



Balanced Assessment Plan

OUR ROAD-MAP TO SERVE EVERY CHILD, EVERY DAY

Amherst County Public Schools|2023-2024

Overview

Amherst County Public Schools (ACPS) began moving towards a strategically balanced assessment program during the 2016-2017 school year when the Virginia legislature mandated the elimination of several Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. This act propelled ACPS to intentionally look at our practice and purpose for assessing students. From this assessment review we discovered the strengths of our curriculum programs, as well as their weaknesses, which allowed us the opportunity to make changes focused on what is best for students.

Over the course of the past several years, ACPS participated in professional development and training provided by VDOE, collaborated with other school divisions in establishing a framework for change, completed an inventory assessment, provided opportunities for teachers to build and create a variety of assessment(s) types, and began the difficult work of implementing a new assessment system that met the needs of all students.

This Balanced Assessment Plan outlines the following;

- I. A basic understanding of the types of assessments, the types of item methods, and provide a common assessment vocabulary glossary,
- II. A list of assessments that are currently being administered using a performance based approach.
- III. How we as a division will support the effective use of the different types of assessments,
- IV. Evidence of opportunities for students to demonstrate Virginia's 5 C's (critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration, and citizenship),
- V. The Local Testing Calendar for all ACPS students,
- VI. Next Steps for ACPS and,
- VII. Samples of Assessment Tasks.



Balanced
Assessments

I. FORMS OF ASSESSMENTS, ITEM METHODS, & GLOSSARY

A balanced approach to assessments includes both summative and formative assessments. ACPS uses multiple types of assessments within these overarching categories to inform instruction and measure content and skill mastery.

A. Forms of Assessments

Form	Functions	Strategic timing
Summative tests or assessments	1. Selection	Low frequency, regular use. Mostly at the beginning of the learning process: intake assessment, project planning or proposal, research plan. At the end of the learning process: assessment of project results, traditional tests and so on.
	2. Certification	Low frequency, regular use. Mostly at the end of the learning process. Acknowledging credits (ECTS ²), awarding certificates, diplomas, etc.
Formative tests or assessments	3. Diagnosis	Low frequency, regular use. Preceding a learning phase: development centre. During the learning process typically preceding significant moments, or during self-testing sessions.
	4. (formal) Feedback	Frequent use. During the whole learning process. Preferably at significant moments. Focus on personal development and realization of learning goals. Coaching, peer assessment, feedback from professionals, development centres and so on.
	5. Monitoring and evaluation	Highly frequent, especially as self assessment. Focus on the realization of the product and the methods used to get there. <i>Monitoring</i> : during the learning process. <i>Evaluation</i> : at the end, focus on the realization of goals, effectivity and effectiveness.
	6. Reflection	Moderate frequency, regular use. Focus on the development of professional competencies of the individual student. Preceding, during and following the learning process.

Table 1: Assessment: forms and functions

B. Types of Item Methods

Types of assessment methods

Assessment Method	Examples
Observation	Real work activities, simulated work activities
Simulation	Role play, hypothetical situations , scenarios
Questioning	Open ended, closed, verbal and written
Third Party Report	Written or oral reports
Product Review	For product specification benchmarks
Portfolio	Products produced, created by the candidate, training records, certificates, qualifications
Structured activities	Projects, scenarios, case study, group discussion
Self-assessment	Questionnaires, log book, journal, reflections

C. Assessment Literacy Glossary

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/local_assessments/index.shtml

This list of terms relates to the Local Alternative Assessment work and is not intended to be an exhaustive list of assessment terms.

accountability systems—the mechanisms used (generally by states) to evaluate the performance of their education systems. In recent years, accountability systems have increasingly used the school as the unit for monitoring and intervention, based largely on the scores of each school’s students on a set of standardized tests.

accreditation—a process to evaluate the performance of public schools in accordance with Board of Education regulations.

alternative assessment—used to measure applied proficiency of knowledge and skills. In Virginia, alternative assessments include, but are not limited to, performance assessments. [See performance assessment]

assessment—any systematic basis for gathering data or information and making inferences about characteristics, levels of proficiency, or abilities of people, usually based on various sources of evidence; the global process of synthesizing information about individuals in order to understand and describe them better.

authentic assessment—a performance assessment that includes a context from the real world and/or a context that is authentic to the academic discipline.

