marines you will need to pass the ASVAB test. If you study for this test it will make a big difference in your final score. Get started now with our free ASVAB practice tests!
- [1 – General Science Practice Test](#)
- [2 – Arithmetic Reasoning Practice Test](#)
- [3 – Word Knowledge Practice Test](#)
- [4 – Paragraph Comprehension Practice Test](#)
- [5 – Mathematics Knowledge Practice Test](#)
- [6 – Electronics Information Practice Test](#)
- [7 – Automotive Information Practice Test](#)
- [8 – Shop Information Practice Test](#)
- [9 – Mechanical Comprehension Practice Test](#)
- [10 – Assembling Objects Practice Test](#)

Algebra Readiness

- Algebra Readiness Initiative http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/mathematics/middle/algebra_readiness/faq.shtml
- Meets industry standards for validity and reliability of the items and tests proposed. Such standards should include field testing **and proper test form construction**

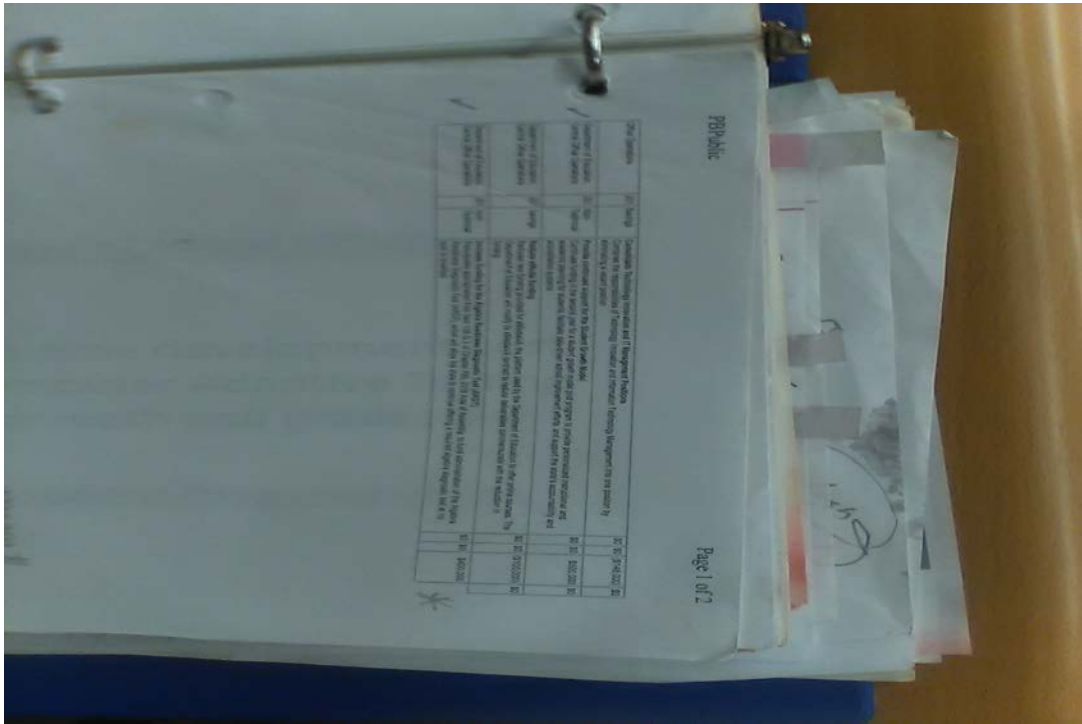
Past information to Public on CAT:

- Ms. Shelley Loving-Ryder Presentation on CAT
- http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2013/04_apr/agenda_items/planning_session/item_g_update_on_VA_assmt_program.pdf
- Superintendent memo- first pilot study (based on info. From assessment specialist) did not share with public about removing previous button

- January 8, 2016
- TO: Division Superintendents
- FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction
- **SUBJECT: Shorter Version of the Grade 3 Mathematics Standards of Learning Tests Administered in a Computer Adaptive Testing Format beginning in Spring 2016**
- The purpose of this memorandum is to announce that the Virginia Department of Education will be implementing a computer adaptive test (CAT) for all online Grade 3 Mathematics Standards of Learning (SOL) tests (regular, audio, Plain English, and audio Plain English tests) beginning in the spring 2016 test administration. The online computer adaptive versions of the test will be shorter than the traditional versions of the Grade 3 Mathematics test.
- Providing a shorter version of the online Grade 3 Mathematics test in a CAT format is part of Governor McAuliffe's initiative to shorten the length of the mathematics SOL tests for elementary school students. Since computer adaptive tests are customized to each student's ability level, fewer questions can be administered to accurately determine each student's achievement level. Because of this advantage of the CAT format, the computer adaptive version of the test will be approximately 35% shorter in total test length than the traditional version.
- Due to the implementation of the shorter Grade 3 Mathematics CAT, the [SOL Test Blueprint](#) for Grade 3 Mathematics has been updated. The blueprint contains the number of test items for the computer adaptive version of the online test and the number of items for the traditional version of the test that will be administered in paper/pencil format. The Grade 3 Mathematics CAT will contain 28 operational test items that are scored and 4 field test items, for a total test length of 32 items.
- http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2016/002-16.shtml

January 2017 Fairfax Public Hearing:

- Amendment asked for \$400K more for ARDT software. I went to Public Hearing as I did NOT understand why additional money being asked for when the new software G3-8 CAT math had advanced reporting capabilities.



SOL – “cut scores”

- There have been numerous reports that can NOT have “cut scores” with the CAT. This is not true; there can be a range. It is my certain people have implemented traditional cut scores on the CAT system. I think this needs further review. Will update.

Bibliography

Citations given within sections. Bibliographic citations on Public Record.
I can do another addendum to add more, if required.

Good afternoon – I am writing to you about the English 11 EOC SOLs for writing and reading that are still on schedule for this year. My school is on a 4x4 schedule, which means that the writing SOL is slated to be given starting Dec. 7th, 2020. I love what I do and have a wonderful group of students, who are trying so hard to feel ready and confident about the upcoming SOLs. However, preparing them under all virtual conditions this fall has been demoralizing.

This experience has been difficult for students and teachers due to many factors. Many involve individual learning/teaching styles; virtual learning cannot replicate what it is like to work with students face to face and give feedback or assess their understanding of content. My students find it much harder to understand content strategies and keep up when doing everything online. Students are often on their laptops for close to 6 hours a day. Some sign in for class but end up leaving, thus missing the lessons to help prepare them. Other factors affecting them include technology issues, family concerns, mental illness, and more. I have many students who struggle with the content that hopefully prepares them for what they will face on the SOL. I know that if conditions were different, and we were able to meet face to face, that they would have a much greater chance for success. Sadly, after COVID-19 numbers went into the red this past week, we are back to virtual school.

My students are drained. They are stressed and worried, and their situation is no different than the 11th graders of last year who received a waiver. In fact, it is worse because last year's 11th graders had the benefit of in school learning up until March 13th. They felt prepared for the SOL that was to be given just a week after school buildings closed and virtual learning began.

If you have not yet considered waiving the SOLs for students this year, I ask you to ponder the many variables that make it so very difficult for students to take them now. In perfect circumstances, SOLs are stressful. The English SOL is a requirement for graduation unless waived. This, in my opinion as an educator, is not the year to have that expectation. I have had more students breakdown due to worry and fear than I can ever recall. Several are helping take care of family members struck by COVID-19. Students with accommodations are especially worried. Asking them to practice comma rules or write yet another essay to practice persuasive writing seems almost counter-productive while so much more is affecting their mental health and ability to learn. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Scovill

English Teacher

To whom it may concern,

Please realize that the reality of teaching in a pandemic and holding students accountable for SOLs this year is unrealistic and beyond comprehension.

I let my children (1 in middle school and 1 in high school) start the school year off physically going to school 2 days a week. When the first COVID positive was announced at the school, the became 100% virtual. COVID positive cases from the schools are coming in CONSTANTLY. The schools aren't closing because the cases didn't originate inside the school, but this makes no sense because if someone was COVID positive at the school and has been around others it would make schools a breeding ground to pass the infection on to multiple people. It would make sense to close the schools physically and make virtual learning more effective. Instead of worrying about the health and wellbeing of the students, it seems that you are more worried about test scores.

You have no idea what students and teachers are going through as you are not in the classroom or attending virtual classes. This year is DIFFERENT. We should be focusing on how to help our children cope with the new reality of learning in a safe space. My A/B students are now not passing classes because it is impossible to keep up with everything they need to do. SOLs should be the last thing on their mind, as they should be concerned with LEARNING and UNDERSTANDING the material. They should be worried about taking a SOL, which is a test to show that the teachers are teaching with the DOE wants them to. Teachers aren't truly able to do their jobs because they are more concerned with getting through the material that will be covered in a SOL. What is this doing? Why is the value of learning based on how well a child does on the SOLs? It's showing our teachers it's more important to be teaching to test instead of letting them do what they went to school to do. TEACH.

This school year has made it clear there need to be better ways to teach our students virtually and make sure they are staying healthy. This is different from anything that has ever happened. Holding them accountable for passing the SOLs and making it a graduation requirement is unrealistic. I remember having to take the SOLs, but I also remember that I did not need to pass them to graduate. The stress these kids are under just to keep up their core classes without fearing a test is indescribable. Do you care about the children's mental health and wellbeing? It does not appear you all care about either of those things. SOL test scores do not show the value of learning or the value of a child. SOL test scores are not even looked at by colleges, they are solely for the purpose of showing the DOE certain material has been taught. Let the teachers teach and the children learn without fearing they will not pass or be able to graduate due to a test score. SOLs weren't done in the Spring because of the situation with COVID, why would it be treated the same way for the Fall?

Do you want to face the hard truth that the DOE standards for SOLs are ridiculous? If SOLs are such an important test for the DOE, why is it possible to opt out of taking them? Obviously, this is just another way for the DOE to show that they are in control of what is being taught. There are so many more things our children can learn if you let the teachers do their jobs. Remove SOL testing requirements because you care about our children's mental health. Teachers don't teach for the income; they teach for the outcome. If you don't want to listen to the parents, listen to the teachers. I'm sure they are strongly against testing as well.

Marlena Driscoll

Dear President Gecker,

I am writing this morning to convey my concern about the recent Board action which significantly reduced the SOL cut scores in Reading. I have no doubt that the Board had the best of intentions, but my fear centers on the fact that lowering expectations will have significant negative impacts on all students, and will likely have a more detrimental effect on our traditionally underperforming subgroups.

This fall, we did a deep dive into the performance of a couple of our subgroups, and found that differing expectations of student performance between subgroups explained a lot of the difference in the performance gaps between the groups (see presentation below). This was evidenced in the different grade/SOL proficiency distributions among our divisions. Whenever grades (a measure of a student's performance relative to the teacher's expectations) are not well aligned to SOL proficiencies (a measure of a student's performance relative to the state's expectations), bad things ensue. What makes this even worse is when these values vary significantly between subgroups. The smaller the gaps in expectations among the subgroup, the smaller the difference in outcomes.

Subgroup Performance Gap Study Fall 2020

I fear that reducing the cut scores in reading will cause schools that have real student learning issues to present as successful schools, at least as far as their accreditation rating. Folks have become accustomed to the idea that if a school is fully accredited, all is good, and there's no real reason to move heaven and earth to make any significant changes. Given that the great majority of these schools serve our most traditionally underserved/underperforming subgroups, this will likely perpetuate their current trajectory.

I realize that several lower performing schools and divisions remained on the same trajectory under the previous, more rigorous cut scores. The difference is that there was at least the recognition that things weren't good and change was needed.

Despite the wonderful intentions behind the Board's actions, I am really concerned that it will have the pernicious effect of perpetuating (possibly exacerbating) real differences in subgroup performance while masking these differences behind great accreditation rates. While these differences may not surface in state reporting, they'll likely be reflected in lack of future educational and occupational opportunities for those students so affected. Lowering cut scores will likely promote the continuation of actual performance discrepancies for our traditionally underperforming subgroups. More of these students will score proficient simply by function of the lower cut scores, and the problem will be whitewashed via the statistics.

