

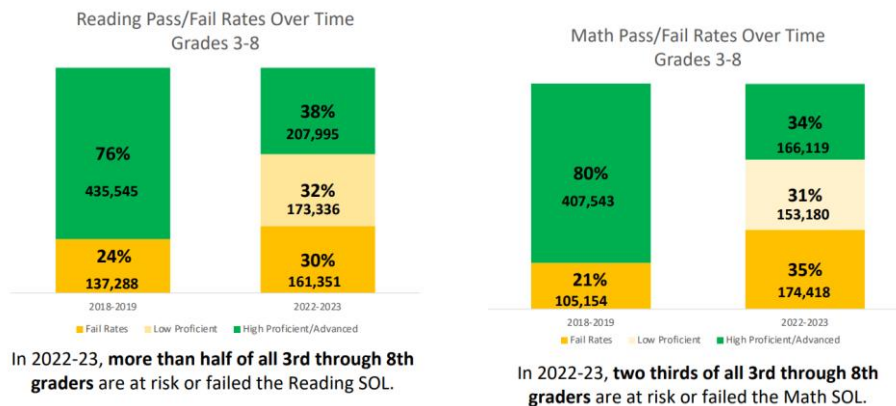


Dear Virginia Families,

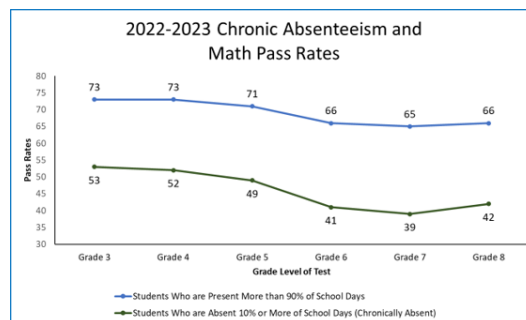
As a caregiver and your child’s first teacher, you are the most important partner and champion for your child’s success in school and life. That’s why Virginia education leaders are “ALL In” and here to **entrust parents as partners to guide our children through a successful school year**. Let’s get started!

Our school leaders and teachers have been hard at work preparing for this new school year. Nothing is more important to us than setting your student up for success and we are grateful for all you have done over the summer to keep students learning and feeling optimistic for this school year. Together, we are making progress in our academic recovery efforts, but we are aware that many of our students are still struggling with missed concepts and instruction suffered during the pandemic, in addition to the social and emotional impact of COVID. **We want to partner with you in ensuring that you have all the information you need to be your child’s best advocate and support school efforts to fill any learning gaps during this upcoming school year.**

First, we need to understand our state data. We saw the first sign of academic trouble with **reading** in the spring of 2019 when the average percentage of students passing their **reading SOL tests** decreased by 5 points. Virginia’s students started to recover in 2021-2022 but the data from 2022-2023 shows that **reading performance stayed almost the same**. Last school year the average **pass rates in math continued to be below pre-pandemic numbers**. Over the past two years, students have improved, but not as much as they have in reading.



The double bars (//) show us when most students didn’t take an SOL due to the pandemic during the 2019-2020 school year. Something else we see is the **average chronic absenteeism rates have nearly doubled** across the Commonwealth. “Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, **chronic absence** has grown into a national crisis,” according to the non-profit initiative, [Attendance Works](#). Chronic absenteeism is defined by missing 10% of enrolled days in a school year. **This is just 18 days a year or 2 days a month**. During the 2022-23 school year, **chronically absent students in Virginia were behind their peers by 18% in reading and 25% in math**.



Simply put, students who attended regularly performed better. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) recognizes that [Attendance Matters](#) and it is clear in our data that we must focus on ensuring students attend school daily. To do this, **everyone must commit to the following:**

- ★ We must communicate clearly that attendance matters, for every child, every day.
- ★ We must support our families with resources that reduce challenges for daily attendance such as expanding breakfast after the bell programs in schools to ensure every child starts their day with a healthy meal, reducing transportation barriers and increasing support for mental health.
- ★ We must ensure every child has at least one trusted adult at school.
- ★ We must serve as partners with our teachers.
- ★ We must monitor and celebrate individual and group successes.

When it comes to you and your family, you deserve to have all the information available to ensure that your child is on track and prepared to meet the learning expectations for their grade. Below are things to do before you sit at the table with teachers to co-create the best plan for your child.

- Receive and review the individualized score reports for your child. Specifically, the *Student Detail by Question Report or SDBQ Report*. **These documents are unique to your student and will give you specific information on where they are excelling and where they might need additional support according to tests, they took last year.**

If you do not have these reports, reach out to your school for help. In some school districts this information is sent home with the final report card.

- Take a moment to read these score reports.
 - If these reports are new to you, start here:
 - [Score Reports at a Glance \(PDF, 1 pg.\)](#)
 - If you want a deeper dive into the reports, we've got you covered with these resources:
 - [The Overview of the SDBQ Report](#) (PDF, 4 pages)
 - [VDOE Standards of Learning \(SOL\) SDBQ Overview](#) YouTube video (5 minutes)
- Use these questions to start a conversation with your child's teachers about their strengths and areas of growth for this year. *The key is to be an active partner with them for the entire year even if things seem to be going well.* Teachers are the best source of ongoing feedback as well as opportunities for individual support as needed.
 - [The scores are in! Now what? Guiding questions for caregivers and parents \(PDF, 1 pg.\)](#)
- VDOE also has a wealth of [Parent & Caregiver Resources](#) by subject that may be helpful in supporting your students' learning.

Let's use this time to **set attendance goals and routines** to keep your child optimistic about this year. Here are some easy ways to talk about school to help you get started and stay on track!

- ★ If your child was absent a lot last year, take time to reflect on what prevented them from going to school every day and plan now to ask for help from your child's school if challenges remain.
- ★ Celebrate a day at school! Keep it simple and focus on one day at a time, and don't forget to give yourself a high five for supporting excellent attendance!
 - Lean on family, friends, neighbors, community members to encourage and affirm attendance goals. A text message from a beloved family member first thing in the morning can be a powerful boost to start the day!
- ★ Read with your student or talk with them about what they are reading.
- ★ Involve your student in the many ways that mathematics is used every day.
 - For example, in cooking, determining the cost of items when a discount is applied, and in estimating the cost of food on a grocery list are practical ways to talk to your child about their math skills.
- ★ Ask them about what makes them feel *excited, included, or prepared for hard work* at school. Give them "wait time" to think before you ask them again or begin speaking for them; this will help your child open up about school and allow you to celebrate what's working even when things are hard.
 - If the answer is "I don't know" or "nothing" don't give up!
 - Teenagers are especially prone to giving these quick answers, but we know they have a lot to say! Ask them to take a deep breath (you too) and give them another chance to think. It's okay to say, "Please let me know when you are ready to share, and I'll be ready to listen. How you feel about school is important."

Our educators are saving you a seat at the table, and we invite you to reach out to the new Office of Parental Engagement with the Virginia Department of Education if we can help you get started. Let's get stick together and be, "ALL In" for Virginia's students!