balanced assessment system—the combination of assessments that form a comprehensive measure of student learning. In Virginia, a balanced assessment system should include a variety of assessment types that are matched to the content being assessed and the purpose of the assessment data, including the need to meet accountability measures. A balanced assessment system should allow opportunities to measure student achievement and growth based on content standards, specific learning goals, and the 5 C’s (critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship); the data gathered should provide meaningful information that supports and guides classroom instruction.

formative assessment—a process or assessment designed to intentionally collect information about the nature or degree of student learning during instruction, providing feedback to teachers and students and allowing for teachers and students to make instructional decisions (adjustments and modifications). Formative assessment is generally referred to as assessment “for” learning.

growth assessments – an assessment given to identify what students have already learned as well as the skills they may need additional support throughout the school year.

higher-order thinking skills—a category of thinking skills that requires students to go beyond recalling facts, understanding content, or replicating rote procedures; make connections; solve problems different from those given in classroom examples; and use content to reach and justify

conclusions. Deep and rich use of higher-order thinking skills is often dependent upon lower-order thinking skills.

integrated performance assessment or interdisciplinary assessment—an assessment that measures student performance on content and/or skills across two or more subject areas.

inter-rater reliability—the degree of agreement among raters scoring a performance task, product, or assessment.

intra-rater reliability—the degree of consistency with which a single rater scores a set of students' work on performance tasks, products, or assessments.

local alternative assessment (LAA)—assessments created, administered, and scored at the local division level in the place of eliminated Standards of Learning tests, as required by legislation.

lower-order thinking skills—a category of thinking skills characterized by knowledge, understanding, and application of procedural skills.

performance assessment or performance-based assessment—generally requires students to perform a task or create a product and is scored using a rubric or set of criteria. In completing the task, students apply acquired knowledge and skills. This type of assessment often includes a written component. [See rubric]

performance task—a learning activity that requires students to perform a task or create a product to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and proficiency. Performance tasks occur during the learning process, provide feedback on learning to students and teachers during instruction, and offer opportunities for students to develop skills that may be applied in performance assessments.

portfolio assessment—a systematic collection of student work and artifacts that demonstrate growth and/or mastery of content, knowledge, and skills over an identified period of time.

project-based learning —a teaching method or approach that engages students in sustained, collaborative, real-world investigations. Projects are organized around a driving question, and students participate in a variety of hands-on tasks that seek to meaningfully address this question (Buck Institute). Performance assessment is typically a component of this approach to teaching and learning. [See performance assessment]

qualitative reading inventory – an assessment measuring student reading levels in grades 6-8.

rubric—a description of the criteria for success and levels of achievement for a task, product, or assessment. Rubrics are used to score various types of alternative assessments based on evidence in student work. When used during instruction, rubrics provide feedback to teachers and students, allowing teachers and students to make adjustments and modifications during the learning process.

summative assessment—used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a unit, project, course, semester, program, or school year. Summative assessment is frequently described as assessment “of” learning.

validity—the degree to which an assessment actually measures the learning it is intended to measure. In order to strengthen and account for the validity (and reliability) of an assessment, assessment designers use a combination of procedures and tools in the development of, the administration of, and the post-administration analysis of assessments.

II. LIST OF PERFORMANCE BASED ASSESSMENTS

Performance Based Assessments are used to measure a student’s understanding of the content or their ability to implement the skills. Often the assessment is centered on real-world scenarios that require critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Many are designed by teachers specifically for their individual classrooms. ACPS encourages this practice and in support of a balanced assessment program, the school division implements Performance Based Assessments in the following areas;

Grade	Content
Third	History and Science
Fifth	US History to 1865
Sixth	US History 1865 to Present

As ACPS builds capacity in understanding and implementing different types of assessments, Performance Based Assessments will continue to be embedded into all content areas.

VDOE offers the opportunity for students to verify their credit in writing by completing a writing SOL or by collecting a Body of Evidence (BOE) across grade levels that is verified at the local level. ACPS currently utilizes the EOC Writing SOL assessment to verify credit in writing in grade 11, but will transition to completing a Body of Evidence, with local verification, for students.

During the 2021-2022 school year, ACPS began this collection with our ninth grade students during the second semester through the collection of a persuasive piece of writing focusing on skills outlined in SOL 9.6, 9.7, and 9.8.