On a related note, at last week's Board meeting the topic of "teaching to the test" was brought up, and seemed to have a negative connotation among Board members as it does with many in the general public. I agree with this statement when discussing history or science SOL tests. On those tests, we're more or less playing Trivial Pursuit: can the student regurgitate discrete facts. However, this is not the case in reading or math. Those are very much skill based assessments in that students are asked to demonstrate proficiency on the skills they have learned. In reading for example, the state does not provide a Dick and Jane reader, then ask questions about Dick and Jane on the SOL test. The more we perpetuate the myth of "teaching to the test" in reading and math, the more we diminish the

importance of related data. If we don't think these tests are what we need them to be, it is better to improve the tests than to denigrate them in this manner.

If I can be of service to help counter these potential negative outcomes, please let me know. Please don't hesitate to call me any time (276) 870-3535 if you have specific questions. We have done much data work, and would be more happy to share anything with you. Pam Davis-Vaught might even vouch for me.

Sincerely,

Matt

Matt Hurt, Ed.D.

Director, Comprehensive Instructional Program

628 Lake Street NE

Wise, VA 24293

276-870-3535- Cell

276-328-4735- Fax

Website: <http://www.cip.education/>

Good day Franklin County Board of Supervisors Franklin County School Board Members, and VDOE Staff,
(This email was sent to the local boards November 28th)

I write you today to express my extreme concern for my child, and all the other children in this county, who are not receiving an education due to Covid. I understand the fear regarding this virus however, I believe our bigger fear should be that surrounding our many students who are failing due to virtual learning. This system does not work for majority of families I have spoken with.

Children who have legally binding IEPs are not being provided the accommodations that have been agreed upon in said IEPs. My son is one of those children. He has went from A-B honor roll to failing. His attempts to complete assignments mostly fail as do his attempts at watching and reading the required material. I genuinely believe the reason for this decline in his grades and performance is due to virtual learning.

This "new" system is not working. My son feels as though he is not retaining the information being presented and I feel as though he has given up. I fear he will want to quit school because of the lack of structure and lack of classroom participation. He is also stressed, overwhelmed, depressed, anxious, and angry. He struggles daily with feelings of failure and feels like he is letting people down. It has been proven time and time again, these emotions in teens leave them at a higher risk for suicide.

I'm one person reaching out to our county officials begging you to help get our children back into the classroom full time. This "pandemic" is causing more damage emotionally than the virus would. I know there are students, the self-contained classroom, who are attending school 4 days a week. Pre-k through 2nd grade are attending school 4 days a week. I have to ask a question, what about our older students? They wear their masks, they understand the concept of social distancing, and they know how to use common sense practices such as washing their hands. Our older students NEED to be in school. These are the students trying to get into colleges and trying to start careers. The self-contained classroom are being given opportunities to succeed while others are being refused a free and public education.

Even if our children were allowed to go to school and do their work online. At least then they can have that structure and have an educator on site and able to answer questions. Please don't sweep this under the rug. I know our governor is "mandating" however, at some point we as a community need to stand up for our children. That is what I am doing now. I will also be encouraging others to do the same.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

THIS IS THE RESPONSE FROM Ms Jukue Nix:

Hello, Michaelynn!

We voted at our last meeting to get our children back to in person learning four days a week starting at the beginning of next semester, barring any mandates or staffing issues. It sounds like you may have missed this. Just for future reference, our Board meets each second Monday of the month at 7:00. There is a link on the FCPS website for you to click if you'd like to watch them.

I hope this helps put your mind at ease. Thank you for trusting us enough to reach out to us.

Julie

THIS WAS MY RESPONSE:

I didn't miss it. That being said, I am watching my child fail his sophomore year. I'm watching him lose hope in the system. I'm watching him give up. So, you will have to forgive me if I am concerned that by the 26th of January 2021 my son will not come back from this emotionally or academically. Also, his IEP accommodations are not being met which is severely problematic. I don't think there is a clause for a pandemic in his legally binding contract. When it comes right down to it he will be the one to pay emotionally and academically, nobody else. My child has Asperger's Syndrome, his eligibility for his IEP is under autism. He thrives in a classroom setting. He is supposed to have a one on one with him in all classes. He has no executive functioning skills and requires structure, peer interaction, and classroom instruction to be successful. He is getting none of this. I'm quite sure he is not the only student in Franklin County with an IEP whose accommodations are not being met. This in itself is illegal. I have requested that my son be allowed to attend school in the self-contained classroom and was told that would not be happening. Therefore I am not only thinking of my child but every student in this county. Especially those who are falling through the cracks.

I appreciate your speedy reply. And I understand you're looking at this from a different perspective than I am. That being said, please know that I very much feel what is happening to my son goes against every Wright's Law that applies to his specific needs. I will stand up for him and advocate for him.

Have a good night

I have not received a response to my last reply. I have also NOT received a response from Jeff Worley, who is my area school board representative.

I have extreme concern for my son. We worked years to get him where he was at the beginning of 9th grade. He is regressing and withdrawing. He has very few accommodations, however the main one is that he have a one on one with him all day everyday and that is obviously not happening due to the lockdowns that Franklin County has imposed. They did a poll several months ago and at least 60% of parents who participated wanted their students to be back in school full-time. Four of our members have voted to open them without restriction, four have voted to keep them closed. One of the representatives, Mr. Worley, happens to be married to a principal at one of the county schools. I feel that is a conflict of interest and would like guidance regarding that and the rest of the topics I have discussed.

Please contact me so that we might discuss a remedy and plan to get these students in school sooner rather than later.

Thank you.

Michaelynn Hanson 540-493-1859

Dr. Lane & VA Board of Education,

Our DDOT once again shared information gleaned from the state regarding recent Emergency LAVC's being awarded for students currently taking classes that was once again not translatable to SOL Retesters. So, as usual the regular high achieving students are rewarded for having education come easily to them, while those that struggle are punished by not receiving the same rewards.

What do I mean specifically?

Our current Emergency Legislation that enables students taking SOL's this year to get an LAVC for scoring at a 350 or above (instead of a 375) in an SOL class and that SOL does not count against the max/cap of total LAVC's a student can earn for graduation.

Meanwhile, a student that may have busted their butt in a previous year, only to score poorly and thus are forced to retest this year, are not eligible for this same 350-399 LAVC opportunity. In fact, they might have scored a 374 before and they are not eligible (which technically in my book the LAVC should be made retroactive).

So in short, our higher level students, who have very few SOL's to worry about, only have to do a minimum of 350 to get an SOL Verified Credit, while a student who has always tested poorly and thus has to retest over and over again, does not get that same benefit and will head towards graduation with constant anxiety over not getting their diploma due to SOL testing.

If you have questions or would like to discuss, please let me know, but please consider opening up these guidelines for all students scheduled to take SOL's this year (whether they be end of course SOL's or retesting).

Thank you,
Eric W. McCaslin
Director of Counseling
Liberty High School

Dr. Lane, Secretary Qarni, and Board Members:

We truly appreciate your willingness to understand the current stressful environment our students and staff are under during this global pandemic. We are grateful for the latitude for our students with regard to SOL testing requirements.

However, I am very concerned about the recent ruling from VDOE that does not allow SOL re-takers to be given the same latitude of earning a verified credit after earning a 350 or higher on a SOL taken during this school year. The state is allowing students currently in classes with an end of course SOL test to earn a verified credit for earning a score of a 350, but not those retaking SOLs during this school year. I believe this directly hinders our special education students, ELL students, and many other struggling learners from earning a diploma during this pandemic year.

I am requesting that the board reconsider this recent ruling for the following reasons:

- Re-takers are also taking SOL tests during this pandemic in order to qualify for graduation. Dr. Lane states that we want to “ensure that COVID-19 pandemic does not unduly prevent any student from earning a diploma.” By making re-takers earn a 400 for a verified credit, while everyone else can get the verified credit with a 350, we are doing the exact opposite of Dr. Lane’s quote above.
- We are giving students furthest away from graduation the opportunity to earn a verified credit if they score a 350, but re-takers (mostly seniors trying to graduate this year) are not permitted this latitude. Re-takers are also taking these tests in the middle of the pandemic with WAY more at stake than those in the classes for the first time.
- Re-takers are often seniors who need one or two verified credits to graduate. Are we going to tell these students if they don’t come into school to take and then pass a SOL test during a global pandemic that they cannot graduate? Some of these students and their families are scared to be in public places for fear of contracting COVID; many live with elderly or ill parents and grandparents and they have chosen to remain virtual because they do not want to risk the health of their loved ones. As stated in the press release from Dr. Lane’s office, safety must take priority right now. It is essential we take this into consideration. Holding graduation over the head of a senior who still has an SOL to pass during a global pandemic is disturbing to say the least; yet, that is exactly what we are doing.
- As our school testing coordinator said, “it seems the struggling learners, already at a disadvantage, and further disadvantaged by the loss of instructional/remedial time, are getting the short end of the stick yet again.” This is exactly what we are seeing. We have seniors with IEPs and seniors who fall under ELL status who have worked extremely hard during their high school careers to get to this point. SOL tests are already extremely challenging to them. Many will struggle even if you grant the 350 for re-takers due to their disabilities and/or language struggles. In this pandemic, where families are going through extreme trauma, all students taking a SOL test this year should be granted the 350 option.

In conclusion, I would ask the board the following:

1. Immediately revise the 350 waiver to include students retaking SOLs during the 2020-2021 school year
2. Vote to waive class of 2021 graduation requirements for verified credits as was done last year (see reasoning in the last two bullet points above) and let school divisions know this by January

I appreciate your time. I also appreciate all the work you have done during this time and overall. As educators at the ground level, we feel confident with you leading us.

Please feel free to reach out at any point for further information and discussion.

Lauren Milburn
Assistant Principal
Liberty High School

Dear Dr. Lane and Members of the Virginia Board of Education,

Good morning! I am writing to respectfully request you consider adding additional scaffolding to the existing recent amendments regarding our Standards of Learning Assessments due to COVID-19. As our School Testing Coordinator, I am regularly working with teachers and students and have a unique vantage point. I see the trepidation our students currently in-course have in approaching their fall assessments (we use a 4x4 block schedule and are currently administering EOC testing) as they know they are not quite ready. The adjustments you have made allowing them to earn a Verified Credit with a score of 350+ has helped to ease said trepidation. Thank you for that!

However, our most at-risk learners, those with disabilities and English Learners, may be in need of more help. Please consider allowing a Verified Credit to be earned by re-testers (students not currently in-course) for the same range of scores (350+). These students struggle under ideal circumstances, and the past six months have been far from that. Normally, we would be able to provide daily face-to-face intense remediation in preparation for struggling re-testers. Most of them are now seniors falling under the old diploma requirements (6/9 verified credits for Standard/Advanced Diplomas), and are down to their last one or two SOLs. Why are we granting Verified Credits to students typically not at risk and mostly underclassmen, while those in danger of not graduating on time must reach a higher bar? Yes, they had more seat time in-course, however, they are so far removed from instruction that that in itself is an obstacle. COVID-19 only increased that obstacle.

In addition, please consider lowering the threshold for expedited retakes and verified credits for students with disabilities. Many of our students with IEP/504 accommodations have an accommodation permitting them access to expedited retakes OR a Verified Credit with scores of 350-374, as opposed to the typical 375-399. Now that all learners have access to the expedited retake with a 350-399, should an accommodation (expedited retake and/or Verified Credit) for students with disabilities be made for scores of 325+?

Currently, we have a student with a disability taking a History SOL for the 12th time (it's the last credit he needs), an English Learner senior from El Salvador who came 4 years ago and is down to Reading and Writing SOLs who has taken them a combined nine times (a grueling 65-questions for Reading, which takes her no less than 4 hours each time) in addition to the substitute WorkKeys exams, and another senior with a disability who last took Algebra I in middle school set to take his 8th attempt at an EOC Math SOL. Those are just three of their stories; there are so many more. As a side note, the English Learner is attempting to graduate this semester as she needs to work to support herself. If she does not earn her verified credits this month, she will likely drop out.

