



# Loudoun County Public Schools

## Department of Pupil Services

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### Information for Parents/Guardians Regarding Changes to Assessment Requirements

Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) wishes to inform you of recent changes to state and federal legislation that impacts your child's assessment requirements to earn a high school diploma.

#### [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA, Federal legislation\)](#)

- Under ESSA, students must be tested in reading and mathematics annually in grades 3-8 and once in high school (grades 9-12). In science, students must be tested once in elementary school, once in middle school, and once in high school. Students may meet the [ESSA testing requirements](#) by taking a Standards of Learning (SOL) test, or in the case of students with significant cognitive disabilities, participating in the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP).
- The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) has required Virginia to select one end-of-course SOL test in each subject area to be used for federal accountability. Virginia selected Algebra I as the high school mathematics test, Biology as the high school science test, and the end-of-course Reading test for high school reading. USDOE has granted Virginia a waiver so that students who have passed the Algebra I SOL test in middle school can use a score from the Geometry or Algebra II SOL test in high school to meet the federal accountability requirement in mathematics. Additionally, Virginia has been granted a waiver so that students who pass the Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II tests in middle school can use an SAT, ACT, Advanced Placement, or International Baccalaureate test score in mathematics in high school to meet the federal accountability requirement.

#### [2017 Revision to the Standards of Accreditation \(SOA, State legislation\)](#)

- In addition to changes under ESSA, the testing requirements ([8VAC20-131-30](#)) as described in the SOA have also changed. The requirements for students in kindergarten through grade 8 are:  
“In kindergarten through eighth grade, where the administration of Virginia Assessment Program tests is required by the board, each student shall be expected to take the tests following instruction.”
- The SOA requirements for testing students who are enrolled in classes with end-of-course SOL tests are: (**Emphasis** added by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)).  
“**Each student in middle and secondary schools shall take all applicable end-of-course SOL tests following course instruction.** ... Students who achieve a passing score on an end-of-course SOL test shall be awarded a verified unit of credit in that course in accordance with the provisions of [8VAC20-131-110](#). Students may earn verified units of credit in any courses for which end-of-course SOL tests are available. **Students shall not be required to take an end-of-course SOL test in an academic subject after they have earned the number of verified credits required for that academic content area for graduation,**

**unless such test is necessary in order for the school to meet federal accountability requirements.”**

#### Application of the Testing Requirements included in ESSA and the 2017 Revision of the SOA

Based on the SOA requirements, students who are enrolled in courses that have end-of-course SOL tests must take the tests unless they have already earned the number of verified credits in that content area needed for graduation. However, even if the student has earned the number of verified credits in the content area needed for graduation, the student is expected to take SOL tests in mathematics, science, and reading while enrolled in high school to meet federal accountability requirements. VDOE requires that school divisions assess high school students at the first available opportunity, thus most ninth grade students will be assessed in Math, Science and History. More specific information about how the requirements are applied in each subject area may be found below.

- Mathematics: Students who have completed the Algebra I course and passed the Algebra I SOL test prior to ninth grade must take either the Geometry or Algebra II SOL test while enrolled in high school. These students have earned a verified credit in mathematics in middle school, but are required to take a mathematics test while enrolled in high school to meet federal accountability requirements.
- Reading: All students must take the SOL end-of-course Reading test to meet federal accountability requirements.
- Science: Virginia has selected the Biology SOL test as the high school science test for federal accountability. Therefore, a student who has passed Earth Science and the associated Earth Science SOL test has earned a verified credit in science; however, school divisions are expected to administer the Biology test to high school students regardless of whether they have already earned the verified credits required for science to meet federal accountability requirements.
- History/Social Science: The administration of history/social science SOL tests is not required under ESSA; however, students are required to earn verified credits in history to meet graduation requirements.
- Writing: The administration of writing tests is not required under ESSA; however, students are required to earn verified credits in writing to meet graduation requirements. School divisions may choose to award verified credits in writing using either the current SOL assessment or local performance assessments.
- Students with a significant cognitive disability who are unable to participate in SOL testing are expected to participate in the VAAP in all content areas listed above.

#### Change in Diploma Requirements

Beginning with first-time freshmen for the 2018-19 school year, students only require 5 verified credits to earn a [standard](#) or [advanced studies](#) diploma. This is a reduction from the previous requirement of 6 verified credits to earn a standard diploma and 9 verified credits to earn an advanced studies diploma, which results in a decrease in SOL testing.

### Additional Guidance

Once a student has earned the required verified credits for graduation and met the federal testing requirements, the student is not to be administered additional end-of-course tests. Parents may, however, request that their student complete an end-of-course test beyond the required assessments by providing affirmative parental consent (“opt-in”) to the school division. Parents must submit their request in writing for the administration of each end-of-course test requested beyond the required assessments. Students who complete an additional end-of-course test will not receive any incentive or reward and their test score will not be included in school, division, state or federal accountability calculations.

### Student-Selected Verified Credit

Students who entered the ninth grade for the first time prior to 2018-2019 must earn a “student-selected” verified credit for their standard or advanced studies diploma. Because this credit is intended to be “student-selected,” students should be able to choose which SOL test will be used for this purpose. School Counseling staff will reach out to students to ascertain their choice. The student-selected verified credit is no longer a requirement for students entering the ninth grade for the first time in 2018-2019 and beyond.

### Substitute Tests

Parents and students may choose to earn a verified credit for a diploma through the use of a Virginia Board of Education approved substitute test. VDOE set minimum cut scores for each test and updates the tests and cut scores annually. For federally required assessments, LCPS must offer the SOL test to your child, which must be refused before the substitute test score can be accepted. Substitute tests in all content areas other than Math are not accepted by USDOE, requiring the student to be counted as a ‘non-participant’ for federal test participation rates. Parents and students may find detailed information on the [VDOE website](#).

The Virginia regulations do not provide an “[opt out policy](#)” for students regarding the Virginia assessments. If parents refuse to have their student participate in one or more of the required Virginia assessments, they should be aware that their student’s state assessment score report will reflect a score of “0” for any test that is refused. A refusal will not impact the student’s grade or prevent the student from promotion to the next grade or course; however, students who do not take an end-of-course SOL test may be unable to earn the verified credit required for their diploma. Refusals must be made annually, in writing, to the School Test Coordinator.

Additionally, LCPS wishes to inform parents that students observing a religious holiday or participating in a religious practice, such as fasting, during school hours are eligible for a test schedule modification within the LCPS test window. Students will be permitted to test in the morning or afternoon, depending upon their need, and will be allowed to make up a missed test due to absence. Requests for a scheduling modification should be directed to the School Test Coordinator.

Questions about your child’s diploma, diploma options and/or course work should be directed to your child’s School Counselor. General diploma and course work questions may be directed to [Dr. Tracy Jackson](#), School Counseling Supervisor. General questions about division-wide assessment practices may be directed to [Leigh Bennett](#), Supervisor, Assessment Services. General questions about state and federal accountability may be directed to [Scott Meisenzahl](#), Supervisor, School Improvement.