In order to continue this process of transition in the division, the following timeline will be used to include the other required documents to verify credit using a BOE:

- 2022-2023: Grade 10 will collect an analytic piece and focus on 10.6, 10.7 and 10.8, Grade 9 will continue to collect a persuasive piece focused on 9.6, 9.7, 9.8.

- 2023-2024: Grade 11 will collect an argumentative piece focused on 11.6, 11.7, and 11.8. Grade 9 and 10 will collect their corresponding samples.

After the BOE has been compiled in grade 11, a scoring committee will review the samples and provide an overall score through the use of the Virginia Quality Criterion Tool for Performance-Based Assessments. The performance level descriptors will determine if the student's achievement is advanced, proficient or does not meet the standard. Those awarded the advanced or proficient according to those descriptors will be awarded a verified credit in lieu of taking the SOL Test. During the BOE collection, students are provided multiple opportunities to collect samples to be included their submission Alternative assessments such as Work Keys and the SOL Writing assessment, for those students who are not able to verify through the use of a body of evidence, will be afforded the opportunity to participate in order to verify their credit.

III. DIVISION SUPPORT OF EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT PRACTICE

The purpose of division level support is to assist school administrators and teachers in improving instruction and instructional **practices** by strengthening the alignment between the written, taught, and tested curriculum. Assessments *for* and *of* learning are essential to that process. ACPS provides a variety of division level supports to ensure the effective ongoing use of both formative and summative assessments by Pre-K through 12th Grade teachers.

ACPS Resources include, but are not limited to the following;

- Division created curriculum maps and rubrics with embedded assessments
- Division elementary and secondary local assessment calendars
- Pre-K-5th grade literacy PALS resources
- Pre-K-5th grade Numeracy VKRP & IXL tools
- 6th-8th grade Literacy Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI)
- VDOE Growth Assessments in Math and Reading grades 3-8
- VDOE SOL SDBQ Reports
- Division Liaison support and participation in PLC process at each school
- Progress monitoring and interventions support documents for all teachers
- Data analysis tools
- 2nd & 6th grade CogAT Testing
- WIDA English language proficiency assessment for students in kindergarten through grade 12.
- VDOE Understanding Scoring Professional Development for all writing teachers in grades 5-12

IV. EVIDENCE OF VIRGINIA'S 5 C'S

ACPS is focused on equipping students in the area of Virginia's 5 C's so that they may face and deal with the challenges each will most likely encounter in their future. We place critical thinking at the center of instruction. Beginning in our early childhood programs and extending to post graduation, critical thinking must be nurtured and encouraged throughout K-12 education.

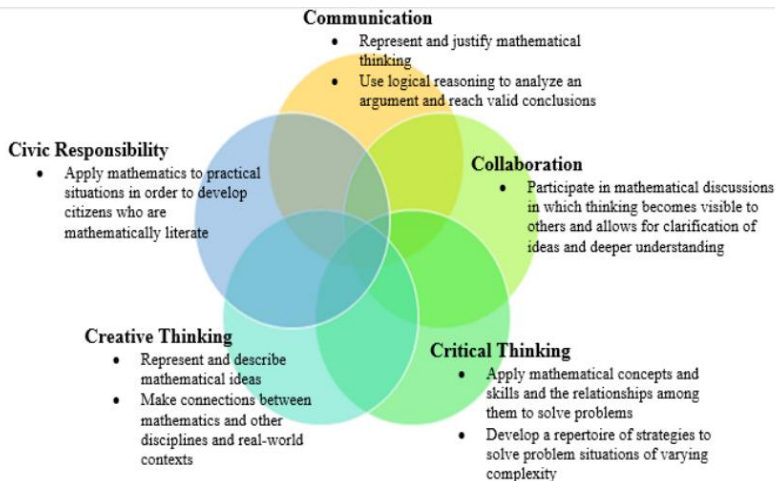


We also realize that critical thinking does not stand alone. Creativity, communication, and collaboration also play a role in helping develop our students into productive citizens.

This means providing students opportunities to gain insight and experience in the workplace. Below are two graphics that detail how Virginia's 5 C's; critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, collaboration and citizenship are embedded into the core and elective curriculum for ACPS.

