

BOARD BRIEF

Date: August 20, 2021

BOARD INFORMATION: X

MEETING PREPARATION:

FROM: Clinton Page, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

THROUGH: Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Meagan Alderton, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Preliminary SOL Results

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence

SY 2020-2021 FOCUS AREA:

Focus Area 5: Academic Disparities

FY 2022 BUDGET PRIORITY:

Implementation of 2025 Strategic Plan

SUMMARY:

VDOE will release 2020-2021 SOL results on August 26, 2021. These data will have no impact on state or federal accountability systems based on the on-going pandemic. Within ACPS, only 60% of students eligible to participate in spring 2021 SOL assessments participated, representing a significant decline from previous years participation rates above 95%. A cohort analysis of students who participated in both spring 2019 testing and spring 2021 testing showed equivalent reading pass rates (62%) and a 15 percentage point decrease in math from 2019 to 2021. A student group cohort analysis also showed widening disparities in math across groups with the White student group decreasing (-18 percentage points) at smaller rates than Asian (-20 pts), Black (-27 pts), or Hispanic (-30 pts) student groups.

BACKGROUND:

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) will release SOL results from the 2020-2021 school year for the state, division, and schools on August 26, 2021. These data are for information only and will have no impact on state or federal accountability systems based on the on-going pandemic. Within ACPS, only 60% of students eligible to participate in spring 2021 SOL assessments participated, representing a significant decline from previous years participation rates above 95%. Further, based on a VDOE emergency provision, locally developed alternative assessments were used instead of in-person SOL assessments in grade 8

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writing and grades 4 and 8 history, limiting those content areas to only high school students who were eligible to partake in the in-person SOLs. Of the students who did test, preliminary SOL pass rates were: Reading - 57%, Math - 40%, Science - 44%, Grade 11 Writing - 82%, and High School History - 45%.

Based on low SOL assessments participation in 2020-2021 compared to previous years, direct comparison of results across years or to other localities are not valid. To gain a better understanding of the SOL results from 2020-2021 compared to previous years, the Department of Accountability and Research conducted a cohort analysis to compare results of students who participated in both spring 2019 testing and spring 2021 testing. The cohort analysis included 35% (n=2,969) of math and 24% (n=1,971) of reading students who were eligible to participate in the SOL in 2020-2021. The cohort analysis showed equivalent reading pass rates (62%) and a 15 percentage point decrease in math from 2019 to 2021. A student group cohort analysis also showed widening disparities in math across groups with the White student group decreasing (-18 percentage points) at smaller rates than Asian (-20 pts), Black (-27 pts), or Hispanic (-30 pts) student groups.

Planning for the return to five days a week in-person learning this fall has focused for months on how to best address both the academic and social-emotional needs of students. For this reason, a majority of ARP ESSER Fund III monies are being allocated specifically to implement and enhance existing programs designed to recover, support, and accelerate social, emotional, and academic learning. Further, the Continuity of Learning Plan 6.0 solidifies these plans in a strategic and systematic manner for immediate implementation. The division will also place high focus on fall assessment results to further understand students' immediate academic and social-emotional needs and be prepared to adjust to emergent needs as necessary.

RECOMMENDATION: The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the preliminary SOL results in advance of VDOE public release on August 26, 2021.

IMPACT:

As seen across the nation, the SOL data cohort analysis points to increased academic disparities across student groups and the impact of the pandemic on overall proficiency levels in mathematics.

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