

FAQs for the Spring 2021 SOLs (Guidance from the LCPS Testing Office)

1. ***Why are we giving SOL tests this year when we didn't last year?***

In March 2020, Virginia public schools closed for the duration of the school year. Virginia was able to acquire a waiver from the United States Department of Education which freed us from having to administer federally mandated assessments in Reading, Math, and Science. Virginia also issued a waiver which freed us from having to administer state mandated assessments in Writing and History. *To aid students in graduating or remaining on track to graduate, VDOE implemented emergency guidelines that allowed school divisions to award a locally-awarded verified credit to students enrolled in a high school level course at the time of the closure who passed the course/demonstrated mastery. Through this process students earned a verified credit without having to take an SOL test.*

This year, schools are not closed and the United States Department of Education is not providing states a waiver. We must administer federally mandated assessments, regardless of the instructional model or health conditions. VDOE has attempted to support school divisions by offering the opportunity to provide performance assessments in place of SOL testing in Writing and History (state mandated assessments). LCPS is implementing flexibility in all History and Social Science courses, but not in Writing. A combination of classroom assessments, projects/quizzes, and the performance assessments must cover all of the standards that would be assessed by the History and Social Science SOL test. Performance assessments will be scored by the classroom teacher using state rubrics. High school students who pass the course, pass the performance assessments, and demonstrate content mastery will be awarded a locally-awarded verified credit at the conclusion of the school year. SOL tests in Reading, Math, and Science remain the only way for students to earn a verified credit for their diploma.

It's important that parents and students understand that administering SOL tests is not a local decision. LCPS is complying with state and federal legislation (ESSA).

2. ***Why can't we give the SOL tests remotely?***

SOL tests are proprietary assessments protected by a contractual agreement with the VDOE to maintain their security. Virginia is unable to administer SOL tests in a manner that would jeopardize their security. This includes remote administration which would be vulnerable to screen captures or other recording violations. Additionally, certain system and network requirements must be met to administer the SOL tests, which prevents the tests from being administered by non-VDOE approved entities.

3. ***Are there alternatives to the SOL test?***

There are no alternatives for students taking grade level SOL tests.

VDOE will accept set cut scores on [approved tests](#) in place of some high school level SOL tests. The most frequently used tests are the SAT, PSAT/NMSQT, and the ACT. Families wishing to explore this option should reach out to their School Counselor for support.

4. ***How can you say it's safe to test but it isn't safe to instruct?***

The US Department of Education is not providing waivers from federal assessment and Virginia must administer the SOL tests in person; therefore, we are required to test students at school, regardless of our instructional model or rates of infection. LCPS has implemented rigorous health mitigation strategies to ensure the safety of students and staff while we meet these assessment mandates. ***At River Bend, students and staff will need to wear masks, student shields have been installed on desks, and physical distancing will be enforced. All students and staff must complete the [Symptom Checker Questionnaire](#) before entering the building on testing days.***

5. ***For high school level courses, what is the difference between a standard credit and a verified credit? How does refusing the SOL impact high school level credits?***

- a. There are no SOLs for high school level World Languages courses.
- b. Any middle school student that passes an Algebra I, Geometry, or Algebra II course receives a **standard credit**, which can be applied to a standard or advanced studies diploma.
- c. Any middle school student that passes an Algebra I, Geometry, or Algebra II SOL test receives a **verified credit**, which can be applied to a standard or advanced studies diploma.
 - i. A middle school student that passes the Algebra I AND Geometry SOL tests has earned 2 verified credits in math for their diploma.
 - ii. A middle school student that passes the Algebra I, Geometry AND Algebra II SOL tests has earned 3 verified credits in math for their diploma.
 - iii. Middle school students **only require 1 verified credit in math** for a standard or advanced studies diploma.
- d. For more information on standard versus verified credits, and advanced versus standard diplomas, click the following VDOE links:
 - i. [VDOE Advanced Diploma Requirements](#)
 - ii. [VDOE Standard Diploma Requirements](#)
 - iii. [VDOE Standard versus Verified Credits](#)

6. ***What are the repercussions of refusing grade level SOL tests?***

There are no negative repercussions for refusing a grade level SOL test. Refusals do not impact a course grade, promotion, or course placement. Refusals also do not impact high school course selection, diploma options, and are not shared on high school transcripts/college admissions documents. Make up testing would not be offered and is not required.

7. ***What are the repercussions of refusing high school level SOL tests? (i.e. Algebra 1, Geometry)***
Please note: Foundations of Algebra and Pre-Algebra are NOT the same as Algebra 1. These are not associated with high-school level SOL tests.

There are no negative repercussions for refusing high school level SOL tests; however, failure to take an SOL test *may delay the student from acquiring the necessary verified credit for their diploma*. In order to receive a standard or advanced studies diploma, students need one verified credit in math that comes from passing the course *and* SOL for either Algebra 1, Geometry, or Algebra II. Students whose parents refuse testing this year may take the test next fall or may skip the test altogether and take the SOL test associated with the next course in the progression.

For example, a student currently enrolled in Algebra I, whose parents refuse the test may wait and take the Geometry SOL test next spring (May 2022) to earn the 1 verified credit in math needed for their diploma.

8. ***My child is in Geometry this year and never took the Algebra 1 SOL last year because SOLs were cancelled. What does that mean in terms of verified credits?***

If a student passed the Algebra I, Geometry, or Algebra II **course** last spring (2020), they were awarded a verified credit even though they did not take the SOL test. VDOE's emergency guidelines gave divisions the autonomy to do that (see italicized in Question #1). The verified credit is the same as if they had taken and passed the SOL test so it does apply to their standard or advanced studies diploma.

In other words, students currently enrolled in Geometry or Algebra II do not need the verified credit as they already have it for Algebra I last year (as per the VDOE emergency guidelines) so there is no impact on them.

9. ***What if my child took Algebra 1 last year, was awarded a verified credit even without taking the SOL test, but decided to expunge the course and take it again? Does my child need to take the SOL for Algebra 1 now?***

Guidance from VDOE is that students may keep their verified credit for Algebra 1.

10. ***Why do students have to take math SOLs every year, even after getting a verified credit?***

There is a federal requirement that we assess students in math every year in grades 3-8. So, if you have a 6th grader who passes the Algebra I SOL test, we still have to ask them to take the Geometry SOL test in 7th grade and the Algebra II SOL test in 8th grade, even though they do not need the additional verified credits for their diploma. Parents can refuse.

11. *When are the SOLs this year at River Bend?*

The testing window is open from April 19th through June 4th. Specific dates for each SOL test is still to be determined, however River Bend plans to begin testing on May 3rd. A calendar will be communicated once we receive more guidance from the testing office.

12. *How do I refuse an SOL test this year? And can I refuse certain SOLs but not others?*

The River Bend Parent Refusal form for SOLs this year is a Permission Click:

<https://permission.click/gYwv/us> (bit.ly/SOLrefusal)

On the form, you may select which SOLs you would like to refuse.

For additional questions or individual concerns, please contact River Bend's School Testing Coordinator, Juliet Kenny (juliet.kenny@lcps.org).