Content Specific Examples of the Virginia's 5 C's

Mathematics



Career & Technical Education

21st Century Workplace Readiness Skills for the Commonwealth

Needs Identified by Virginia Employers

Personal Qualities and Abilities

- CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION: Employs originality, inventiveness, and resourcefulness in the workplace
- CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING: Uses sound reasoning to analyze problems, evaluate potential solutions, and implement effective courses of action
- INITIATIVE AND SELF-DIRECTION: Independently looks for ways to improve the workplace and accomplish tasks
- INTEGRITY: Complies with laws, procedures, and workplace policies; demonstrates honesty, fairness, and respect
- WORK ETHIC: Consistently works to the best of one's ability and is diligent, dependable, and accountable for one's actions

Interpersonal Skills

- CONFLICT RESOLUTION: Negotiates diplomatic solutions to interpersonal and workplace issues
- LISTENING AND SPEAKING: Listens attentively and asks questions to clarify meaning; articulates ideas clearly in a manner appropriate for the setting and audience
- RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY: Values individual differences and works collaboratively with people of diverse backgrounds, viewpoints, and experiences
- CUSTOMER SERVICE ORIENTATION: Anticipates and addresses the needs of customers and coworkers, providing thoughtful, courteous, and knowledgeable service
- TEAMWORK: Shares responsibility for collaborative work and respects the thoughts, opinions, and contributions of other team members

Professional Competencies

- BIG PICTURE THINKING: Understands one's role in fulfilling the mission of the workplace and considers the social, economic, and environmental impacts of one's actions
- CAREER AND LIFE MANAGEMENT: Plans, implements, and manages personal and professional development goals related to education, career, finances, and health
- CONTINUOUS LEARNING AND ADAPTABILITY: Accepts constructive feedback well and is open to new ideas and ways of doing things; continuously develops professional skills and knowledge to adjust to changing job requirements
- EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY: Plans, prioritizes, and adapts work goals to manage time and resources effectively
- INFORMATION LITERACY: Locates information efficiently, evaluates the credibility and relevance of sources and facts, and uses information effectively to accomplish work-related tasks
- INFORMATION SECURITY: Understands basic Internet and email safety and follows workplace protocols to maintain the security of information, computers, networks, and facilities
- INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: Maintains a working knowledge of devices, resources, hardware, software, systems, services, applications, and IT conventions
- JOB-SPECIFIC TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES: Knows how to select and safely use industry-specific technologies, tools, and machines to complete job tasks effectively
- MATHEMATICS: Applies mathematical skills to complete tasks as necessary
- PROFESSIONALISM: Meets organizational expectations regarding work schedule, behavior, appearance, and communication
- READING AND WRITING: Reads and interprets workplace documents and writes effectively
- WORKPLACE SAFETY: Maintains a safe work environment by adhering to safety guidelines and identifying risks to self and others

AMHERST COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Testing Schedule 2023-2024 School Year

8.7.23

Key Code: Elementary

Yellow = Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)		
Light Green = Local Alternative/Project Based Assessments		
Purple = Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments		
Pink = VDOE Growth Assessments (New Fall 2021)		
Turquoise = Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)		
Magenta = Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP)		
Green = WIDA (EL)		
Elementary Schools		
VDOE Growth Assessments Reading & Math	3-5	Fall Assessment: September 11, 2023 - September 29, 2023 Winter Assessment: January 16, 2024-February 9, 2024
PALs	1-5	August 28, 2023 - September 22, 2023
		January 2, 2024- February 2, 2024 -Mid-Year
		April 22, 2024 - May 17, 2024
Pre K and K	Pre K and K	September 25, 2023 - October 20, 2023
		January 2, 2024- February 2, 2024 -Mid-Year
		April 22, 2024 - May 17, 2024
VKRP	Pre-K and K	September 11, 2023 - October 6, 2023
		April 8, 2024 - May 17, 2024
CogAT	2	November 6, 2023 - November 10, 2023
Local Alternative/ Project Based Assessments	3-5	Ongoing, completed by April 19, 2024
Grade 3 History	3	
Grade 3 Science	3	
Grade 5 US History I	5	
Grade 5 Writing	5	
Standards of Learning (SOL):		April 29, 2024-May 31, 2024
Non-Writing		
Grade 4 Virginia Studies	4	
Reading/Math	3-5	
Science	5	
VAAP	3-5	March 4, 2024-May 17, 2024
WIDA	K-5 (EL)	TBD (Winter)

