

**Report on George Washington Carver Elementary School  
Richmond Public Schools  
Spring 2018 Standards of Learning Test Investigation  
July 30, 2018**

**I. BACKGROUND**

In early 2018, the Richmond Public Schools (RPS) Superintendent, Mr. Jason Kamras, shared with Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff that members of the Richmond City School Board and the community had expressed concern that “something was going on with Standards of Learning (SOL) testing” at George Washington Carver Elementary School (GWC ES). One concern was the number of students from GWC ES who failed their SOL tests after moving on to middle school despite the overall high pass rates at GWC ES. RPS constituents also reported that the score gains made by GWC ES students who retook the SOL tests under the SOL expedited retake policy were unusually high. Expedited retakes are SOL tests that are re-administered to students who did not achieve a passing score (400 points or higher) on their initial SOL test but who are eligible to retake the test because they scored within a score range of 375-399 or experienced an extenuating circumstance prior to their first test attempt.

As a result of the concerns shared by the RPS Superintendent, VDOE staff initiated a review of previous SOL test results from GWC ES. VDOE staff noted that pass rates at GWC ES over the past several years had been high but had declined from 2015-2016 to the 2016-2017 school year. Further examination of the data confirmed that student scores on expedited retakes were unusually high. VDOE staff reported these results to RPS staff and informed them that GWC ES would be added to a list of potential schools where an on-site SOL test administration audit would occur in spring 2018. On-site audits conducted by VDOE staff are routine events that occur in schools during SOL test administrations as VDOE resources allow. The purpose of on-site audits is to verify the proper implementation of SOL testing procedures by the school and to gather feedback regarding VDOE-provided test materials (e.g., Examiner’s Manuals, etc.) and policies.

In May 2018, VDOE staff notified the RPS Division Director of Testing (DDOT) that GWC ES was identified as a school where an on-site SOL test administration audit would occur in spring 2018. The RPS DDOT provided VDOE staff with the SOL testing plan for GWC ES so the audit could be scheduled and planned.

On May 24, 2018, RPS division-level administration received details from an anonymous source regarding potential test irregularities at GWC ES. As a result of the reported details, the RPS division-level administration asked the VDOE to lead an investigation of the alleged test irregularities. VDOE staff confirmed it would lead an investigation with the involvement of RPS staff. Soon after, VDOE staff received details from an anonymous source regarding potential test irregularities and concerns at GWC ES.

Given the allegations of test irregularities and the earlier concerns about the school shared by the RPS Superintendent, VDOE staff determined it would proceed with the on-site SOL test administration audit at GWC ES but with an expanded scope to include talking with numerous students and teachers. On Friday morning, June 1, 2018, VDOE staff partnered with RPS staff to jointly conduct interviews with 16 GWC ES students in grades 3 through 5. Additionally, one VDOE staff member observed an SOL test

session being administered that morning. In the afternoon, VDOE staff conducted interviews with 13 GWC ES staff members, each with varying responsibilities for students in grades 3 through 5.

From the information gathered on June 1, 2018, VDOE staff determined that proper SOL testing procedures were not followed during the administration of the spring 2018 SOL tests to date. Issues included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Students reported receiving assistance from adults during their SOL tests.
- Examiners and proctors did not administer SOL tests in accordance with the SOL Test Examiner's Manual (e.g., standardized test directions were not followed consistently, details beyond the standardized test directions were provided to students at various times during the SOL tests).
- SOL tests were administered with test accommodations (e.g., the read-aloud accommodation) to students who did not have the accommodation documented in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.
- Certain SOL test accommodations were not implemented properly during the administration of SOL tests (e.g., a read-aloud accommodation was provided to students in the same room with students not receiving a read-aloud accommodation; different SOL test content was read aloud to students in the same room).