Thank you for your time and consideration, especially in these unprecedented times.

Respectfully,

Tara Neidich
Testing Coordinator
Liberty High School
6300 Independence Avenue
Bealeton, VA 22712
540.422.7377



December 7, 2020

Dear Mr. Daniel Gecker, President of the VA Board of Education,

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Virginia Council of Administrators of Special Education, I am writing to you today to advocate for a delay in the implementation of one narrow component of the Virginia Regulations Governing Seclusion and Restraint in Public Schools. These regulations, approved by the Virginia Board of Education and Governor, are scheduled to be implemented in full and in full effect on January 1, 2021. VCASE requests that the specific provisions pertaining to the mandated advanced level training of staff who work with students who may need seclusion or restraint be delayed in implementation.

This delay is requested due to the continued COVID19-related challenges that divisions are experiencing with the required "hands-on" training that are core requirements in advanced training programs. In-person training activities involve live simulations and close, face to face interactions between trainers and trainees to complete an evidence-based qualification program constituting advanced training. Simply put, given COVID19 health guidelines that require safe social and physical distancing, neither trainers nor division staff trainees should be participating in in-person, "hands-on" activities that are mandated components of this type of training. Several special education administrators have contacted us with concerns that they may not have the required staff trained by January 1, 2021, due to staff, trainers or vendors being unwilling to participate in face-to-face hands-on training due to COVID19-related health risks.

VCASE leaders have been participating as stakeholders in the development of these regulations that promote student safety and well-being for several years. We consider the regulation necessary for our student and staff safety and wish to ensure 100% implementation. Our 400-plus VCASE members who supervise the provision of special education services for over 160,000 students with disabilities wish to ensure that division staff can be qualified through the appropriate advanced training that is required by these new regulations. Therefore, we ask that full implementation of the Seclusion and Restraint Regulation be postponed from the January 1, 2021 date until such time as health conditions warrant safe implementation of evidence-based advanced training of required division staff.

Thank you for consideration of this request and please reach out if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Jane Strong
Jane E. Strong, Ph.D.

Cc: Dr. James Lane
Dr. Samantha Hollins

Dr. Jane Strong

President

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Policy and Legislative Chair

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Good afternoon Dr. Lane & Virginia Board of Education,

Thank you for our current emergency guidelines and waivers that enables students taking SOL's this year to get an LAVC for scoring at a 350 or above (instead of a 375) in an SOL class and that SOL does not count against the max/cap of total LAVC's a student can earn for graduation.

I am writing to today asking you to consider granting students retesting SOLs the same opportunity for the following reasons:

- Retakers are also taking SOL tests during this pandemic in order to qualify for graduation. Dr. Lane states that we want to "ensure that COVID-19 pandemic does not unduly prevent any student from earning a diploma." By making retakers earn a 400 for a verified credit, while everyone else can get the verified credit with a 350, we are doing the exact opposite of what the quote above says.

- It makes no sense that students furthest away from graduation would be given a verified credit if they score a 350, but retakers (mostly seniors trying to graduate this year) are not permitted this latitude. Retakers are also taking these tests in the middle of the pandemic with much more at stake than those in the classes for the first time.

- Retakers are often seniors who need one or two verified credits to graduate. Are we going to tell these students if they don't come in and take and pass a SOL test during a global pandemic that they cannot graduate?

- We are saying that this pandemic is so dire that students who won't graduate for THREE years are allowed earn verified credits for a 350 but a student trying to graduate right now, during the pandemic, has to reach 400. As our school testing coordinator said, "it seems the struggling learners, already at a disadvantage, and further disadvantaged by the loss of instructional/remedial time, are getting the short end of the stick yet again."

Please consider amending the emergency legislation for all students scheduled to take any SOL this year.

I am happy to discuss this further at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Sam Cox

Samuel R. Cox
Principal
Liberty High School
6300 Independence Avenue
Bealeton, VA 22712
540.422.7360 @LHSEAGLESMRCOX

Changing Admissions at America's #1 High School Does Not Address Inequalities in the Local Education System

From the height of the racial justice movement this year, many people see the need for improved opportunities and representation. However, in this context, Virginia's Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) Superintendent and School Board decided to embark on a long-standing ambition to remake the admissions process at America's [#1 public high school](#), Thomas Jefferson High School for Science & Technology (TJHSST).

Although FCPS is facing many other crises, the FCPS Superintendent has repeatedly justified the need for a TJHSST admissions reform effort because TJHSST's student body is not representative of the student population demographics of Fairfax County [and](#) "we have been working to understand why the talent at TJHSST does not reflect the talent in FCPS." An [underdeveloped proposal](#) for a new admissions process using a "[merit lottery](#)" was subsequently unveiled and months of contentious debate followed, sowing division across Northern Virginia. In November 2020, FCPS finally released [a white paper](#) with some supporting data. So, I analyzed this data and the results are astounding- the TJHSST admissions process almost couldn't be more fair, equal opportunity, and representative. The incoming TJHSST class is nearly an exact correlation to the 8th grade student demographics across Fairfax County- however for math level, not for race.

There are approximately 14,000 FCPS students enrolled in 8th grade math each year. However, the student distributions in each math level vary widely across each racial group (Table 1), and the racial make-up at each math level also varies widely (Table 2). The FCPS white paper also highlights that the percentage of Black, Hispanic, and White students enrolled in Geometry who actually applied to TJHSST are only 38%, 35%, 29% respectively, compared to Asians (64%).

Table 1: Math Level, by Student Racial Designation

	% of Students by race, taking Algebra I	% of Students, by race, taking Geometry	% of Students, by race, taking Algebra II, or higher,
Total 8th graders (out of 14,000)	46.4%	12.1%	1.2%
Asian	50.3%	26.7%	4.6%
White	57.7%	12.8%	0.4%
Black	39.9%	3.9%	0.07%
Hispanic	30.12%	3.2%	0.11%

Table 2: Student Racial Designation, for a Given Math Level

	% of Algebra I Students	% of Geometry Students	% of Algebra II, or higher, Students	% of students in Geometry who applied to TJHSST
Asian	23.2%	47.3%	84.6%	64%
White	49.2%	41.7%	12.2%	29%
Black	9.5%	3.6%	0.6%	38%
Hispanic	18.1%	7.4%	2.6%	35%

Using this data and assuming all students in Algebra II or higher who apply are accepted, while the students in Geometry are accepted at an exactly equal rate across all racial groups from those who applied, the resulting racial make-up of the incoming class would be 71.9% Asian, 21.3% White, 4.6% Hispanic, and 2.2% Black. Compared to the actual admitted class to TJHSST of 73.0% Asian, 17.7% White, 3.3% Hispanic, and 6% Multiracial, Other, and Black (as reported by FCPS). Clearly students are more than only their math level, and the TJHSST admissions process has long been designed to provide a holistic look at each student. But, as shown by the data, 50% of the admitted students to TJ are at least two math levels higher (Algebra II or higher), and nearly 45% are one math level higher (Geometry), than the long-standing minimum requirement of Algebra I for admission to TJHSST. Students in only Algebra I in 8th grade are no longer competitive for a school specifically designed and established for exceptionally gifted students, and with a specific high interest and aptitude for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

There is a plethora of talent across Fairfax county, as the Superintendent and School board have suggested. Enough that the new admissions minimum for TJHSST could easily be Geometry or higher in 8th grade, along with a 3.0 GPA, student interest information, critical thinking assessment, teacher recommendations, and a standardized test ([as legally required](#)). Additionally, more FCPS high schools today can accommodate students who will reach Calculus by their senior year (the standard progression beginning with Algebra in 8th grade), compared to when TJHSST was originally established.

Social equity is being denied, but not by the TJHSST admissions process. Instead the FCPS elementary and middle school STEM pipelines provide insufficient opportunities and resources to the most under-represented, under-served neighborhoods. Only [seven of the twenty-four](#) FCPS middle schools offer Algebra II to 8th graders, two in Regions 1, 2, and 5; but only one in Region 4 and none in Region 3. Which is also the primary reason for the long-lamented disparity in Fairfax County regional representation at TJHSST. Instead of focusing on changing the THSST admissions process (other than eliminating the testing fee, and elevating the minimum math level required to apply) what should be done to help all students across FCPS, and especially under-represented minority students?

No matter what reforms are implemented at TJHSST, it remains a single school, with limited capacity. Rather than accepting this artificial limit, due to a lack of imagination and agency, the opportunities and experiences should be expanded to service a substantially larger population of students across Fairfax County. FCPS should scale the opportunities that are available at TJHSST to all students who desire them. FCPS should re-enforce the basics of STEM and exposure to intellectually stimulating activities through available, free, and supplemental after school and summer academic enrichment programs. Similar to the language immersion programs at many FCPS elementary schools, STEM immersion programs could be established in Regions 3 and 4, where access is most needed for under-represented student populations. FCPS must focus on better identifying students early on and providing them with more opportunities at local elementary, middle and high schools, along with supporting post-graduate planning and career opportunities, such as [Northern Virginia Community College's \(NVCC\) SySTEMic program](#). NVCC provides affordable matriculation opportunities to both technical careers and automatic transfer to in-state colleges for undergraduate STEM degrees. FCPS schools can establish student support networks

involving peers, mentors, and community leaders. FCPS can establish new resources, based on the [TJHSST Partnership Fund](#) model, to support all FCPS high schools with beyond Advanced Placement (AP) electives in STEM, and research lab experiences to those students who desire them. All of these programs could be supported by resources from a wide coalition of Northern Virginia businesses, who are eager for more talent, since demand already far outstrips supply today.

The FCPS Superintendent, the School Board, and the entire community have a chance to be bold. As Virginia Secretary of Education, Atif Qarni has [asserted](#) “It’s certainly not a difficult problem to fix. The problem has been a lack of political will.” Instead of wasting political capital on misguided and analytically dubious attempts to change the TJHSST admissions process, we must instead engender Fairfax County to be a leading national model of how to better teach, challenge, inspire, and support all students with STEM interests. Students will rise to meet clear standards. FCPS leadership should challenge students to improve their unique abilities at the best pace for them, encourage habits and skills for life-long learning, develop critical thinking and STEM literacy, while also building self-confidence, promoting compassion, and inspiring achievement. FCPS must have excellence in education for all, not just a single high school– this is what the Northern Virginia community, the Commonwealth, and America demand.

Dr. Chris Bassler is a TJHSST graduate, and a Fairfax County resident and parent.

Hello I am emailing in regards to the oh so wonderful school year. So let's strap in it's a fun conversation.

I have spoken with numerous teachers about one getting back into schools. Our kids need in person school. The rate of survival is high. If the same kids are able to go out and play travel sports and still be safe. How is it our school in Newport News or VA in general not play? If you think about it we still go out shopping, restaurants, sports, parks, everything like before. But no we can't get into school. Yes I know plenty of teachers who have kids in travel sports and they are out every weekend playing in and out of state. But yet we cannot go back to school.

2. SOL why is it that we have to take these. Teachers don't teach in reality, they only teach to the sol that's it. Kids learn and then dump. So what is the teacher there for? We should get rid of the sol completely anyway. It is only used to help get accredited and money. Now these kids will never master those subjects while in school they will be able to use resources once they are out of school. Teachers don't like teaching the sol. It should not be required for them to graduate.

3. How do you see that it is fair to teach the same curriculum as last year? When they are not in the same environment as before. Most kids need the interaction of a classroom. These teachers are overwhelming these kids with assignments. How are you going to give 14 assignments on Tuesday and say it has to be done by Thursday? When you have 6 other classes. I know my kids have to stay up late at night because they keep getting more and more work today. If they teachers don't like having to work after hours neither should the kids. Homework should not be given if the teacher can't get it done in class so be it. Only homework should be study for a test. I have spoken when teachers about many topics. Virtual is not a healthy way to be given classes. If it has to be then cut down on curriculum don't assign as many assignments. Take out stupid classes like art, living skills, they get that one from being at home all day. All these pointless electives need to go.