Key Code: Secondary

Yellow = Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT)		
Light Green = Local Alternative/Project Based Assessments		
Purple = Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments		
Pink = VDOE Growth Assessments (New Fall 2021)		
Orange = Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT)		
Blue = Career and Technical Education Credentialing (CTE) Exams		
Gray = Advanced Placement (AP) Tests		
Turquoise = Quantitative Reading Inventory (QRI)		
Green = WIDA (EL)		
Middle Schools		
Standards of Learning (SOL): Writing	8	March 19 & 20, 2024
VDOE Growth Assessments Reading & Math	6-8	Fall Assessment: September 11, 2023 - September 29, 2023 Winter Assessment: January 16, 2024-February 9, 2024
Standards of Learning (SOL): Non-Writing Outline		April 29, 2024-May 31, 2024
Reading	6-8	
Math/Alg I	6-8	
Science/Earth Science	7-8	
Civics	7	
World History I	8	
VAAP	6-8	
Grade 6 US History II	6	Ongoing, completed by April 19, 2024
QRI	6-8	Fall Assessment: August 21, 2023-October 31, 2023 Spring Assessment: March 4, 2024 - May 31, 2024
CogAT	6	November 6, 2023 - November 10, 2023
WIDA	6-8 (EL)	TBD (Winter)
High School		
Standards of Learning (SOL): Writing (Term Grad)	11-12	March 4-15, 2024 (1st Attempt) April 8-26, 2024 (2nd Attempt)
Standards of Learning (SOL): Writing	11	March 19 & 20, 2024
CTE Credentialing Test	9-12	April 8, 2024 - June 7, 2024
PSAT	10-11	October 25, 2023
Standards of Learning (SOL): EOC Non-Writing	9-12	April 29, 2024-May 31, 2024
VAAP	9-11 EOC	March 4, 2024-May 17, 2024 Grade 9- Science Grade 10- Math Grade 11- Reading
AP Testing	10-12	May 6, 2024 - May 17, 2024
Body of Evidence for English 11 EOC	9-11	TBD
WIDA	9-12 (EL)	TBD (Winter)

VI. NEXT STEPS

ACPS will continue to train teachers in the development of balanced assessments and provide support in implementing all types of assessments into their daily instruction in order to help inform their delivery.

The Division Instructional Team will conduct division wide scoring of the assessments and continue to add grade level performance based assessments to all content areas. Team leaders will write exemplars, project based tasks, and cross-curricular assessments that support the 5 C's of critical & creative thinking, communications, collaboration and citizenship.

Artifacts will be collected to help monitor the implementation of the Balanced Assessment Plan and a review of the plan will be conducted annually.

VII. SAMPLE ASSESSMENTS

Please note the following Performance Based Assessments (Tasks with Samples of Work)

Science Third Grade


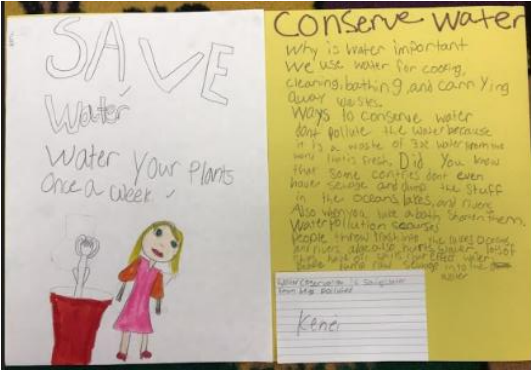
Student Page 1

Good afternoon! The local board of supervisors is concerned about the local water supply. They have asked you to help increase awareness and understanding of the importance of water conservation and protection in your community. You can create a video, announcement, flyer, or poster to communicate your public service announcement (PSA). To help guide you in the process, use the graphic organizers provided to plan your project.

Task: Your task is to create a PSA (video, announcement, flyer, or poster) to inform the community on the importance of conserving water and how to protect their water sources.

Your Public Service Announcement (PSA), flyer or poster must include:

- ⊗ Explanation of why water is essential to living things.
- ⊗ Identify and explain ways people in the community can conserve and protect water.
- ⊗ Analyze potential sources of water pollution to determine which source is most likely to impact your local water supply.