Because of these issues, VDOE staff could not confirm the validity of the spring 2018 SOL tests administered at GWC ES through Friday, June 1, 2018. RPS division-level administration was directed to suspend SOL testing at GWC ES beginning Monday, June 4, 2018, until corrective actions could be implemented. Immediate corrective actions included the following:

- GWC ES staff would be retrained by RPS testing staff in the use of appropriate testing procedures as outlined in the SOL Test Examiner's Manual.
- SOL test accommodations documented in GWC ES students' IEPs and 504 Plans would be verified by RPS division-level staff to ensure the correct SOL test accommodations were provided to individual students.
- The 336 SOL tests administered prior to June 5, 2018, at GWC ES would be invalidated and re-administered to students by GWC ES staff and observed by VDOE staff.
- The administration of SOL tests that were scheduled for June 4, 2018, and beyond would be observed by VDOE staff.
- A revised SOL testing schedule would be developed for GWC ES for spring 2018 that reflected the appropriate re-administration of all SOL tests administered through June 1, 2018, as well as the initial administration of SOL tests scheduled for June 4, 2018, through the end of the school year.

The corrective actions detailed above were initiated on Monday, June 4, 2018. The administration of SOL tests resumed at GWC ES on Tuesday, June 5, 2018, under the observation of VDOE staff.

As a result of the information gathered by VDOE and RPS staff through June 1, 2018, the on-site SOL test administration audit transitioned to an SOL test irregularity investigation led by VDOE staff at the request of RPS. This report outlines details from the investigation, conclusions, and the future actions to be taken.

## **II. DETAILS FROM INTERVIEWS AND DATA REVIEWS**

## Interviews with GWC ES Students

To gather first-hand information, VDOE staff partnered with RPS staff to conduct two rounds of student interviews at GWC ES. The first round was completed Friday morning, June 1, 2018, by four pairs of interviewers, each consisting of one RPS staff member and one VDOE staff member. Each pair talked with four individual students resulting in a total of 16 first-round interviews with a mix of students in grades 3 through 5. RPS and VDOE staff members conducted a second round of student interviews on Thursday, June 14, 2018, using the same format, and talked with 19 additional students. Student statements indicated that certain examiners provided inappropriate assistance during SOL testing.

## Review of SOL Test Documentation

As a follow-up to the students' statements about certain examiners providing inappropriate assistance during the SOL tests, VDOE staff conducted an extensive review of the SOL test administration documentation and test data associated with the 336 SOL tests administered at GWC ES prior to June 5, 2018, when VDOE staff began to observe all SOL test sessions.

A set of GWC ES documents reviewed by VDOE staff included the completed *Test Ticket Transmittal Form and Affidavit for Examiners/Proctors* (Appendix, Figure A.1, p. 30). Often referred to as the transmittal form, this document is a daily part of every school's SOL test administration. The examiner and school test coordinator (STC) each initial the dated transmittal form to confirm the receipt of test tickets and to verify the number of test tickets being transferred before and after testing on that date. At the end of each test session, the examiners and proctors sign the transmittal form to affirm they administered the SOL tests according to the *School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement* (Appendix, Figure A.2, pp. 31-34).

Through the review of completed transmittal forms and other SOL test documentation, VDOE staff confirmed that the individuals who served as examiners for the majority of the 336 SOL tests administered prior to June 5, 2018, were Ms. Nicole Lacy (Grade 3); Ms. Valencia Davis and Mr. Marlin Osborne (Grade 4); and Ms. Evette Cartwright and Ms. Kayiesha Golds (Grade 5).

## Response Change Data for SOL Tests

In addition to a review of the GWC ES transmittal forms and test documentation, VDOE staff compiled and conducted an extensive review of GWC ES's SOL test data including response change data. Response change data indicate when a student changed a response to a test item and which new response the student selected for the item. The types of data compiled and summarized are described in Table 1.

**Table 1: Types of Response Change Data**

<b>Types of Response Change Data reviewed for Spring 2018 SOL Tests from GWC ES</b>
Note: Response change data are <i>not</i> available for the grades 3, 4, and 5 mathematics tests because students cannot go back to review and change responses on the computer adaptive mathematics tests.
<b>1) Incorrect Response to Correct Response:</b> The total number of items on the student's test where the student responded to the item with an <i>incorrect</i> response, moved on in the test, and later returned to that item and changed the response to the <i>correct</i>