I would love to have a sit down or zoom or anything to further talk. Because these kids are not really learning and teachers are doing everything in their power NOT to go back to school. How can private schools do it? Oh yea money. I say as long as they aren't in school then those schools shouldn't get grants or federal money. Many parents are looking to private or actual home school programs.

Thanks

John Harris

Ladies and Gentleman,

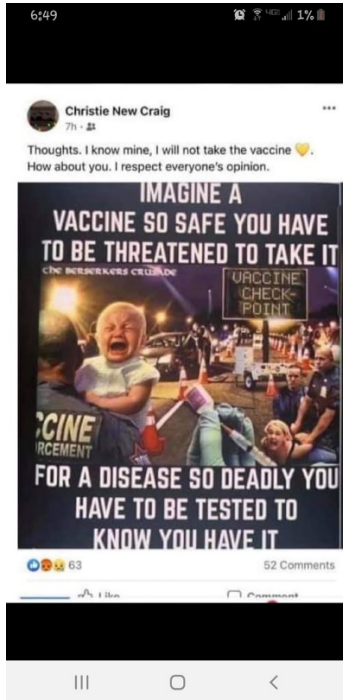
My name is William Murphy and I live in Cape Charles, my daughter has been a special needs teacher in Chesapeake Public schools for over eighteen years and I have three grandchildren in public school there. I am attaching a face book post from a member of the Chesapeake School board who's conduct I find appalling and I further believe her political views are overriding her concern for the facts. She has constantly shared her radical and uninformed views and opinions during public meetings and with postings on social media such as the one attached while her and the rest of the board have ignored their own metics for decision making regarding the opening and closing of schools in order to pander to the will of a few.

She is an elected official as well as an employee of State Senator Cosgrove, so I realize that's a touchy situation and it's probably outside your preview to take direct action. I would hope you would at least agree and ask the School Board there to censure her or at a minimum keep it to herself and not have it color her dealings with the health and safety of children.

She is very combative and seems to enjoy and flaunt her unpopularity amongst reasonable people. I find this unacceptable from a public servant and I urge you to at least take some symbolic action. I'm sure you have contacts in the Chesapeake area who will confirm my story.

Thank you for your time and attention.

William Murphy
3 Seay CT
Cape Charles VA
757 408-1347



President Gecker,

Today, the Center for American Progress released an issue brief that examines ways that states can use Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) flexibilities to provide relief for their residents. The next COVID-19 relief bill in Congress will likely not include an expansion of TANF. However, millions of Americans have fallen into poverty during the pandemic. This brief includes actions that many states have taken and/or can consider using to address increased hardship of their residents, even in the absence of congressional action. The issue brief is accompanied by a factsheet that outlines the recommendations for states and it includes an interactive component that lists TANF actions by state. At the end of September 2019, the 50 states and Washington, D.C., had accumulated more than \$6 billion in unspent TANF funds. Most states have tens of millions of dollars in reserves, and 15 states have more than \$100 million of unspent TANF funds, including Virginia. Let me know if you are interested in connecting with a policy expert to discuss these resources. Recommendations from the brief include the following:

- Increase the use of all kinds of TANF benefits, with an emphasis on direct cash assistance
- Distribute TANF reserve funds where they are needed the most
- Prioritize, expand, and boost direct cash assistance
- Subsidize jobs throughout the labor market
- Provide housing assistance
- Support child care programs and subsidize child care costs
- Use other nonrecurrent short-term benefits creatively
- Consider making other technical changes

Thank you,

Lola Oduyeru

Manager, State and Local Government Affairs

Center for American Progress and Center for American Progress Action Fund

Good morning Mr. Gecker,

Thank you for your service as the president of Virginia's Board of Education.

I am reaching out to introduce myself and a mission parents in Virginia have committed to over the past several years. I am a parent of children with Dyslexia and what that means is that over the past 10 years I have had to become deeply involved in understanding our Virginia public schools' approach to teaching reading. Dyslexia is a reading disability but the good news is with early screening and appropriate instruction there is an exponential decrease on the impacts of that disability on a student.

This journey has moved me and many other parents to take a hard look at our district's literacy curriculums and PD as well as teacher preparation programs in our institutes of higher education. I believe this is also a priority of our superintendent of VDOE, Dr James Lane. Good core instruction in reading, based in the science of reading is integral and even more important today as this pandemic continues on.

As you can image with 10+ years of dedication to this space our story has a lot of history. Parents continue to work across the state with VDOE, state legislators, UVA and other institutes of higher ed, State SEAC and of course our local school districts. I hope that our Virginia Board of Ed is making literacy a priority and I welcome the opportunity to meet virtually for further conversations.

I hope you have a wonderful holiday and a happy new year.

Cheers,

Kristin Kane

Parent

Decoding Dyslexia VA

703 474 3563

Dear School Board members,

I am a parent and a taxpayer who lives in the Providence district.

You have marginalized families and children by getting rid of the race-blind merit component for admissions at TJHSST. I am writing to ask you to vote to reinstate the TJ admissions test and revisit this issue with honest and transparent public engagement.

There have been numerous efforts to take down the governor's school TJHSST for years now. Families and students have been demonized and insulted over and over. Academic excellence and a pride in meritocracy at TJ has persisted despite these efforts. The lone excellence at TJ is a stark reminder of the failure of FCPS to educate children at the elementary and middle schools. So, the option for the School Board to chop down the tall poppy that was the source of pride in northern Virginia is quite regrettable for the rest of the community. What reason is there for the STEM and other business leaders to want to view this area as desirable, certainly not the high taxes!

Superintendent Brabrand misled the school board in taking the October 6 decision to eliminate the admissions test to TJHSST, despite knowing that the diversity report due to Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam and Virginia Education Secretary Atif Qarni did not require an overhaul of TJ admission. Brabrand has shown very poor leadership and his contract should not be renewed by you.

Taxpayers deserve a better Superintendent. Under his watch the FCPS blackboard was hacked, relevant information from our children and families was compromised, the Spring virtual learning was a dismal failure, the Fall virtual learning is inadequate, and he has not consulted appropriately with stakeholders in developing and implementing his failed and failing policies.

I hope you are listening to the taxpayers, and will vote to reinstate the TJ admissions test at your regular meeting on December 16th.

Sincerely,

Suparna Dutta

Please OPEN THE SCHOOLS! The science does not support the closing of schools. More kids are dying of suicide than COVID. If the teachers are concerned they can remote teach but let the kids go back to school. OPEN THE SCHOOLS! You are ruining our kids and compromising their education. OPEN THE SCHOOLS!

There is no scientific support to keep the schools closed. OPEN THE SCHOOLS! We are losing so much precious meaningful educational opportunities. Time is of the essence and the school closings will have a lifetime impact on our kids. OPEN THE SCHOOLS!

A review of multiple studies finds that young people are as much as three times more likely to develop depression in the future due to social isolation, with the **impact** of loneliness on mental health lasting up to nine years later. **Closing schools** places the physical health of young people at risk.

[The Price Students Pay When Schools Are Closed - Education...](#)

The Price Students Pay When Schools Are Closed - Education Next

Seven ways children, and the nation, lose out when school buildings do not open

[The long-term effects of school closures](#)

The long-term effects of school closures

According to the World Bank, around 1.6 billion school children were affected by Covid-related school and childc...

Conclusion

School and childcare closures have significant negative long-term consequences on the human capital and welfare of the affected children, especially those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. This reduction in human capital accumulation is likely slowing the long-run growth prospects of countries, especially those whose economies are relatively human capital intensive, such as the US and Europe.

Thus, school and childcare closures are potentially very costly measures to avoid the spread of the Covid-19 virus. This point was initially largely lost in the political debate, likely because these negative effects arise only in the long run and thus are not immediately measurable. Medical research now also indicates that children are not the primary drivers of the COVID-19 pandemic, in contrast to pandemics caused by the influenza virus. During the current second wave of the crisis in the autumn of 2020, governments seem more committed to keeping schools and childcare centers open as long as possible. For example, Germany and France are closing restaurants, bars, and the entertainment industry during their 'lockdown light' in November 2020, but not schools or childcare centers. Our research suggests that this policy choice has the potential to pay significant long-run dividends for future generations, even though it might contribute to a more rapidly evolving second wave of Covid-19 infections in the short run.

OPEN THE SCHOOLS!

*Sherry Harvey
141 Red Robin Lane
Linden, VA 22642*

December 22, 2020

I went to the BOE's webpage via VDOE and saw the June 18, 2020 Announcement listed on the first page regarding systemic racism, racial justice and education. It went on to say you adopted this statement and stand behind "the promise of a high-quality education for every child by eliminating racial and socioeconomic inequities in Virginia's public education system." It went on to say "The history of people of color, particularly Black Americans, in our country is a history of strength, perseverance, courageous struggle, agency and hope. But we also know that history is marked by exploitation, oppression, disenfranchisement, and discrimination."

I would like to add this obstacle is abundantly evident in the JLARC report that was just completed. It states that black students with disabilities have lower graduation rates. On top of that deeply disturbing finding, we worry about ALL children being pushed onto the VAAP track with no high school diploma as young as kindergarten. This will hinder the ability to participate in meaningful employment and be productive citizens in our society. However, even if they were on the high school diploma track due to the findings in this JLARC report about Transition Services and lack of functional goals, those children with IEPs do not stand a chance for meaning engagement into the community for jobs or life skills are defined and required per IDEA.

Although many states in your positions, associations, unions (outside of VA), and teacher organizations like to say well all states are in these predicaments, it has to stop with someone. There has to be a meaningful plan to increase accountability with schools, consistency and continuity in education across the state, successful screening tools that has the proper components to see if students are having trouble reading, and there has to be a paradigm shift with ANY teacher that wants to step foot in a classroom that you will be teaching ALL students. There should be no segregation with I want the well-behaved kids who perfectly fit in a box. They need to be fully prepared to take on ALL kids at any time. They need to be informed of trauma-informed practices, PBIS, taken Ortin Gillingham training (and not an online 2-3 hour training either), classes in Applied Behavior Analysis, and be willing to receive ALL children. This is the shift we need. I know so many teachers that are angry when a special needs child is thrown in their class, they are put out because they never received training, they aren't equipped in understanding a child dealing with trauma, they were only prepared for the children that perfectly attends and does their work.

This should not be new information to anyone what's in this JLARC report. You hear it day in and day out from parents, however maybe since it's from an independent source, you will take into account that these issues are pervasive in this state and has no doubt contributed to Virginia being the 8th highest for incarceration rates.

I am writing to you all as a mother of two special needs children that have been subjected to discrimination, retaliation, and left to a cookie-cutter education that does not fit either of them in segregated classrooms. It's not individualized. It's not FAPE. We've have to file an OCR

complaint which OCR sided with us, we've been moved around to 5 schools and my child is only in the third grade, we have been asked to see if our child wanted "to have their assignments modified to make things easier for them to complete" when I asked if that was VAAP in Kindergarten, they said "yes". These schools are not doing what's right by our kids and it shows in this JLARC report. They can do and decide the course of the direction of a child's future. Luckily I had been in parent training by Peter Wright and new how to advocate, however the entire class was asked in Kindergarten to go on VAAP. This is evident in JLARC that it's not just us that it is happening to, it's the entire state.

We rely on you all to stop saying "we are a Commonwealth and it's up to each school". This is why we are in the predicament we are in currently, no one wants to take the accountability. Please stop writing proclamations and start issuing orders for these life changing trainings for our teachers and staff.

Respectfully,

Heidi Bunkua



JLARC
Presentation.pdf



JLARC Commission
Draft 12 14 2020.pdf

Good evening!