History Third Grade

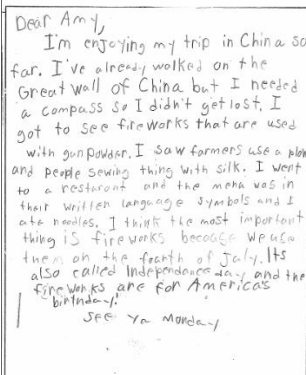

The Greatest Influence

HSS 3.3 The student will explain how the contributions of ancient China, Egypt, Greece and Rome have influenced the present world in terms of architecture, inventions, the calendar, written language and government.

HSS 3.1g The student will demonstrate skills for historical thinking, geographical analysis, economic decision making, and responsible citizenship by explaining connections across time and place.

Teacher Notes: Students will use a [graphic organizer](#) to identify important contributions of Greece, Rome, China and Egypt. Students will create [postcards](#) from each country/culture that highlight the contributions of that culture in both pictures and words. Additionally, they will create a postcard from the United States explaining which culture they feel had the most influence on our present world, and showing one or more of those influences in modern times.

Student Directions: You are taking a trip around the world to visit all of the ancient civilizations your class is learning about in 3rd grade. You will create postcards to send back to your class about each country. Each postcard must include pictures on the front showing important contributions of that country that have influenced the present world, and a written message on the back explaining these contributions. After you have created postcards from all of the civilizations, you will make one more from the United States. The message on this postcard should explain to your classmates which civilization you feel had the most influence on our world today, and a picture(s) on the front that shows one or more of those contributions.

US History I

Task: Students will choose an invention from the 1800's, not taught in class, and research that invention. The students will create a depiction of the invention and will market it on "Shark Tank."

Summary of the Assessment:

- 1) Watch a clip from the show, Shark Tank
- 2) Research and choose an invention from the 1800s (one NOT taught in class)
- 3) Decide which format (video, PowerPoint, or other electronic presentation approved by teacher) you are using to present


Engaging Scenario + Explicit Directions
We have learned about several inventions of the 1800s – reaper, cotton gin, steamboat, and steam locomotive. For this assignment, you will need to research and find your own invention that occurred during the 1800s. Pretend that you are the inventor and are presenting your invention on Shark Tank to the entrepreneurs.


Be prepared to present your findings to the class through a choice in one of the following:

- video
- PowerPoint, or
- another teacher approved presentation.

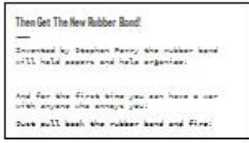
Tell the class:

- the name of your invention,
- who invented it,
- as well as why this invention was important.
- Create a claim with evidence ("sales pitch") that presents the positive changes on society of this invention.
- Please provide a copy of your anticipated negative consequences in preparation for the questions an entrepreneur might ask you before investing in your invention.
- You also need to provide a reference list detailing the sources of your information and how you located them.





- How do papers all cover your desk?
- Do your telephones clutter yours?
- Can you meet every correspondence?




Then Get The New Rubber Band!

Invented by Stephen Perry, the rubber band will hold papers and help organize.

And for the first time you can have a car with anyone who annoys you.

Soon will beat the rubber band and fire.



Appendix

Standards of Learning (SOL) Opt-Out Example Letter

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Your student is scheduled to take the Standards of Learning (SOL) Test in [XXXX](#) during the [XXXX](#) 2023-2024 school year. These assessments will enable our teachers to identify what students have learned, as well as the skills that they may need additional support in order to show mastery. The SOL Assessments must be taken in-person at a school building. We encourage all of our students to take these assessments, as they are beneficial to supporting your student's continued growth and the ACPS assessment participation rate through ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act).

We do understand that you may choose for your student not to participate in some of the assessments listed above. If you are choosing to "opt-out" your student from any assessments, please complete the information below and return it to [XXXX](#) by [XXXX](#).

It is important that you understand that if you choose to opt your student out of taking the End of Course SOL tests at the secondary level, they will still be **required** to complete these tests in a later test session, as they are a graduation requirement. Opting out only **delays** when the test is given. It **does not** prevent them from ever having to take the tests. Please return this form to your school counselor by [XXXX](#).

Thank you,

[XXXXXX](#)

(School Test Coordinator) or (Principal)

XXXX@amherst.k12.va.us

Date: _____

Student Name: _____

Student Number: _____

Date of Birth: _____

_____ (initial) I wish to opt my student out of the checked SOL Assessments. (Please check all that apply):

[XXXX](#) [XXXX](#) [XXXX](#)

[XXXX](#) [XXXX](#)

Additional Comments: _____

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____