<b>Types of Response Change Data reviewed for Spring 2018 SOL Tests from GWC ES</b>
response.
<b>2) No Response to Correct Response:</b> The total number of items on the student’s test where the student left the item with <i>no</i> response, moved on in the test, and later returned to that item and entered the <i>correct</i> response. (This category does not apply to SOL computer adaptive reading tests as students cannot leave an item blank.)
<b>3) Correct Response to Incorrect Response:</b> The total number of items on the student’s test where the student responded to the item with a <i>correct</i> response, moved on in the test, and later returned to that item and changed the response to an <i>incorrect</i> response.
<b>4) No Response to Incorrect Response:</b> The total number of items on the student’s test where the student left the item with <i>no</i> response, moved on in the test, and later returned to that item and entered the <i>incorrect</i> response. (This category does not apply to SOL computer adaptive reading tests as students cannot leave an item blank.)
<b>5) Incorrect Response to Incorrect Response:</b> The total number of items on the student’s test where the student responded to the item with an <i>incorrect</i> response, moved on in the test, and later returned to that item and changed the response to a different <i>incorrect</i> response.

By examining how students responded to individual test items, VDOE staff were able to identify tests where students changed their responses to numerous test items from an *incorrect* response to a *correct* response or from *no* response to a *correct* response. Changes of this type, when occurring often, can raise concerns that students may be receiving some type of assistance or prompting to change answers during their test administration.

The response change data compiled for GWC ES aligned with details from student interviews that assistance was provided to the students during the administration of the initial spring 2018 SOL tests. Student statements made during the interviews and summaries of the response change data are provided below by grade level.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Grade SOL Tests: Student Statements**

Student statements made to RPS and VDOE staff about 3<sup>rd</sup> grade SOL testing included the following:

- “I didn’t understand the question. Ms. Lacy helped me understand the question when I raised my hand.”
- “The teacher [Ms. Lacy] said, ‘Check your work.’ I reread the question and changed my answer.”
- “When I raised my hand, Ms. Lacy would tell me to keep going if I did it right. If it was wrong, she would tell me to try again.”
- “If I just didn’t know, I’d raise my hand and ask for help. They would read to me. They would sit down next to me and read to me.”
- “Ms. Lacy watched while I reviewed. She read hard words to me if I didn’t know it.”

- “Ms. Nelson didn’t check my work [the second time I took the test]. She said, ‘Read the screen’. I did better the first time [with Ms. Lacy].”
- “In math Ms. Lacy said, ‘What does difference mean?’ I said, ‘I don’t know.’ Ms. Lacy said, ‘It means minus.’”
- “During math, Ms. Lacy would tell us to check our work. If I would get it right, Ms. Lacy would tell me to go on. Ms. Lacy would tell me to check my work if I got it wrong. Ms. Lacy helped one of my friends with regrouping.”
- “She [Ms. Lacy] would hold up her fingers to help us with  $8 + 9$ . She put up 9 fingers and then counted up to 17.”

During the interviews, two students referenced testing from spring 2017 with Ms. Lacy.

- “I remember 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading. I got some wrong, but the second time [expedited retake] I got them all right. I read them over. I got help from Ms. Lacy.”
- “Ms. Lacy checked our answers. If she smiled at me, I didn’t have to check it, but if she frowned, I knew I needed to check it.”

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade SOL Tests: Response Change Data

VDOE staff compiled and reviewed the response change data, as described previously in Table 1 (p. 4), for a number of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading tests administered during spring 2018 at GWC ES. The data are shown in Table 2. For a number of students, two test attempts existed. Test 1 was completed prior to June 5, 2018; Test 2 was completed on or after June 5, 2018, when VDOE staff were on-site observing the SOL test administrations.

**Table 2: Grade 3 Reading SOL Tests Administered at GWC ES**

Total number of test items on the Grade 3 Reading SOL Test is 33. The scaled scores of all SOL tests range from 0 to 600. Scaled scores below 400 are categorized as failing, while scores ranging from 400 to 499 are categorized as Pass/Proficient and from 500 to 600 as Pass/Advanced.