I am writing to you to voice my concern of how the board members of the Fairfax County Board of Education seem to be dismissing and objecting every possible move to allow our students back to school in person. Do you even realize how horrible it is to sit and listen to the same presentation over and over again and for the board to each and EVERY time dismiss the presentation in favor of putting yet another pause on the return to school. The experts have all ECHOED the importance of returning our children to school. I have a 6 and almost 9 year old suffering with online learning each day as this "pause" continues. I work in a job that I do not have the luxury of working remotely 100% and EVERYDAY risk my health to do my job. Nevertheless, I do it because I love what I do and I need my job. I have no patience for those who do not value what they choose to do and CAN do it safely.

What about the children? What about the families? What about our taxes dollars continuing to pay for 5 days of school when our kids only get 4.1, if that. What about the positions that our tax dollars continue to pay who are not even reporting to work? What about the kids who are in unsafe homes? School is their haven. What about the kids who cannot afford Wi-Fi or even the kids who can, whose parents cannot stop what they are doing to be school IT during a computer glitch? What about those kids without heat in their homes in the winter? Or even the kids without homes all together where school is their heat, and shelter for a few hours a day? What about the teachers who want to be in the classroom? What about all of those teachers who worked so hard to set up their classrooms, only to continue to sit unused? What about the office staff who still have to report to the schools to work? Why can sports go back, but students not? Why can the staff go back? But students not?

I received my covid vaccine today as I work in a field that has it available. While sitting there, I wished a teacher could be the recipient instead and was thrilled to see the Governor has listed teachers in the next group eligible for the vaccine. I want this horrible disease to stop just as much as anyone. My own Nana tested positive for Covid 6 weeks ago and is now on hospice, yet I still believe returning our kids to school can be done safely. She may not get better from this disease, but I know as a retired teacher, she would stand behind our kids getting back in the classroom. It baffles my mind how each of the representatives for our board of education, the organization supporting the education of our children cannot see past the union propaganda and realize what matters most and that is our children and their education.

As our state board of education representative I wanted to let you know that FCPS in being ruled by the board and our superintendent is not being supported by the board whatsoever. FCPS needs state intervention to fix this matter ASAP. Our children deserve better.

Thank you in advance!

L Speidell

To The Virginia Board of Education and Secretary of Education,

I am forwarding the below email to both the Virginia Board of Education and Virginia Governor's Office. I should have included both in the original email sent to the Prince William County School Board and Superintendent. To date, I have only received a response from Ms. Wall, who represents the Gainesville District. My daughter is zoned in the Brentsville District and Ms. Jackson has **not** responded.

I am advocating on behalf of my daughter who has been participating in virtual learning since March, 2020. My daughter is currently experiencing severe depression from the PWCS Systems decision to **only allow virtual learning to date stating safety of all students and faculty as the priority**. However, the PWCS System has also decided that **contact sports are completely safe to run** and have no shame in posting the live videos on Facebook of the wrestling matches taking place as I type this. Where is the respect for the mental health of the students who are not athletes and have no in-person options to attend, most especially the option to sit at a desk in a classroom with a teacher while wearing a mask.

Attached is a link of the full contact wrestling match taking place while in-person learning is not allowed.

<https://fb.watch/2VAU9o8r88/>

I am requesting an explanation as to why this blatant hypocrisy is tolerable by the PWC School Board, the VDOE and the Governor's Office. I am also requesting an explanation as to when the massive decline in the mental health of the students due to these decisions is going to be prioritized.

Sincerely,
Nora MacIntosh

January 15, 2021

Mr. Daniel A. Gecker
President
Virginia Board of Education
James Monroe Building
101 North 14th Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dr. James Lane
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Virginia Department of Education
James Monroe Building
101 North 14th Street
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Mr. Gecker and Dr. Lane:

I want to start by extending sincere appreciation for the decisive action taken by the Board and Department over these past several months to reduce barriers for students in attaining their graduation goals. Virginia public education is known for quality, and a high school diploma from a Virginia public school is a gateway to students' diverse postsecondary pursuits.

Flexibilities for the Class of 2020 under Executive Order Fifty-One (2020)—alongside the fruits of long-term division investments in secondary English learner programming and targeted school supports—contributed to a record high on-time graduation rate in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), with notable reductions in achievement gaps for our on-time graduation and dropout rates. (See [On-Time Graduation Additional Analysis article](#).) Furthermore, the Board's Emergency Guidelines for Locally Awarded Verified Credits (LAVCs) have already relieved significant anxiety and testing pressure for students in the Class of 2021 and beyond.

Today, I am writing to advocate for three areas of extension to existing graduation flexibility implemented since April 2020. Rationale for these requests are detailed in the attachment to this letter:

1. Extend verified credit waivers to students scheduled to graduate by February 2021;
2. Extend emergency guidelines for LAVCs for fall 2020 courses; and
3. Clarify language of emergency guidelines for LAVCs to allow LAVC consideration for repeater courses.

These flexibilities would provide critical relief to some of the students most impacted by the ongoing pandemic. Thank you for your consideration of these requests as we all work to do what is best for our students in this challenging time.

Sincerely,


Scott S. Brabrand, Ed.D.
Division Superintendent

SSB/bh

Attachment

Thanks for all you are doing! Your help is appreciated!
Scott

Extension 1: Verified Credit Waivers for Students Scheduled to Graduate by February 2021

Across Virginia, a number of seniors are scheduled to graduate at the end of this fall semester, by February 2021. Most impacted are seniors in schools operating a 4x4 schedule; however, any high school is likely to have at least a few students finishing the last of their course requirements during the fall semester. *On behalf of our students and families, I urge you to extend the availability of verified credit waivers afforded to the Class of 2020 to any student scheduled to graduate by February 2021, as follows:*

- *Students currently enrolled in a course for which they need a verified credit in order to graduate;*
- *Students who have previously been awarded standard credit, but have not earned the associated verified credit; and*
- *Students who have not completed the student-selected test.*

It is true that these seniors already benefit from the Emergency Guidelines for Locally Awarded Verified Credits (LAVCs) applied to for any standard credits earned during spring through fall 2020 and fall 2020, as well as for up to one standard credit earned prior to spring 2020. However, the cancellation of spring Standards of Learning (SOL) non-writing assessments and limited access since that time to SOL assessments and approved substitute tests for verified credit have put these students at a disadvantage in completing their verified credit requirements on schedule. Already, you have recognized ongoing assessment challenges, issuing Class of 2021 waivers for emergency first aid/cardiopulmonary resuscitation/automated external defibrillators training requirements and the Standard Diploma requirement for a career and technical education credential.

In a normal year, students would have had multiple opportunities within spring, summer, and fall testing windows to take SOL assessments needed to verify credit for a prior course. Taking our experience here in FCPS as an example, due to health and safety concerns:

- We were unable to offer any summer SOL assessments in July or September;
- We had to postpone writing assessment opportunities for verified credit until December; and
- We had to cancel a total of four (4) ACT WorkKeys windows—used for verified credit in reading and writing—between July and November.

Summer and fall testing windows are especially important in our division as prior course testing opportunities for students needing verified credit. The loss of these windows on top of lost retest opportunities for prior courses last spring has introduced a new layer of academic pressure for our seniors. February graduates in particular face a time crunch to access and pass any outstanding tests for verified credit by the end of the fall semester. On top of these stressors are added legitimate health and safety concerns related to the ongoing pandemic. A number of our students are unable to participate in needed in-person testing this fall due to personal health conditions. Additionally, a number of parents and guardians have expressed that they are uncomfortable or unwilling to have their students participate in an assessment appointment, even with our division's health and safety mitigation strategies in place. While the Department has extended flexibility to defer testing to a later window, this is not a satisfactory solution for seniors who are trying to graduate this fall.

I implore you to offer the same level of graduation flexibility students graduating by February 2021 as you offered previously for the Class of 2020. By extending this flexibility, our seniors who have been most impacted by assessment restrictions over the last 10 months would not face the additional, potentially life-altering disappointment of having to postpone their scheduled graduation simply because they have not had the necessary opportunities to earn a qualifying exam score.

Extension 2: Emergency Guidelines for LAVCs for Fall 2020 Courses

Assessment data and Department guidance both support the notion that the best opportunity for students to pass a SOL test for verified credit is at the culmination of the course content. In FCPS, approximately 850 students are enrolled in semester-long courses at our nontraditional school programs. A majority of the students placed in these programs have experienced interrupted schooling and face ongoing

economic, social, and emotional pressures that elevate their academic and dropout risk. *On behalf of these students and their families, I urge you to extend the emergency guidelines for LAVCs afforded to students affected by extended school closures in spring and summer 2020 to also apply to students impacted by the ongoing pandemic in fall 2020, as follows:*

- *Approval or rejection of the LAVC based by an appointed local review panel comprised of at least three educators, with:*
 - *Allowable evidence of student mastery of standards, to include course grades, classroom assignments, division exams, etc.; and*
 - *Option to consider LAVC eligibility at the course level rather than student-by-student.*

Already in November, the Board expanded its emergency guidelines to allow some special considerations for fall 2020 courses. Namely, local panels may determine eligibility for LAVC in fall 2020 courses with only one SOL score above 350. However, this flexibility still relies on the student being able to access the SOL test. The current guidance puts at a disadvantage our students with health conditions or those whose parents/guardians request to defer testing based on health and safety concerns. Even if these students are able to access the SOL test in the future, each month between the end of their course and the assessment puts them at greater risk of failure. This risk is especially high for the students attending our nontraditional school programs, even more so as a result of the dramatic economic, social, and emotional hardships many of these students have faced due to the ongoing pandemic.

The Board's revisions to its emergency guidelines for LAVCs this past April and June recognized the significance of lost testing opportunities in spring and summer 2020 beyond the impact for the Class of 2020. Assessment opportunities this fall have been drastically limited due to health and safety concerns, as described above. Even when assessments are offered, many families are choosing not to participate. Further, the few students who are accepting the risk of in-person testing are often experiencing an added layer of stress and anxiety connected to the restrictive assessment experience using all health and safety mitigation measures. While we are hopeful that this health anxiety will decline through the spring as we work to build confidence for in-person learning experiences, our division is not yet at a point where most of our testing students can be expected to feel natural and able to perform at their best.

I ask that you consider extending the same level of emergency LAVC opportunities for fall 2020 courses as you previously offered for spring and summer 2020 courses. By extending emergency guidelines for LAVCs in this way, our students within semester-long courses who are unable to complete their necessary testing at the end of their coursework due to health and safety concerns would not face the added academic pressure of testing in a future window after separation from the tested course content.

Extension 3: Emergency Guidelines for LAVCs for Repeater Courses

The Board's emergency guidelines for LAVCs adopted in April, June, and November 2020 introduced the opportunity for a local panel to award LAVC for students completing courses in spring, summer, and fall 2020, as well as history and social science courses completed in spring 2021. Although the Board guidelines indicate only that a student must have been "**enrolled** in a high school credit-bearing course that was **eligible for a verified credit**," Department interpretation of this language has restricted emergency LAVC access to students who were awarded standard credit during the specified semesters. This restrictive interpretation excludes a substantial group of students who choose to retake a course for which they have previously earned standard credit but for which they still need verified credit. *On behalf of the impacted students, I urge you to clarify language within the emergency guidelines for LAVCs to permit local panels to consider LAVC for **any** high school credit-bearing course completed in the specified semesters.*

Across FCPS, a number of students with prior standard credit choose to retake a high school course each year. While a subset of these students are merely aiming to raise their GPA for college admission, at least as many are retaking the course as a form of SOL test remediation in an effort to earn verified credit. These students fall into two main groups. One set are transfer students from out of state and often out of the U.S. While their transcript course description qualifies them for transfer standard credit based on coursework completed in their previous school, they do not feel confident to attempt the SOL test without

explicit instruction in the Virginia standards. For example, a student may bring a transfer standard credit for Chemistry from their school in the Philippines, but they wish to experience the course in FCPS before sitting for the SOL test. The second set are students who previously passed the course (often with a grade of D or C) but were unable to pass the SOL test. In some cases, these students have previously attempted SOL retakes with standard remediation practices and were unsuccessful. With academic advising, these students have determined to retake the full course as a way to prepare for the SOL exam while also gaining a deeper mastery of the course concepts and skills.

