



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

October 17, 2014

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Changes to the Standards of Learning Assessment Program

The Virginia Department of Education is implementing numerous changes to the state assessment program in the 2014-2015 school year. Some changes are enhancements to the assessment program; others represent cost-saving measures that became necessary due to funding constraints.

The changes being implemented will vary among the different test administrations and are detailed below:

- **Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) for Grade 6 Mathematics Standards of Learning(SOL):** As stated in [Superintendent's Memo No. 189-14](#), the Department's initial plans were to implement CAT for grades 6, 7, and 8 mathematics in fall 2014 and grades 3, 4, and 5 mathematics in spring 2015. Due to funding constraints, however, only grade 6 mathematics will be administered in a CAT format beginning in fall 2014. Additional tests will be converted to the CAT format as funding becomes available.
- **New SOL Score Reports in Reading, Mathematics, Science, and History:** Newly designed SOL score reports will be introduced for SOL tests administered in the content areas of reading, mathematics, science, and history beginning in fall 2014. The new SOL Student Score Reports will be presented in an easier-to-read format for school personnel and parents. Training regarding these new SOL score reports will be provided to division directors of testing in fall 2014.
- **Fall and Spring SOL Writing Test Administrations Combined:** Previously, the fall and spring SOL writing test administrations have been managed as two separate test administrations in the assessment management system. Beginning in 2014-2015, the fall and spring writing tests will instead be managed as one test administration, the 2014-2015 SOL Writing Test Administration, in the assessment management system. School and division staff will experience differences when managing the combined test administration; however, the changes will be transparent to students and will have no impact on SOL writing test dates. Individual student score reports will be available to schools within the Web-based assessment management system after the fall writing test is administered. School divisions may print reports from this system if they choose. In addition, school divisions will have the option to receive no-cost, printed copies of fall *and* spring writing score reports after the spring writing tests have been reported.
- **Initial Shipments of SOL Test Materials Discontinued for the Fall and Summer Test Administrations:** In the past, each Division Director of Testing (DDOT) has provided estimated counts of the number of students taking online and paper/pencil tests several weeks prior to the start of a test administration. These data were used to project the amount of test materials (e.g., test booklets, examiner's manuals, formula sheets) to be automatically shipped to each division for use. Beginning in fall 2014, initial

shipments will no longer be estimated and delivered for the fall and summer test administrations. Rather, each DDOT will place orders via the assessment management system in the fall and summer for the exact amount of test materials needed and these materials will be shipped via overnight carrier to the DDOT. This change is feasible given the limited number of paper/pencil tests being administered and will result in reduced program costs and less waste. No changes will be implemented for the spring test administrations at this time. DDOTs will continue to provide estimated counts of students who will take online and paper/pencil tests in the spring and these estimates will be used to project materials that will automatically be shipped to school divisions.

- **Summary of SOL Test Results Discontinued in Summer and Fall Test Administrations:** SOL test results from fall, spring, and summer test administrations have previously been summarized and reported to school divisions in the form of printable summary reports and summary data files. Beginning in fall 2014, summary reports and summary data files will only be prepared for the spring non-writing test administration and the combined fall/spring writing test administration. This change will *not* impact the availability of individual student test results to divisions, schools, and parents.
- **Reporting of Lexile® and Quantile® Measures Discontinued:** The Lexile® and Quantile® Measures that have been provided by MetaMetrics and published on SOL score reports will be discontinued beginning in fall 2014. These measures will no longer appear on the SOL student score reports for the grades 3 through 8 reading and mathematics tests. The elimination of Lexile® and Quantile® Measures is for cost savings and will have no impact on the SOL test results reported for students.
- **Implementation of Computer-based Scoring for the short paper component of the SOL Writing Test:** The SOL Writing test consists of two components: a section with multiple-choice and technology enhanced-items (MC/TEI) and a short-paper component where students write in response to a [prompt](#). The MC/TEI component currently is scored by a computer; however, each student's short paper has been scored by two professionally-trained human scorers. Beginning in fall 2014, all short papers will be scored once by a human scorer and once by a computer. If disagreement exists between the two scores, the short paper will be scored again by a human reader to resolve the disagreement. Computer-based scoring can reduce the turnaround time needed to receive test results.
- **Term Graduate Automatic Rescores Discontinued:** Term graduate students are those students completing one or more SOL tests to meet graduation requirements in their last year of high school. In previous test administrations, term graduate students who completed their SOL writing test but did not pass the test would automatically have their short paper component rescored if it were determined that a higher short paper score could result in an overall passing test score. Beginning in fall 2014, the automatic rescore of eligible term graduate tests will be discontinued. Rather, school divisions will apply the same procedure used with all other non-term graduate SOL writing tests to determine whether requesting a rescore for a student's writing test is appropriate. It is important to note that automatic rescoring for eligible term graduate short papers were implemented when the writing test was administered only in a paper/pencil format. At this time test results could not be returned to divisions in sufficient time for the evaluation of the papers for possible rescore and for making high school graduation decisions. With the improved turnaround time for term graduate writing results and the need to reduce program costs, the term graduate rescore will no longer occur automatically. The same policy will be implemented for Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP) assessments submitted for term graduate students.
- **Transition from Face-to-Face Training to Web-based Training:** In the past several face-to-face training sessions have been held each year at locations across the state to train school division staff to score Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA) and Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) collections of evidence. To reduce costs beginning in 2014-2015, the VGLA and VAAP scorer training sessions will be conducted via multiple Web-based training sessions. The Web-based sessions will be held in late winter and early spring, and school divisions will be notified in advance for session registration.

Details regarding the various changes and cost-savings measures have been provided to division directors of testing in each school division, and student assessment staff will continue to provide training and technical support to school division staff throughout the implementation of these changes.

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

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