	Incorrect Response to Correct Response	Correct Response to Incorrect Response	Incorrect Response to Incorrect Response	Scaled Score	Examiner
<b>Student 1</b>					
Test 1	11	0	1	493	Lacy
Test 2	0	0	0	384	Collier
<b>Student 2</b>					
Test 1	15	0	1	506	Lacy
Test 2	0	0	0	392	Collier
<b>Student 3</b>					
Test 1	5	0	0	539	Lacy
Test 2	0	0	0	412	Lacy
<b>Student 4</b>					

	Incorrect Response to Correct Response	Correct Response to Incorrect Response	Incorrect Response to Incorrect Response	Scaled Score	Examiner
Test 1	6	0	1	438	Lacy
Test 2	1	0	0	322	Collier
<b>Student 5</b>					
Test 1	9	0	2	476	Lacy
Test 2	0	0	0	362	Lacy
<b>Student 6</b>					
Test 1	15	1	1	501	Lacy
Test 2	1	0	0	368	Nelson
<b>Student 7</b>					
Test 1	4	1	0	540	Lacy
Test 2	0	0	0	447	Nelson
<b>Student 8</b>					
Test 1	8	1	1	522	Lacy
Test 2	1	0	0	345	Nelson
<b>Student 9</b>					
Test 1	8	0	0	521	Lacy
Test 2	0	0	0	400	Nelson
<b>Student 10</b>					
Test 1	8	0	2	418	Lacy
Test 2	NA	NA	NA		
<b>Student 11</b>					
Test 1	8	0	0	487	Lacy
Test 2	NA	NA	NA		

NA – Test 2 was not completed.

The number of changes from an *incorrect* response to a *correct* response during “Test 1” of the grade 3 reading test raised significant concerns about the integrity of these tests when combined with other information collected during the investigation.

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Grade SOL Tests: Student Statements

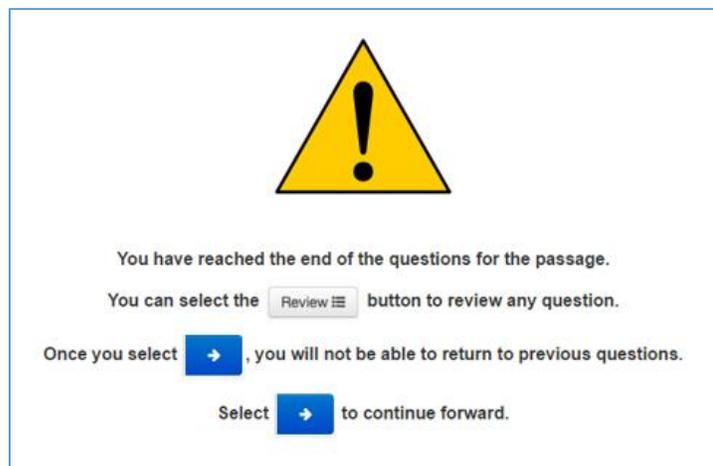
Student statements made to RPS and VDOE staff about 4<sup>th</sup> grade SOL testing included the following:

- “Ms. Davis gave me help. She would tell me to check it over again.” The student reported when students raised their hands, Ms. Davis would tell them to review and would watch. “She would tell me to check it again if I’m wrong.”
- “When I raised my hand and asked what a word meant, Ms. Davis would help me. She would use the word in a sentence for me.”
- “Sometimes Ms. Davis would tell me to move on. Sometimes she asked me if I was sure that was the right answer.”

- “If you get stuck, you’re supposed to tell the teacher. Ms. Davis will give you hints.”
- “Ms. Davis told me to push review and go back to the first question. If I got it wrong, Ms. Davis told me to try again. She couldn’t give me the answer, but if it was right, she told me to go ahead.”
- “She’ll [Ms. Davis] say do that over again because it might not be right.”
- “Ms. Davis didn’t have to read anything to me, but she helped some other kids with words.”
- “We reviewed all the questions. When it was wrong, she [Ms. Davis] said look it over. If it was right, she said go ahead. We didn’t do that the second time because there was a man [VDOE staff] in the room.”
- “The man [VDOE staff] was in the room so she [Ms. Davis] didn’t review the questions.”
- “Ms. Davis helped everyone the same way.”
- “Mr. Osbourne said think about it if it was wrong. If it was right, he said go ahead.”
- “Everyone in the room raised their hands because Mr. Osborne said, ‘When you get to the yellow triangle, raise your hand and I will come and look.’ The second time [I took the SOL test] he said, ‘Don’t raise your hand. Just keep going.’”

