

# **Proposed Removal of Grade 3 History and Social Science Test from the Virginia Assessment Program**

**A Report Presented to the  
House Appropriations Committee  
June 16, 2009**

**Dr. Patricia I. Wright  
Superintendent of Public Instruction**

---

June 16, 2009



# Background Information

- Superintendent of Public Instruction and Board of Education (BOE) members discussed unmet requirements and future enhancements to the Standards of Learning (SOL) testing program during the BOE's April 2009 planning meeting.
- BOE asked the Department of Education to make recommendations for moving forward with assessment enhancements while addressing educators' concerns about the amount of SOL testing, particularly in the early childhood years.
- During their May 2009 meeting, the BOE accepted on first review a recommendation to discontinue the cumulative Grade 3 SOL history and social science test and asked the Department to develop a timeline for changing the Grade 3 SOL reading test to include passages addressing topics from the history/social science SOL.

# Rationale for Removal

- Respond to request from school divisions to relieve educators of administrative testing burdens
- Focus on reducing the amount of testing in areas where multiple tests are given in a grade span, particularly in the early childhood years
- Maximize finite assessment resources to meet requirements to develop and administer "modified achievement standards tests" in reading and mathematics for students with disabilities and to enhance reading assessments

# Number of SOL Tests Currently Administered by Content Area

<b>Reading</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Writing</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Science</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>History and Social Science</b>	<b>9</b>

# History and Social Science Tests Currently Administered

Test	Date Implemented
Grade 3 (cumulative test covering K-3 SOL)	1998
Grade 4 or 5 (Virginia Studies)	1998
Grade 8 (cumulative test covering United States History to 1877, United States History: 1877 to the present and Civics & Economics)	1998 (Discontinued following spring 2008 administration; replaced with separate tests implemented in 2004)
World History to 1000 AD/ World Geography (Changed to World History and World Geography to 1500 in 2003)	1998
World History from 1000 AD/ World Geography (Changed to World History and World Geography: 1500 AD to the Present in 2003)	1998
United States History (Changed to Virginia and United States History in 2003)	1998
World Geography	2000
US History to 1877 (grade 5 or 6)	2004
US History: 1877 to the present (grade 6 or 7)	2004
Civics and Economics (grade 7 or 8)	2004

# Strategies to Ensure Coverage of K-3 History and Social Science Content

- **Much of K-3 content is necessary to access what is taught in later grades**
- **Topics will be used to develop passages to be assessed on the grade 3 SOL reading test**
- **Academic review for elementary schools warned in history/social science would examine instructional plan for history/social science SOL in grades K-3**
- **Incentives could be created to encourage and reward excellence in history and social science**

# Coverage of Grades K-3 History and Social Science Content in Later Grades/Courses

- 80% included in upper elementary or middle school
- 14% included in high school courses
- 6% of content not included in later courses

# Integration of K-3 History and Social Science Content into Reading Instruction

- **Topics addressed in the K-3 history/social science SOL would be used as the basis for passages assessed on the grade 3 reading test**
- **Using reading passages linked to history and social science topics would encourage school divisions to incorporate a literacy approach in teaching history/social science content**

# Rationale for Approaching History Content Through a Literacy Approach

- Provides context for history/social science standards resulting in greater understanding and retention of the content
- Improves reading comprehension by increasing familiarity with the subject matter of the passage

# **Rationale for Approaching History Content Through a Literacy Approach**

**“I am confident that the reading-assessment changes you are contemplating can make a real difference in gradually raising reading comprehension abilities of students, and also in raising the economic and civic competencies that go with higher verbal skills.”**

**E.D. Hirsch, Jr.**

**Professor of Education Emeritus, University of VA  
Founder of Core Knowledge Foundation**



# Sample Reading Passage and Items

**The following slides present a released New York State Grade 3 Language Arts test that uses a History passage.**

Permission granted

# Annual Costs of Grade 3 History and Social Science Assessments

## Test Development **\$152, 412**

- Item and test form development
- Educator review committee meetings

## Test Administration **\$222, 813**

Administration, scoring, and reporting costs for

- SOL tests
- VGLA - grade level alternative assessment for students with disabilities and English language learners
- VAAP - alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities

# **Need for Cost Savings: Price Adjustments in Contract**

**Pearson, the current contractor for the Virginia Assessment Program, may request annual cost increases limited to changes in costs for providing services. Increases may not exceed 4%.**

# Need for Cost Savings: Meet Federal Requirements

- **Development of “modified achievement standard” tests as required under NCLB and State Fiscal Stabilization Funds Application**
- **Tests are intended for students with disabilities who are learning grade level content but who are unable to reach the same level of proficiency as their non-disabled peers. Estimated to be approximately 2% of students at a grade level**



# Virginia Modified Achievement Standard Test (VMAST)

- Received a grant from the United States Department of Education in September 2007 to investigate a process for developing “modified achievement standards” tests in reading and mathematics
- Addition of supports and simplifications to existing online Grade 8 reading and mathematics test items
- Supported items have been piloted; field test planned in spring 2010
- Funds needed to expand development to reading and mathematics in grades 3-7 and high school

# Revised History and Social Science Standards of Learning Implementation Schedule

<b>Summer 2009</b>	Content committees review potential field-test items based on the revised 2008 <i>History and Social Science Standards of Learning</i> and Curriculum Framework
<b>2009 - 2010 School Year</b>	Field-test items based on the revised 2008 <i>History and Social Science Standards of Learning</i> and Curriculum Framework included in SOL tests
<b>Summer 2010</b>	Content committees review for History and Social Science assessments based on the revised 2008 <i>History and Social Science Standards of Learning</i> and Curriculum Framework
<b>2010 - 2011 School Year</b>	Full implementation of assessments based on the 2008 <i>History and Social Science Standards of Learning</i> and Curriculum Framework

# References

[http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american\\_educator/issues/spring06/willingham.htm](http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/spring06/willingham.htm)

[http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american\\_educator/issues/summer07/Crit\\_Thinking.pdf](http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/summer07/Crit_Thinking.pdf)

[http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american\\_educator/issues/winter0607/CogSci.pdf](http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/issues/winter0607/CogSci.pdf)

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/23/opinion/23hirsch.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=hirsch%20tests&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/23/opinion/23hirsch.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=hirsch%20tests&st=cse)

[http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american\\_educator/spring2003/AE\\_SPRNG.pdf](http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/spring2003/AE_SPRNG.pdf)