When the SOL tests were cancelled in spring 2020, these students' classmates were eligible for LAVC based on evidence of mastery and passing the course. However, these students themselves were deemed ineligible for LAVC even though they passed the course, simply because the course did not earn them a new standard credit. This interpretation has put these students at a disadvantage for future SOL success toward verified credit, due to the limited access to SOL test opportunities and elapsed time since they have completed the repeater coursework.

Already, the limited access to SOL retake opportunities in spring, summer, and fall 2020 has created barriers for access to verified credit for students with prior course credit. While the June revisions to emergency guidelines for LAVCs offered the opportunity to review evidence of mastery for up to one prior course based on specific criteria, the one course is insufficient to address the level of need seen by many of our students. By extending the interpretation to include **any** enrolled high-school credit-bearing course-- including repeater courses-- students who engaged in deep remediation over the course of the semester and successfully passed the repeater course would have the same opportunity to be considered for LAVC based on evidence of mastery as their non-repeater peers. Though this would not meet all students' prior course verified credit needs, I argue that this small interpretation adjustment is fair and appropriate in light of the vast and complex challenges facing our students in the current environment. In these cases, the awarded LAVC would be assigned as verified credit in the student's record using the same method as would have been applied if the student had the opportunity to pass the SOL test.

I ask that you allow the original language of the guidelines to stand, opening access to LAVC consideration under the emergency extending guidelines to any student enrolled in a course in the specified semesters for which the student needed verified credit. By clarifying emergency guideline language in this way, our students who have demonstrated commitment to preparation for standards mastery by repeating coursework needed for verified credit would gain the same benefit as their non-repeater peers to reflect the impact of test cancelation in the ongoing pandemic.

January 17, 2021

Dear Members of Virginia Board of Education and Other Groups:

As an educational advocate and generations, generations of family in education, I wanted to share with you THREE more inconsistencies in regards to educational software, practice materials/tests, and other areas. I did want to provide a bit of my background before this. I have been the FIRST to develop a form to track key educational items, first to determine that there was NO field test done of the G3 CAT MATH SOL before removing the back button, and also had students share with me (in Loudoun and Fairfax) that certain classes were TURNING ON the back button for select students doing better in math. Clearly, the back button is a programmable tool. It is ALSO very clear that key people are controlling access to best practice tests. The following shall report on the access to practice materials and practice tests, certain communication on computer adaptive testing (both in VA and College Board), and the role of online tools for STREAM (STEM) with the Accuplacer. Certainly, there may be additional information needed as in a pandemic, and it is the start of the 2021 year.

Pearson: (VA's close to 40 million contract).

Over a week ago, I saw this note from Pearson (PHSchool.com). This website had slightly older curriculum materials, practice tests, and other areas for CORE subjects, World Languages, and other Content Areas. Pearson is claiming that the decision to retire the site was an "Adobe Item". The reports indicate that Pearson sold this site to SAVVAS. SAVVAS is interested in NOW charging for curriculum content. While charging for perhaps certain current educational materials is FAIR, I find it unconscionable that Pearson, in its business deal with SAVVAS, chose NOT to support continuing a FREE accessible website. It seems that certain businesses can not handle some FREE accessible materials for students. This is NOT the only example. Just a few years ago, key people within Fairfax determined that having six FREE online Big Ideas books on the instructional page for Fairfax was NOT needed Whoa. ([PHSchool.com Retirement Notice - Savvas Learning Company](#)). Here is the news about Pearson's deal with Savvas, [Finally: Pearson Sells Its US K-12 Courseware Business—for \\$250 Million.](#) https://www.edsurge.com/news/2019-02-18-finally-pearson-sells-its-us-k-12-courseware-businesson* | [EdSurge News](#)

PHSchool.com Retirement Notice

Due to Adobe's decision to stop supporting and updating Flash® in 2020, browsers such as Chrome, Safari, Edge, Internet Explorer and Firefox will discontinue support for Flash-based content. As a result, this site has been retired. If you have additional questions use [this contact link](#) to find either your sales rep or the technical support form. www.savvas.com/index.cfm?locator=PS3g2v

In addition, at this moment, there are TWO softwares (within Fairfax) that can run SOL materials, TestNav8 and Horizon Northrup-Grumman (as well as possibly other softwares during pandemic. In other counties it is PowerTest and TestNav8.

It is my opinion that VA does NOT need TestNav8 and its close to \$40 million contract. Furthermore, I find it very concerning that many people have not clearly communicated WHAT is computer adaptive testing and HOW students can do this with ALL online tools.

Yesterday, Vice President Elect Kamala Harris shared some of her stories about science, her mom-scientist, and the scientific method. She shared the importance of science; in addition, when the science does not provide certain results, it is time to try again

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mL5Plt1jm18>)

Of forming a hypothesis, and recognizing that it's not a failure to reevaluate that hypothesis when the facts don't add up (Vice President Elect Kamala Harris, January 16th, 2021 in Wilmington, Delaware, announcing White House Science Team) (<https://buildbackbetter.gov/speeches/remarks-announcing-key-science-advisors-as-prepared-for-delivery-by-vice-president-elect-kamala-harris-in-wilmington-delaware/>).

In technology, I see this as connected to the back button. Students deserve the back button. Furthermore, in a 2004 report Vantage Learning CLEARLY states that this is a tool, Dynamically Optimized Testing (DOT) which can allow students to check their work and maintain the computer adaptive experience. Other programs provide all online tools within sections via a certain computer algorithm (ie Smarter Balanced). As there have been multiple reports in VA sharing the Computer Adaptive Testing REQUIRED the removal of the back button, I feel that it is imperative that everyone, VA public, VA students, STREAM (STEM) based students, students taking College Board materials DESERVE to know this.

It is ALSO NOTED that Vantage learning has had or continues to have contracts with Virginia as well as the College Board for the Accuplacer. The Accuplacer is a key admissions placement for entrance into many programs, including many STREAM/STEM based programs. At present, the Accuplacer does NOT allow students to go back and check work on the practice. I feel that BOTH THE Accuplacer practice and actual test should allow ALL students to go back and check work in ALL the key content areas.

In my opinion, it is with great sadness that I think there are a group of adults who do NOT support students checking their work. It's spiritual. We all need time. Students deserve all online tools and the ability to check work.

Sincerely,

Ms. Carolyn Murphy

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January 18, 2021

Dear Members of the Board of Education and Other Groups:

There is another update in regards to computer adaptive testing.

The memo from 2016 clearly states that computer adaptive testing requires the removal of the back button; however, the 2004 report from Vantage Learning shares that there is a Digitally Optimal Tool (DOT) which allows students to go back and check work, while maintaining the CAT experience.

I decided to speak to Vantage Learning today. There is an update. This person has shared that Vantage works with Virginia now on APT-VA for placement into community colleges and running diagnostic tests. This person has shared that the Diagnostics allow for students to go back and check their work; however, the placement for community colleges do NOT.

I wanted to GET THIS SENT RIGHT AWAY. I did want to share that two people hung up on me today, ahahahhaha. I believe in technology which reflects equity, diversity, and access for ALL students to achieve at all level of education: pre-K, K-12, community/technical colleges, colleges, universities, and other areas.

Sincerely,

Ms. Carolyn Murphy

Bibliography

https://www.doe.virginia.gov/news/news_releases/2016/04_apr27.pdf

www.vantage.com/pdfs/vlp.pdf

[Adaptive Learning Platform™ | Vantage Learning](#)

[VPTHandbook.pdf \(viriniawestern.edu\)](#)

I needed to also share this link,

<http://www.mccanntesting.com/products-services/college-success-placement-test/>.

For Immediate Release: April 27, 2016

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

Computer Adaptive Technology Means Shorter Math Tests for Students

RICHMOND, Va. — The expansion of computer adaptive testing will result in approximately 380,000 Virginia elementary and middle school students taking shorter Standards of Learning (SOL) mathematics tests this spring. For example, the computer-adaptive version of the online test third graders are taking has 32 items, 18 fewer than the 50-item tests grade-3 students took last year.

The computer-adaptive versions of the grade-7 and grade-8 math tests — also new this year — each have 53 items, seven fewer than the 60 questions on the traditional versions of the tests. Computer adaptive SOL testing was first introduced during 2014-2015, with the debut of a 53-item computer-adaptive version of the sixth-grade math test.

“Computer adaptive testing can help reduce stress and frustration for students, teachers and parents,” Governor Terry McAuliffe said. “No student should spend hours struggling through a standardized test.”

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. The General Assembly has approved requests from the governor totaling \$7.2 million to convert all math and reading SOL tests in grades 3-8 to the computer adaptive format by fall 2017.

“When this change is fully implemented, elementary and middle school students will experience significant reductions in test-taking times and most will complete their math and reading SOLs in less than two hours,” Secretary of Education Anne Holton said.

“Computer adaptive testing is a win-win: Students benefit from a customized assessment with fewer test items, while schools and the commonwealth get a more precise measurement of content mastery and growth, especially for high performing students,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples said. “Also, the new federal Every Student Succeeds Act expressly permits the use of computer adaptive testing as part of state accountability systems.”

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. Because student responses on a computer adaptive test are scored in the sequence in which they are presented, students are not able to skip items or return to previous answers. All students must answer the same number of items to complete a test.

Computer adaptive testing is a scientifically validated and widely used assessment format. The Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test, which Virginia students have been taking since 2002, is administered in a computer adaptive format. In addition, computer adaptive testing is used by professional boards, the military and other organizations.

January 19, 2020

Dear Member of the Board of Education:

RE: Computer Adaptive Testing, Placement Tests-Untimed, SOL-CAT, Grading on Computer Adaptive Tests, College Placement

There is some inconsistent information about computer adaptive testing which wanted to bring to your attention.

DIAGNOSTICS

A VA press release clearly states that the SOL CAT Math is modelled on the ARDT. These tests do NOT allow the back button.

Yesterday, I learned that Vantage Learning works with Virginia. (There is also a new contact too). This person just shared that the community college diagnostic tests HAVE the back button.

GRADING:

In a previous memo, a person from Virginia Assessment has shared that the reason a student can NOT go back to check work is that the "question is already graded" (VA Assessment, Memo on Public Record).

The information on the website of McCann clearly states that the test is graded at the END, not at the beginning. While these have to do with computer adaptive college placement tests, I will also get additional information for you for the VPT.

Immediate Scoring

Upon test completion, College Success delivers immediate online test results, allowing for multiple, real-time opportunities to make informed decisions.

(<http://www.mccanntesting.com/products-services/placement-testing/>)

UNTIMED TESTS:

The Virginia SOL and the VPT are untimed tests. (While I will cover this in a separate memo, the Accuplacer is untimed as well.)

If the students do NOT have the back button, it is my belief that this test goes from being untimed to timed. In addition, there are clear RULES that allow students to have the whole day.

Furthermore, it is VERY clear from both the Vantage Learning Memo in 2004 that students can have the back button via a DOT. In addition, Pearson has clearly stated that there can be the back button within sections. Finally, the Smarter Balanced allows a whole series of online tools, including the back button.

Thank you for your time. All of these citations have been put in either a previous memo as well as Public Record. If necessary, I can send any again. Students deserve all online tools.

Sincerely,

Ms. Carolyn Murphy

Bibliography

[Adaptive Learning Platform™ | Vantage Learning](https://www.vantagelearning.com/products/alp/) <https://www.vantagelearning.com/products/alp/>

(<http://www.mccanntesting.com/products-services/placement-testing/>

Ever since I was in first grade, I took multiple standardized tests throughout the school year. But in fifth grade, my views on these tests started to change. My hands started sweating and my body went cold during every test I took. But that reached the limit when I was taking the reading SOLs in fifth grade and locked myself in the bathroom stall and started to cry. I was afraid that I would be considered a failure if I didn't get a good grade, and from that moment on I didn't care if I mastered the topic; I cared that I come home with all A's in all my classes. I fear that many of my peers feel the same way and that this mindset does a lot more harm than good. Standardized tests have been around for a long time, but it's clear that this should not decide a student's final grade.