The online screen (Figure 1), referred to as the “yellow triangle” or “caution sign” during student and staff interviews, alerts students during online computer adaptive SOL reading tests that they have reached the end of the questions for that particular passage and directs them how to go back to review their questions or how to continue forward in the test.

**Figure 1: Online Screen in Computer Adaptive Reading Tests that Appears at the End of a Passage Set**



#### **4<sup>th</sup> Grade SOL Tests: Response Change Data**

VDOE staff compiled and reviewed response change data, as described previously in Table 1 (p. 4), for a number of SOL tests administered to 4<sup>th</sup> grade students during spring 2018 at GWC ES. Data for the Grade 4 Reading SOL test are shown in Table 3, and data for the Virginia Studies SOL test are shown in Tables 4 and 5. The total number of items on each test are shown with the data. The scaled scores of all SOL tests range from 0 to 600. Scaled scores below 400 are categorized as failing, while scores ranging from 400 to 499 are categorized as Pass/Proficient and from 500 to 600 as Pass/Advanced. For a number of students, two test attempts existed. Test 1 was completed prior to June 5, 2018; Test 2 was

completed on or after June 5, 2018, when VDOE staff were on-site observing the SOL test administrations.

**Table 3: Grade 4 Reading SOL Tests Administered at GWC ES (Students with two test attempts)**

Total number of test items on the Grade 4 Reading SOL Test is 33.

	<b>Incorrect Response to Correct Response</b>	<b>Correct Response to Incorrect Response</b>	<b>Incorrect Response to Incorrect Response</b>	<b>Scaled Score</b>	<b>Examiner</b>
<b>Student 1</b>					
Test 1	5	1	1	416	Davis
Test 2	0	0	0	338	Davis
<b>Student 2</b>					
Test 1	8	0	4	372	Osborne
Test 2	0	0	0	280	Osborne

**Table 4: Virginia Studies SOL Tests Administered at GWC ES (Students with two test attempts)**

Total number of test items on the Virginia Studies SOL Test is 50.

	<b>Incorrect Response to Correct Response</b>	<b>No Response to Correct Response</b>	<b>Correct Response to Incorrect Response</b>	<b>No Response to Incorrect Response</b>	<b>Incorrect Response to Incorrect Response</b>	<b>Scaled Score</b>	<b>Examiner</b>
<b>Student 1</b>							
Test 1	12	4	0	0	1	479	Davis
Test 2	0	0	0	0	0	356	Archer
<b>Student 2</b>							
Test 1	17	0	2	0	3	501	Davis
Test 2	0	0	0	0	0	323	Davis
<b>Student 3</b>							
Test 1	2	5	0	2	0	546	Davis
Test 2	0	1	0	0	0	429	Davis

**Table 5: Virginia Studies SOL Tests Administered at GWC ES (Students with one test attempt only)**

Total number of test items on the Virginia Studies SOL Test is 50.

	<b>Incorrect Response to Correct Response</b>	<b>No Response to Correct Response</b>	<b>Correct Response to Incorrect Response</b>	<b>No Response to Incorrect Response</b>	<b>Incorrect Response to Incorrect Response</b>	<b>Scaled Score</b>	<b>Examiner</b>
<b>Student 4 - Test 1</b>	0	6	0	1	0	514	Davis

	Incorrect Response to Correct Response	No Response to Correct Response	Correct Response to Incorrect Response	No Response to Incorrect Response	Incorrect Response to Incorrect Response	Scaled Score	Examiner
Student 5 - Test 1	12	0	0	1	1	514	Davis
Student 6 - Test 1	6	4	1	0	0	546	Osborne
Student 7 - Test 1	1	6	0	0	0	598	Osborne
Student 8 - Test 1	11	2	0	0	1	598	Osborne
Student 9 - Test 1	17	1	0	0	1	529	Osborne
Student 10 - Test 1	14	3	0	0	1	529	Osborne
Student 11 - Test 1	20	1	0	0	1	598	Osborne

The number of changes from an *incorrect* response or *no* response to a *correct* response during the Grade 4 Reading and the Virginia Studies SOL tests raised significant concerns about the integrity of these tests when combined with other information collected during the investigation.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Grade SOL Tests: Student Statements

