



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

May 1, 2015

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Student Participation in Virginia Standards of Learning Assessments

The purpose of this memo is to update details provided in [Superintendent's Memo No. 142-13](#), "Student Participation in Virginia Standards of Learning Assessments" dated May 24, 2013. The policy regarding student participation in Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments has not changed; however, the Testing Status code, Testing Status 5, referenced in the original memo has changed to Testing Status 51 as reflected in the following updated memo.

As a result of inquiries from school divisions and parents regarding student participation in Virginia SOL assessments, the following information is being provided as a review of existing Virginia Board of Education regulations and associated assessment procedures.

All students enrolled in Virginia public schools are expected to take the applicable state tests. The *Virginia Board of Education Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, available online at www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/accreditation/soa.doc, state:

"In kindergarten through eighth grade, where the administration of Virginia assessment program tests are required by the Board of Education, each student shall be expected to take the tests" and "each student in middle and secondary schools shall take all applicable end-of-course SOL tests following course instruction" (p. 9).

The regulations do not provide for what is sometimes referred to as an "opt out policy" for students regarding the Virginia assessments. If, however, parents refuse to have their student participate in one or more of the required Virginia assessments, the following procedures should be followed within the school division:

- The parents should be informed that their student's score report will reflect a score of "0" for any test that is refused.
- The school is strongly encouraged to request a written statement from parents indicating the specific test(s) the parents refuse to have their student complete. The document should be maintained in the student's file as a record of the decision.
- To account for the student, a test record for the refused test(s) is to be submitted for scoring with a Testing Status 51 coded to indicate the parent refusal.

In situations where a student's test attempt is coded with a Testing Status 51, the "0" score on the test is included in the school and division pass rates calculated for the purpose of state accountability and for performance in federal accountability. Because the student receives a "0" score for the refused test, the school and division participation rates for federal accountability are not affected.

If a parent or student refuses an opportunity to retake an end-of-course SOL test that the student previously failed, the procedures for handling this situation would be somewhat different. No test record would be submitted because the student was already accounted for by the initial end-of-course test attempt. The parent and student should be made aware, however, of any potential impact that not earning a verified credit may have on the student's attempt to graduate or meet specific diploma requirements.

If you have questions regarding this information, please contact the student assessment staff at student_assessment@doe.virginia.gov or (804) 225-2102.

SRS/SLR/cd