

Response to Questions on the FY 2011 Budget

Request By: Supervisor Herrity

Question: What accounts for the large increase in the number of students taking the VGLA instead of the SOLs? Do we expect this upward trend to continue?

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

The Virginia Grade Level Alternative (VGLA) assessment is an evidence-based alternative assessment for the Standards of Learning (SOL) test for students in grades 3-8. 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. The number of students administered the VGLA has increased from 2006 to 2009 as teachers and students gained experience and knowledge in the use of the VGLA.

Students who qualify to participate in the VGLA are required to demonstrate individual achievement of grade level content standards presented in the SOL test blueprints for the academic content area in which they are being assessed. The following students are eligible to participate:

- Students with disabilities in grades 3-8 who meet the participation criteria; participation is determined on an individual test-by-test basis by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team/504 committee. To participate in the VGLA, a student with disabilities must:
 - Have a current IEP or 504 plan.
 - Demonstrate his/her individual achievement of the Standards of Learning content by means other than multiple-choice test format.
 - Be unable to demonstrate his/her individual achievement on the Standards of Learning test for the assigned course and grade level using available accommodations and/or formats as a result of a disability.

The overall number of students with disabilities participating in the VGLA is expected to rise only slightly; however, number of tests taken using the VGLA by an individual student with disabilities may increase.

- Students with limited English proficiency (LEP) in grades 3-8 at level 1 or level 2 of English proficiency—participation is determined by the LEP team. LEP students are only eligible to participate in the VGLA for English: Reading. The overall number of LEP students in levels 1 and 2 of English proficiency has remained relatively steady this year; therefore, the number of LEP students participating is not predicted to increase much in the next year.