Student statements made to RPS and VDOE staff about SOL testing included the following:

- “Ms. Cartwright read it [science] to me. If it was a hard question, she said, ‘Hit review.’ She showed me how to do one. She drew [a picture] for me.” Student said, “At [previous school] my teacher didn’t read the paragraphs. Ms. Cartwright was more helpful.”
- “When I was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, Ms. Cartwright gave me examples of how to do the hard ones.”
- “She [Ms. Cartwright] helps me, tells me which answers aren’t right.”
- “When I was stuck [on reading test], my teacher [Ms. Golds] told me to look for a paragraph that you see things from the question in.”
- “Ms. Golds looks it over for us before going on.”
- “For science, she [Ms. Golds] had to help a little bit by reading a word I didn’t know. If there was something I didn’t know but it was in my brain, she gave me a hint.”
- “My teacher [Ms. Golds] can help if I’m stuck. She won’t tell me if my answer is right or wrong. She only says go back and try that again.”
- “Ms. Golds read the test to me. Sometimes I told her what to reread for me. Sometimes she decided what to reread for me.”

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Grade SOL Tests: Response Change Data

VDOE staff compiled and reviewed response change data, as described previously in Table 1 (p. 4), for a number of SOL tests administered to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students during spring 2018 at GWC ES. Data for the Grade 5 Science SOL test are shown in Table 6. Test 1 was completed prior to June 5, 2018.

**Table 6: Grade 5 Science SOL Tests Administered at GWC ES (Students with one test attempt only)**

Total number of test items on the Grade 5 Science SOL Test is 50. The scaled scores of all SOL tests range from 0 to 600. Scaled scores below 400 are categorized as failing, while scores ranging from 400 to 499 are categorized as Pass/Proficient and from 500 to 600 as Pass/Advanced.

	<b>Incorrect Response to Correct Response</b>	<b>No Response to Correct Response</b>	<b>Correct Response to Incorrect Response</b>	<b>No Response to Incorrect Response</b>	<b>Incorrect Response to Incorrect Response</b>	<b>Scaled Score</b>	<b>Examiner</b>
<b>Student 1 - Test 1</b>	4	1	0	1	0	538	Cartwright
<b>Student 2 - Test 1</b>	11	5	0	0	1	476	Cartwright
<b>Student 3 - Test 1</b>	22	4	9	1	1	453	Cartwright
<b>Student 4 - Test 1</b>	13	3	2	1	1	435	Cartwright
<b>Student 5 - Test 1</b>	11	1	0	0	0	419	Cartwright
<b>Student 6 - Test 1</b>	10	5	1	3	2	466	Cartwright
<b>Student 7 - Test 1</b>	12	3	0	0	0	488	Cartwright
<b>Student 8 - Test 1</b>	11	4	0	0	0	488	Cartwright
<b>Student 9 - Test 1</b>	12	0	0	0	1	499	Cartwright
<b>Student 10 - Test 1</b>	17	0	0	0	0	447	Cartwright
<b>Student 11 - Test 1</b>	23	0	2	1	2	447	Golds
<b>Student 12 - Test 1</b>	15	4	0	0	5	444	Golds
<b>Student 13 - Test 1</b>	7	3	5	2	1	473	Golds
<b>Student 14 - Test 1</b>	20	0	0	0	1	444	Golds
<b>Student 15 - Test 1</b>	21	1	1	0	4	453	Golds
<b>Student 16 - Test 1</b>	17	0	0	0	1	466	Golds
<b>Student 17 - Test 1</b>	13	2	0	0	5	447	Golds
<b>Student 18 - Test 1</b>	17	3	1	0	4	463	Golds
<b>Student 19 - Test 1</b>	14	3	2	1	1	453	Golds
<b>Student 20 - Test 1</b>	16	2	5	0	1	439	Golds
<b>Student 21 - Test 1</b>	19	1	0	0	5	456	Golds
<b>Student 22 - Test 1</b>	14	0	1	2	2	447	Golds
<b>Student 23 - Test 1</b>	13	10	3	3	1	444	Golds
<b>Student 24 - Test 1</b>	19	2	2	1	1	435	Golds
<b>Student 25 - Test 1</b>	15	4	1	0	1	476	Golds
<b>Student 26 - Test 1</b>	19	1	3	1	0	476	Golds
<b>Student 27 - Test 1</b>	18	2	2	1	0	476	Golds
<b>Student 28 - Test 1</b>	8	6	1	2	1	456	Golds

The number of changes from an *incorrect* response or *no* response to a *correct* response during “Test 1” of the Grade 5 Science SOL tests raised significant concerns about the integrity of these tests when combined with other information collected during the investigation.