Firstly, standardized testing causes stress and anxiety, especially among Middle and High Schoolers. Some students are able to manage high-stress levels but others cannot. Neurological studies show that high-stress levels cause damage mentally and physically. When your brain becomes overwhelmed by high-stress levels, this can deteriorate academic performance. As a result, some are forced to cheat to get good grades and some even take performance drugs. Especially in high school, solely these tests decide placements in prestigious colleges even though there is so much more that should be considered. Even some teachers are very anxious and stressed because their job may depend on test results because they need to teach well in order to stay teaching. Stress and anxiety can cause neurological problems for the rest of one's life.

Furthermore, standardized tests do not provide an equal learning environment. For example, some wealthy children have money for various tutors to teach them the topic better than some others. Standardized tests treat us all as identical; when we are not. Each student has a preferred style of learning, not just one the same way. Each student's traits should be embraced and taken into consideration when testing on mastery of a topic. Tests should be created to bring out the best in students, not to try to make them fail. When a child comes home with their report card, most of those grades are weighed from tests and quizzes. These grades don't show the full spectrum of knowledge that a child is capable of. Instead, it is limiting the creativity and difference each student has by testing students using standardized tests.

In addition, standardized tests ask a series of questions that require only memorization, which is very different from learning and fully understanding the topic. Ever since standardized testing was implemented in the public school system, some teachers only care about good test grades rather than students actually learning the topic because of the school's rating and their jobs. In fact, some-and even most students care about only their grade, not if they actually learn the topic. Studies show from Harvard University that graduates were asked why it is colder in the winter and hotter in the summer. Most of them got the answer wrong, yet they graduated from Harvard! They were obviously good test-takers, but they didn't understand the topic enough to explain. Adding on, most topics in standardized tests have no use in the future life, so why are they stressing out students now?

Clearly, standardized tests do more harm than good. This is shown through workload on students, a not provided learning environment, and too much emphasis on these close-to-useless tests. On top of that, we are faced with a dangerous pandemic that has taken many lives and forced us, students, to move to online school. We are not getting nearly as much information as we do when we are in person, and yet, we are still forced to take standardized tests. As a good student and as a good person, I am asking, why take impractical tests when there are so many other ways to test a student's intellectual ability? With thought, Nadia Lach-hab

Dear Board of Education,

My name is Julissa Martinez and I would like to express my feelings and thoughts regarding school and my opinion on things. Firstly I would like to address my appreciation for everything you do and I just want to inform you before I start explaining my feelings so it doesn't seem as if I'm being rude and/or disrespectful. Alright now things regarding school work. I believe that because of COVID the schools think we have more time and leisure so they would give more work. I understand that it's to teach us how to do what we are learning but some classes have a lot more work than the other. When assignment are due at 12am and we are trying to finish this assignment after another back to back it stresses us out (It's also a proven fact that half of all teens 45% say that school makes them stressed which causes anxiety then leads to depression) and makes us uninterested in wanting to do it. The hours of sleep we usually need is about 8 hours and when an assignment is due at 12am we will spend so much time trying to do it then when we finish it we go to the next assignment that is due tomorrow because we don't want it to be late and we lose more points each day is late then we become stressed because we know we are going to receive more work the next day. It feels like they forget as if we have lives to live and a childhood to enjoy but it's hard for us to do that because we are trying to get perfect grades and finish work on time which is hard for us. The things we are learning in school right now I think should be changed. I think we should be learning real life skills such as how to do our taxes, how to fill out a resume, how to file for insurance, how to set up a bank account, how to buy an apartment or house, how to raise your credit score, Bills, how to file for a credit or debit card, things about debt, interest, mortgages, a basic understanding of life like how to cook and take care of yourself or home maintenance, how to sell an idea or entrepreneurship, explain what a stimulus check is and how to be eligible for it. These are the things we really need that we are not getting taught and I'm sure we will learn it in high school but I think it would be better to teach us young so we have a feel and better understanding for it so we don't accidentally commit tax fraud or anything worse. Math I believe that we need in life the most, but English...well I think the only thing we should learn is grammar and punctuation and make sure what we write is able to be understood. Civics and Economics is a useful subject and so is learning a foreign language which should also be a main class because knowing different languages is a great benefit in my opinion. History should be changed. We need to be learning about what's happening now not what happened almost a hundred years ago because school is always telling us to look forward to the future or think and worry about the future because we are stuck sitting in class learning about what happened before we were even born. Reading is a mixed opinion thing but I think it's something we should have because reading is beneficial for the brain and it is entertaining and fun. My sister Allyson is learning about the history of Virginia and I feel that she should be learning something more useful for example; Proper manners, how to be dependent, how to have good social skills, How to love their selves and people for who they are and not to judge or anything along those lines, and how to avoid/deal with peer pressure or how to properly deal with and handle their emotions. The only purpose I think history has should be if someone from another country wants to live in the U.S. and need to learn about the U.S. for the Citizenship test. The issue I have with school now also is that because everyone is always on their laptops or phones doing work there are often errors with work and such things because it isn't only me that has a problem where I do my work and submit it and I find out a while later that I never did it and it's missing. All my friends and family members have the same issue and the teachers assume that we just didn't do it because we don't care. The thing is we really do care because if we didn't we wouldn't continue to do the work over and over again we wouldn't continue to try and care about our grades and if I didn't care I wouldn't be writing this to you. If we do these things

that will truly benefit us we would be out of school faster and we would be more successful in the future. Some famous millionaires such as Mark Zuckerberg, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, and Albert Einstein were school drop outs. When people apply for a job they think that because they have a degree the companies will care. Some jobs don't because they want creativity and passion in a worker and school deprives us and restricts us from our creative side because they want us to be perfect and obedient. A school and prison have fairly similar morals like; Walk in lines, Restricted individual autonomy, Don't speak unless you are told to or if you ask for permission, and set times for walking, eating, etcetera. There really needs to be change in some way or somehow because it's saddening that this isn't brought to the light and it seems like no one discusses or cares about it. So I ask please read this and please discuss on this because it's a topic worth a discussion.

Thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Julissa Martinez from Passage Middle School.

Good afternoon,

My name is Andrew Dumont and I am a resident of Fairfax County, Virginia. I am emailing you today to convey my feelings and expectations pertaining to in-person versus virtual instruction for the upcoming 2021-2022 academic year.

By way of background, I have a four-year-old daughter who will turn five in early June, and therefore will be starting kindergarten this fall.

It is my hope and expectation that Fairfax County Public Schools be open for full-time, in-person instruction this fall. It is my belief that we are paying a steep cost by keeping children at home, and that the risks of bringing children into the classroom for in-person instructions are far outweighed by the benefits.

I believe they do because all of the evidence I have seen to-date indicate that schools present no added risk with respect to increasing the rate of transmission in the community, and that many communities and countries around the US and the world have been able to continue providing in-person instruction without materially increasing their infection rates above those of communities that have not continued in-person instruction. This is consistent with my own experience, whereby my daughter has been back in an in-person, full-time daycare setting with many other students, teachers, and administrators since July 2020, and there has not been a single recorded case of COVID at the school, let alone a case of transmission linked back to the school.

However, other evidence I have seen to-date does indicate that our children are experiencing significant social, emotional, and academic trauma by being forced into virtual rather than in-person instruction. Again, this is very consistent with my own experience, whereby our daughter exhibited significant alterations in her behavior in the latter part of the initial lockdown from March through June 2020. However, she immediately reverted back to her previous, sunny disposition within a week of returning to a full-time, in-person daycare setting.

Given the relative costs and benefits, I think we are doing our children an incredible disservice by forcing them to continue with virtual instruction, and are doing so for almost literally no benefit whatsoever.

I for one will not stand by and allow my daughter to be forced into virtual instruction this fall, and will be submitting applications to various private schools as a back-up option should FCPS make the unfortunate and unnecessary decision not to resume full-time, in-person instruction this upcoming academic year. I feel fortunate to have the flexibility to make this decision, and feel saddened that my neighbors without the means to do so face the greatest risk of having to face this significant negative situation, which is and will continue to affect their ability to work.

Such a decision will also upset me in that I moved to Fairfax in part because of the excellent quality of our local schools: a quality that is being significantly undercut by the unnecessary decision to continue with virtual instruction. Should I no longer be able to benefit from those schools given this decision, I will have no choice but to wonder why I should continue paying such steep state and local income, sales, and property taxes, forcing me to consider both moving

out of the area, or supporting candidates for public office who propose drastically reducing those taxes commensurate with the reduced value of our local public schools.

Being a long-time believer in public schools, and the benefit and necessity of strong state and local governments, this is not a decision that I want to make, but if I am forced to absorb the cost of private education for my daughter to make up for the poor decisions of our public officials, I will have no choice but to seek to save at least some of that investment by reducing my support of our state and local government through perpetually and drastically lower tax rates.

I hope that you will confer with our local government leaders and put significant pressure on them, for example by only making various funding resources available to them contingent on their reopening in the fall. It is my hope that your leadership on this issue could convince them to follow the lead of other jurisdictions around the country and the world that have successfully reopened schools for full-time, in-person instructions for children. Doing so vocally and publicly would convince me that I can continue to support you and your vision for our state and my community. To be crystal clear: this will be the only factor I consider when next voting for state elected officials.

Sincerely,

Andrew Dumont
2435 Jackson Pkwy
Vienna, VA 22180
Andrew.m.dumont8@gmail.com

Good morning. I write this letter as a mother, owner of a counseling practice, a master's degree recipient and holder of my own share of learning disabilities. .

What is happening with our children is really scary from a mental health perspective. I am a trainer to child/adolescent counseling therapists up and down the east coast in my field and am unsure how to teach colleagues how to foresee what it will be like for our children to integrate back into society.

Here's the truth of it all. Some of our children's environments have love, financial stability and a parent at home to help with studies and some have drugs, violence, men in and out of the home etc.

As educators, you know exactly what I am talking about. I know you do. And, I imagine you are living your own set of horrors as you have to navigate this tricky life of teaching all the while your family is struggling somewhere in there too...

I need to make this personal for a minute. My 14 year old son, Hayden has my academic struggles, an IEP but he also has intelligence and a thirst for knowledge. Online school has snatched his soul. It's not how his brain works and he is STRUGGLING.

We can't do it anymore. It's too much. Hayden is the guy who will seek out hours and hours of science videos or podcasts (and still does) and just drink in the knowledge. But now, we spend hundreds of dollars on tutoring, spend a tremendous amount of time in homework and his grades are in no way reflecting any of it. We are telling him he just needs to pass, but he feels like a failure and he feels inadequate and it's really hard to watch.

Most nights it's 2 or 3am until he finally falls asleep. Even with melatonin and calming herbs he is still SO anxious about school the next day. I would be too if I felt inadequate all day long, and then know the day doesn't end. Its starts all over again with homework. We went through spells last quarter where we just couldn't make him do the homework. It cost him and us too much.

I think about plumbers and restaurant employees, dentists and florists who all get to go home and JUST BE. The work day ends and everyone is grateful. My work day ends and Hayden is still at it...for hours and for what? Before we spent hundreds on a tutor, his time earned him Ds and Fs. No more. We're finished.

I have CC'ed county and statewide educating officials to this because if it is costing my son (and countless others) this much and we are a family of love, support and financial stability AND a mental health expert within the family's structure and we can hardly keep our head above water, you can be sure we have a severe and intense crisis on our hands...everywhere.

Our kids need a break. They need their work day to end when most adult's work day ends. And quite frankly, this might allow a teacher's work day to end at a more reasonable hour as well. We see you teachers and are grateful for the calls and texts from home and extra 1:1 attention, but you have lives and families too! It's too much. I know you know.

I am requesting that Hayden be 100% exempt from homework without penalty. I would love to see this happen across the board, but will start with my son. He can't do it. We can't do it and we are watching our son slip. 100% exempt.

Thanks for your attention and help with this matter, for my child and others.

Gabrielle Anderson



Teaching. Learning. Leading.

