

BOARD BRIEF

Date: January 22, 2021

BOARD INFORMATION:

MEETING PREPARATION: _____

FROM: Clinton Page, Ed.S., Chief of Accountability and Research
Terri H. Mozingo, Ed.D, Chief of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
Bethany Nickerson, Ed.D. Executive Director of English Learner (EL) Services

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: Winter SOL and WIDA ACCESS Assessment Update

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence

SY 2020-2021 FOCUS AREA

Focus Area 1: Reopening of School

FY 2021 BUDGET PRIORITY

K-2 Literacy Programming

Chronic Absenteeism among Hispanic Students

Outreach to Hispanic Families to Improve Attendance and Graduation

SUMMARY

Federal and VDOE requirements still necessitate the in-person administration of the SOL and WIDA ACCESS assessments during the 2020-2021 school year. Due to the pandemic, the division, in collaboration with VDOE, will transition a majority of winter high school SOL assessments to spring 2021. The division will issue a decision by the end of January on the potential use of Local Alternative Assessments in place of the spring 2021 SOL for specific courses where VDOE offered that flexibility. Based on additional VDOE flexibility, the WIDA ACCESS assessment window has been expanded to include administration through early May.

BACKGROUND

Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) has been actively collaborating with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to meet current state and federal assessment requirements within SY 2020-2021. The Standards of Learning (SOL) and WIDA ACCESS for ELLs assessments, typically administered in the winter months, are still only allowed by VDOE to be administered in-person. The division is working hand-in-hand with VDOE to align in-person assessments with the overall transition plan back to in-person learning. This brief updates the School Board to current division planning, timelines, and implementation of in-person assessments and for SOLs additional emergency flexibility offered by VDOE.

BOARD BRIEF

High School (End-of-Course) SOL Testing

All ACPS 9-11 high school students who are currently enrolled in a semester one SOL associated course and/or need to retake a previously attempted SOL will be administered the SOL assessments in the spring SOL administration window of May or June of 2021. To support these students in preparing for the spring assessments, T.C. Williams will provide: learning modules; targeted interventions and support through the Titans Rising period; a Saturday Learning Academy; and additional instruction and preparation for students outside of the instructional day. Families of students attempting to graduate at the end of the first semester or spring 2021 who still require SOL testing to meet graduation requirements will be contacted by T.C. Williams to be allowed to test in February and/or with other students later this spring.

Emergency VDOE Flexibility for Specific SOL Assessments

VDOE provided emergency flexibility allowing divisions the choice to administer locally developed alternative performance assessments in place of the Virginia Studies (Gr4 History), Civics and Economics (Gr8 History), and Grade 8 Writing SOLs. Local Alternative Assessments will cover the content and skills included in the SOL test, and the assessments may be administered either virtually or in-person. The division is currently working with teaching staff, principals, and central office staff directly impacted by any changes to reach a final decision by the end of January.

WIDA ACCESS for ELLs Assessment

On December 31, 2020, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) issued a Superintendent's Memo #332-20 extending the testing window for ACCESS for ELLs through the end of the school year to allow for maximum scheduling flexibility. The Division testing window has been extended with an opening of February 17, 2021, through May 7, 2021. The opening of the testing window is dependent on schools being open for hybrid instruction. Further, it requires students to have a minimum two-week transition to hybrid instruction before starting ACCESS testing. EL families will receive direct communication about the testing requirements along with instructions to complete a form to indicate whether they will agree to send their child(ren) to school for testing. This decision is independent of the response provided to the family choice form for hybrid versus virtual instruction.

RECOMMENDATION

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review this brief to remain informed of the current planning and timeline for federal and state required in-person SOL and WIDA testing.

IMPACT

The division will align state and federal assessment requirements with the transition to in-person instruction, ensuring the priorities remain focused on student learning, social/emotional well being, and safety during the pandemic.

CONTACT

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