### **Other Student Statements**

Students made statements regarding inappropriate assistance from other examiners and proctors; however, these statements could not be correlated with specific response change data.

The student statements included the following:

- “If I get stuck, I ask Ms. Alexis what does it mean. She gives me examples. Sometimes she helps me decide which paragraph to read. After I answered the question, she asked me, ‘Did it say they did that?’ She tells me to go back to check to see.”
- “She [Ms. Alexis] gives hints. She says think again but can’t give you the answer.”
- “Ms. Cotman and Ms. Lacy were going around to check. They were checking work for everybody.”
- “Ms. Cotman would check your work. If I got it right, she said go to the next one.”
- “I was stuck on one, and Ms. Burgess showed me how to do it.”
- “Mr. Johnson doesn’t help. He tells me if it’s right or wrong.”

### **Interviews with GWC ES Staff and Anonymous Sources**

On the afternoon of June 1, 2018, three pairs of VDOE staff interviewed 13 GWC ES staff who had varying responsibilities for students in grades 3 through 5. Two additional staff interviews were conducted by VDOE staff on the afternoon of June 14, 2018, and second interviews were conducted with three GWC ES staff on June 18, 2018. The assistant principal/school test coordinator, Ms. Fay Joyner, and the principal, Dr. Kiwana Yates, were each interviewed by two VDOE staff with an RPS division-level administrator present on Wednesday, June 20, 2018. VDOE staff conducted second interviews with the GWC ES assistant principal on June 28, 2018, and with a GWC ES staff member on June 29, 2018.

VDOE staff were told by various sources that only certain GWC ES staff members administer the vast majority of the SOL tests at the school. Sources also provided statements such as:

- “It’s like [there are] testing committees. They [certain staff] test everyone.”
- “Some people test. Some people don’t. We don’t talk about it.”
- “It’s a weird system here. We don’t want any part of it. We don’t want to talk about it.”

It was reported by multiple sources that teachers were relieved of SOL test examiner responsibilities if the students in their test sessions did not perform well. One staff member reported being removed as an SOL test examiner for not having done enough to help the students pass their SOL tests. Another staff member confirmed being removed as an SOL test examiner after administering a small number of tests, but the individual was not willing to speculate why the change was made. Another staff member stated:

- “Yes, teachers have been pulled out of testing because their scores weren’t good enough. It is a fair statement that people know what will happen if their scores are not good enough.”

- “Dr. Yates is the disciplinarian of testing and scores. People know that. If I’m not getting the scores, then I’m going to have to answer to Dr. Yates.”

When asked about the testing plan and how examiners were identified, Ms. Joyner indicated that she worked with Dr. Yates to establish the testing plan but that there were teachers that Dr. Yates did not want administering SOL tests. “Dr. Yates felt a group of teachers were not capable of testing – that they did not provide a positive outlook for students.” Ms. Joyner said that Dr. Yates indicated to her previously that some teachers were having their students finish the tests too quickly and that they didn’t do well. Dr. Yates would tell Ms. Joyner which teachers she wanted administering tests and would direct her to change the testing plan. Ms. Joyner described receiving text messages late in the evenings from Dr. Yates about making changes in the testing plan for the next day and which teachers she wanted administering SOL tests. Ms. Joyner added:

- “It wasn’t like this when I started here in 2006. It’s become an obsession here. For Dr. Yates it’s like, ‘If I don’t get the results I want, I’m going to change the testing plan.’”
- Based on who Dr. Yates wanted as SOL test examiners, Ms. Joyner said, “I was left with a small bag of people I could use to implement testing.”