Good morning. I am Dr. James J. Fedderman, a choral music teacher in Accomack County and President of the Virginia Education Association, the largest union for educators in the Commonwealth. With over 40,000 members—including teachers, school support professionals, and aspiring educators—VEA works to realize our vision of a great public school for every child in the Commonwealth.

Please accept this correspondence as submission of written public testimony on the updated Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers in Virginia as presented on the VBOE's Business Agenda for January 28, 2021.

The VEA believes that the inclusion of language surrounding **Performance Standard 6: Culturally Responsive Teaching and Equitable Practices**, is appropriate and in line with our ever-changing Commonwealth. Additionally, we appreciate the opportunity to continue to work collaboratively with VDOE on this important addition to the evaluation criteria and ensure that the members of VEA have their voices and concerns heard.

Please note that while so much has been done up to this point, the real work will take place within our local school divisions by way of training and educating those that will be actual users of the Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria. To that point, VEA implores the Virginia Department of Education to task local school divisions to create a space for work on culturally responsive teaching to "live" within their respected school divisions. We must remember that as it is unfair to a student to evaluate them on something that has not been taught to them, the same is true to our teachers and leaders. VEA recommends that there be focused training from VDOE that utilizes authentic examples and non-examples of the proposed standard.

Thank you for your time, and, as always, I, along with everyone at the VEA, look forward to our continued work together to provide a great public school for every child.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James J. Fedderman', written over a printed name and title.

Dr. James J. Fedderman, President
Virginia Education Association



Teaching. Learning. Leading.

Greetings Virginia Board of Education, I am Carol Bauer, an elementary classroom teacher in York County. I also serve as the Vice President of the Virginia Education Association, the largest union for educators in the Commonwealth. With over 40,000 members—including teachers, school support professionals, and aspiring educators—VEA works to realize our vision of a great public school for every child in the Commonwealth.

This past weekend, the VEA Board of Directors adopted the Black Lives Matters in Schools Resolution joining the national call to recognize February 1st to February 5th as “Black Lives Matter at School Week” to begin February’s Black History Month. We call on the Virginia BOE to join us in supporting all of Virginia’s students, and to spread the word to education advocates across Virginia. In June, by unanimous consent, the Virginia BOE adopted a statement supporting racial justice in education, and recognizing Black Lives Matter in Schools will further your commitment.

VEA is committed to calling out issues that disproportionately impact Black and Brown students. Our members are trained to identify local policies and practices that perpetuate inequities, and to advocate for strategies to close achievement gaps and eradicate the school-to-prison pipeline. VEA remains steadfast in efforts to recruit and retain more minority educators. VEA has led the way in advocating for fairness in teacher licensure and was very instrumental in the passage of HB 2037 in the 2019 Virginia General Assembly. We recognize that beyond recruiting and retaining minority educators there are additional barriers that affect minorities in the workforce including climate and working conditions, cultivation of community, and compensation.

The VEA Fitz Turner Commission for Human Relations and Civil Rights promotes the inclusion of culturally competent and responsive curriculum and instruction as well as recognitions which highlight the wealth of diversity within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

VEA’s Human and Civil Rights Department is committed to advancing equity in every school division and community. The department focuses on grassroots partnerships to elevate the voices of under-represented communities (e.g. educators or students of color, students with disabilities, rural students, LGBTQ students and staff, lowest-paid workers).

VEA members are strong advocates for justice—and we stand ready to work as partners with the Virginia Board of Education in the search for solutions! The resolution is also attached.

Please accept this correspondence as submission of written public input to the January 28, 2021 BOE meeting.

Sincerely,

Carol Bauer

Carol Bauer



Teaching. Learning. Leading.

VIRGINIA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

WHEREAS, the members of the Virginia Education Association stand for racial justice and human dignity for all of our students and colleagues and have made them core principles of our organization;

WHEREAS, the members of the National Education Association, at their 2019 national convention, took a position in support of the Black Lives Matter Week of Action during Black History Month, calling for “clear efforts to demonstrate support” for the ending of zero-tolerance school discipline policies, the hiring and mentoring of more Black educators, and the teaching of ethnic studies in public schools;

WHEREAS, there are too few Black educators and educators of color in proportion to the number of students of color in Virginia’s public schools;

WHEREAS, the Virginia Board of Education has approved changes to Virginia’s History and Social Science Standards of Learning to broaden our curriculum in response to recommendations made by Governor Ralph Northam’s Commission on African American History Education in the Commonwealth;

BE IT RESOLVED that the members of the Virginia Education Association join the national call for the observance of Black Lives Matter at School Week to kick off Black History Month in 2021 during the week of February 1-5;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the VEA encourages its members to wear Black Lives Matter shirts to school that week and teach lessons about the school-to-prison-pipeline, restorative justice, and Black history.

Dear Board of Education, Dr. James F. Lane, and Governor Northam,

Please be advised that I am reaching out regarding the curriculum that the state of Virginia is still requiring of our children, their parents, and teachers during a global pandemic.

We are living in unprecedented times. For many of us, our lives are forever changed. For example, I lost my Mother March 5, 2020 so I don't have the extra help established. I am college educated, I own a travel agency, and I have 18 years of experience in my field. However, my industry has been devastated. I have had a very difficult time landing any employment opportunities due to my specific niche. I am so frustrated that I have been in touch with Governor Northam's office, Senator Mark Warner, as well as Senator Bill DeSteph regarding different programs that the state of Virginia is extending to those severely impacted by this pandemic, employment opportunities, and employment resources.

The number one concern of any Virginia citizen at this point should be the health and welfare I have school-age children during a pandemic. Definitely over the state's curriculum requirements. I have an eight-year-old son who has a respiratory disease that he was born with as well as asthma. He has a 504 on record with his school. His medical condition is so serious that the school is to call 911 immediately should he stop breathing during school hours. My son's doctor, Dr. Michele Wadsworth, with CHKD Pediatric Physicians in Virginia Beach, Has denied my son the option to return to school for the 2020-2021 school year, as any subjection to Covid- 19 would most likely cause mortality for my eight-year-old. Therefore, it is my sole responsibility to ensure that his ongoing education is a priority in my household.

My son Dominic, is a very active, highly intelligent, young boy with a beautiful imagination, who is a diehard Historian. He reads at a 5th grade level and has a very broad vocabulary. Over the last few months, my child has changed. Due to the pandemic, the enormous responsibility to uphold his assignments, and continued third grade virtual education, has proven to be causing severe anxiety, angst, anger, frustration, and a breakdown in his personality traits. This is not a matter of anything less than trying to cope with life & school during a major world crisis.

I am writing to you today to share with you that my eight-year-old was so overwhelmed with how fast his third grade class is moving that he said he wishes he could just kill himself and go to heaven with his grandmother, instead of going to school. I have shared my concerns with his teacher who has a heart of an angel, yet she informed me that the state requires the curriculum to remain the same as if they were in school. Third grade is the most critical year of learning than any other. This year I can say my son has learned how to subtract multiple digits, learn to tell time, been introduced to fractions, multiplications, arrays, temperature reading, counting money and giving change, greater than v/s less than, reading maps, and is now onto equations. My only issue is that they have been in school for just FOUR months. 143 days ago to be exact. About 140 to go! His teacher is beyond phenomenal and I THANK GOD for her every single day... BUT COME ON!!!

I am not quite sure what the huge rush is to have these children basically speed learn a curriculum, have it down within 2 to 5 days, be quizzed, And then move on to something else. The very specific situation that led to today's breakdown was an equation that was 184-56

being less or greater than $56 \div 7$. When my smart son, realize that he did not remember how to do this subtraction problem because they moved on from that weeks ago, his eyes whaled up with tears, and he said he would rather die and go be with my Mother, than go to school.

Dr. Lane, I am so glad you are gainfully employed, 🙌📱 Great for you!! However, last month reported 209,498 unemployed Virginians and MANY of us have school aged children. We face for many more frustrations with virtual learning than we care to share with teachers, principals, or guidance counselors. Mommy needs to be looking for a JOB, not sitting next to my son for four hours a day helping him get through each and every question or problem because he otherwise would be lost in the sauce, and fail.

STOP ● I have to speak up because you guys probably go home and pat yourself on the back every night and say nobody's complained today, the SOL test results and quizzes all look like everyone is doing great and being successful at virtual learning.

But at who's expense? That little boy who is told if he doesn't hurry up and finish his homework he's going to sit at the kitchen table until it's done. And he doesn't finish until 730 or 8 o'clock at night just before he turns in for bed. He wakes up the next morning and now that he's mastered how to do $24-16$, they are now moving onto 56 divided by $7!!!$

I will say what the teachers, my parental peer groups, and maybe even some of these educators want to say and that is that this is some **BULLSHIT!!!**

If you cannot put yourself in my shoes, and understand that I need to be actively seeking employment between 8 AM and 3 PM versus sitting there listening to my son's teacher struggle to make sure that every student who is hopped on her train that day stays on track... You are sadly mistaken.

My biggest concern is the long-term effects of your curriculums requirements. These children that are be rushed along to learn one thing and then the next thing and then move on to something else, are going to be entering into the school setting again, at some point. Not one of you are going to be able to handle the amount of problems that these children are going to have. Be it an introvert, an extra hyper child who is just happy to be out of his home, someone who has been emotionally, or even physically abused during this pandemic because not all parents can handle the stress load. All due to the fact that they are not absorbing at the capacity of educational information that you are shoving into their barely formed brains.

Focus now

A third grader's attention span ranges from eight to 30 minutes, with boys usually having shorter spans than girls. To strengthen concentration, encourage activities like meditation and attention and strategy games, like checkers and chess. Emphasize that doing well in school and other mind-intense activities depends on paying attention, and reward your child for hard work. Also limit screen time of TV, video games, consoles, smartphones, and computers. Studies indicate that screens overstimulate developing neurology, resulting in abbreviated attention. Why? Some

researchers believe TV viewing wastefully releases high quantities of the neurotransmitter dopamine, a key regulator of focus.

In kindergarten and first grade, parents were scolded if their child had too much screen time. Now that it is necessary, Virginia Department of education is turning a blind eye to the side effects of too much Chromebook time. How convenient.

I ask that you all get together and sit around the round table, call me on the phone if you want to, put a camera in my house and watch what it's like a day in a life of being a virtual mom, he being a virtual student, and I guarantee you that you will lift these requirements. The norm for my family has become frustration, anger, anxiety, and as of today, an eight-year-old little boy with so much life in him, who would rather die than do the work that you all have mandated as a requirement during a global pandemic. It's TOO much, TOO fast!!!

I am very interested to know, as I asked Dr. Aarons Spence, who in the hell wrote out the curriculum? Who has a PhD in education, and thought the children with profound struggles at home, even if they are their parents struggles, could meet these requirements, and then add at an accelerated pace? I would like to know what statistics they based their success rates off of, being that none of us have ever lived through a pandemic. I am 44 years old, and my parents did not live through a pandemic. I know that this curriculum mandate is as selfish as it is stupid. If one Virginia student kills themselves because they feel like they are not learning, then you failed.

If you prioritize 2x2 over a child's emotional well-being, please quit your job immediately. Again, you all cannot be any more out of touch than what a household looks like in 2021 with kids who are immune compromised, option two, and would die if they were vaccinated and something went wrong. The pressure is intense!

Seriously go home and ask yourself if this is what you signed up for? My child has not ever been and will never be up for political bargaining. I know that I have other options, I could homeschool him myself. The only reason I have not yet, is because I want him to have teachers that he remembers, a school that he is a part of in our community, and has the ability to make friends his age that are also in our community, that share the same like abilities. So I have explored my options, now it's time to call an emergency meeting amongst you all and realize that every cause (let's keep them learning) has an effect, (but at what cost?)

It would make absolutely no sense for me to contact his teacher again, as she stated that's the pace that she has to teach at. I know I won't get anywhere with the principal, because she answers to a higher level. I am bringing my concerns right to the decision makers and I am anxiously awaiting to see what your response is. I'm interested in knowing if a Mother's Voice really matters.

Kindly,

Michelle McMahan