

Response to Questions on the FY 2011 Budget

Request By: Supervisor Herrity

Question: During the presentation at the joint BOS/School Board meeting you reported increases in SOL scores and that you are closing the achievement gap in SOL scores. As the Washington Post reported there has been a large increase in the number of students taking the VGLA. What is the specific impact of the additional VGLA students on the results depicted on these charts? How did you compute the impact so there is an “apples to apples” comparison to those just taking the SOLs?

Response: The following response was prepared by Fairfax County Public Schools:

The Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA) assessment is a collection of individual students' classroom work demonstrating their knowledge of the same grade level standards as is measured on the multiple choice Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. The VGLA was approved by the U.S. Department of Education for use with special education students in 2006 and for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Level 1 and Level 2 students in 2007. As a new assessment, it was used with a small number of special education students in 2006 and with a new group of LEP students in 2007 in reading only. There has been an increase in the number of students administered the VGLA from 2006 to 2009; as new cohorts of eligible students were added, additional training was provided, and teachers and students gained experience and knowledge in the use of the VGLA. Since VGLA is only administered to LEP students whose English language skills are not at a level to comprehend the nuances of multiple choice questions, the pass rate is somewhat higher than when they are given the English multiple choice SOL.

The following sixth grade graphs and tables are examples of the impact of the alternative SOL assessments: VGLA and the VAAP. (The VAAP is the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program, an appropriate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities.) Additional grade level graphs and tables are available on request.

Graph 1 shows the number and percent of FCPS students participating in SOL tests and in approved SOL alternative assessments in reading at the sixth grade level. There were 12,577 students assessed. There were 941 students (7.5%) assessed at the sixth grade level who took the VGLA. This is reflected in the green “slice” of the circle graph. There were only 132 students (1%) assessed using the VAAP. This is reflected in the red “slice” of the circle graph. The blue portion reflects students who participated in the traditional SOL assessment.

Graph 2 shows the number and percent of FCPS students participating in SOL tests and in approved SOL alternative assessments in mathematics at the sixth grade level. There were 12,691 students assessed. There were only 473 students (3.7%) assessed at the sixth grade level who took the VGLA. This is reflected in the green “slice” of the circle graph. There were only 132 students (1%) assessed using the VAAP. This is reflected in the red “slice” of the circle graph. The blue portion reflects students who participated in the traditional SOL assessment.

Since there is only a small percentage of students who are permitted by law to participate in the alternative assessments, the overall impact of VGLA on FCPS results is minimal. VGLA participation will most likely remain about the same from this point forward, resulting in “apples to apples” comparisons.

Graph 1
Standards of Learning Assessments
All Students in Grade 6 Cohort
Reading



■ SOL (91.5%) ■ VAAP (1.0%) ■ VGLA (7.5%)

Test	Pass Advanced		Pass Proficient		Fail	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
SOL (N=11,504)	5,589/11,504	48.6%	5,031/11,504	43.7%	884/11,504	7.7%
VAAP (N=132)	112/132	84.8%	14/132	10.6%	6/132	4.5%
VGLA (N=941)	790/941	84.0%	130/941	13.8%	21/941	2.2%
TOTAL (N=12,577)	6,491/12,577	51.6%	5,175/12,577	41.1%	911/12,577	7.2%

Graph 2
Standards of Learning Assessments
All Students in Grade 6 Cohort
Mathematics



■ SOL (95.2%) ■ VAAP (1.0%) ■ VGLA (3.7%)

Test	Pass Advanced		Pass Proficient		Fail	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
SOL (N=12,086)	6,619/12,086	54.8%	3,769/12,086	31.2%	1,698/12,086	14.0%
VAAP (N=132)	104/132	78.8%	18/132	13.6%	10/132	7.6%
VGLA (N=473)	177/473	37.4%	259/473	54.8%	37/473	7.8%
TOTAL (N=12,691)	6,900/12,691	54.4%	4,046/12,691	31.9%	1,745/12,691	13.7%