Dr. Yates responded to questions about certain teachers being identified to administer tests by stating:

- “Anybody in my building is able to administer tests. It doesn’t matter who tests them [the students]. Anybody should be able to administer tests.”
- When asked if she removed any teachers from testing due to the students’ scores, Dr. Yates stated, “No, I did not pull anybody from testing because their scores were not good enough.”

Anonymous sources and some GWC ES staff reported to VDOE staff that a small group of staff members, often referred to as the “inner circle,” was considered to receive benefits and privileges from the building principal, Dr. Yates; it was reported that other staff in the school did not receive the same benefits. The GWC ES staff members identified as being in the “inner circle” varied slightly throughout interviews, but always included some of the examiners who administered the majority of the SOL tests. Opportunities and benefits reportedly provided to the “inner circle” by the principal were described as including special staff development opportunities - some that involved extensive travel, additional funding or access to materials for their classrooms, and preferred access to opportunities to earn additional income (e.g., hourly work such as Saturday Academy or Extended Day), etc.

When asked specifically about SOL testing and allegations of inappropriate assistance being provided to students during testing, some GWC ES staff indicated nothing inappropriate was occurring. Others stated they could not explain how such scores were being achieved by some of the students, but they did not know how assistance was being provided to students during testing. Statements made to VDOE staff related to inappropriate assistance included the following:

- “I’m glad you’re here. It should be looked at.”
- “I knew this would happen one day.”
- “I have heard about our scores, but I can’t explain it. You need to talk to the people who test [the students].”
- “The students will tell you the truth about how it’s done. This [method] is all they know.”
- “Students come to me on a primer [reading] level, but they somehow do well [on SOL tests].”
- “I would never say something that I’m not sure of – I really don’t know how it’s happening.”

- “I’m fearful for my career. I’m sad for the children. They are not getting what they need.”

One individual expressed concern that over the last four years classroom instruction has deteriorated. “Students are desperate to learn,” but some teachers are not teaching as much because it’s known that “the end of the year will be okay” given what occurs during testing.

One GWC ES staff member admitted to assisting students by monitoring their review of test items and providing indications to students of whether items were correct or incorrect.

Another staff member mentioned the online test screen that was referred to as the “caution sign” or the “yellow triangle screen” (Figure 1, p. 7) during interviews with staff and students.

- “At the ‘caution sign,’ I tell them to go back and review. Yes, that is what happens. When you [VDOE staff] were in the room, I know I wasn’t supposed to say anything.” When asked why it was okay to tell students to go back and review when VDOE staff were not in the room, the teacher responded, “I don’t have an answer for that.”

Other statements included:

- “I know I do some things that I’m absolutely not supposed to do – as a proctor or as an examiner. [During SOL testing] we are encouraged to keep up the good work. This has been encouraged by Dr. Yates.”
- “Ms. Joyner isn’t into the encouraging part. She’s about business. She’s about coming in to the building and getting work done.”

A staff member reported to VDOE staff that Dr. Yates had come into the classroom just as SOL testing was starting and reminded the students not to submit their tests until the teacher had a chance to review their work.

During the interviews with GWC ES staff, VDOE staff presented data regarding student performance. When asked about their students’ SOL assessment data and when they receive their students’ test results, some teachers indicated scores are intentionally not shared with them and that they should not ask questions about SOL test scores. GWC ES staff stated the following:

- “There’s a reason I haven’t seen my [students’] data.”
- “We don’t have discussions about data like at other schools.” When asked why, the response was, “Sometimes you don’t want to ask questions because you don’t want to get your head knocked off.”
- “There is no transparency around our testing. We never learn our scores. This [interview] is the most transparent anybody has ever been about scores.”
- “I never see my scores. If a student failed, they just told me, and I remediated them.”
- “Honestly, I don’t really know how my kids do.”
- “Scores are never shared with teachers. I never see my scores. I stopped asking.”

When asked about the release of SOL test scores, Ms. Joyner stated, “Dr. Yates didn’t want me to release scores. That was a directive from her to not provide [SOL test scores] to teachers.” When Dr. Yates was asked by VDOE staff about providing SOL test scores to staff, she said, “We talk about them as a class and as a school.” She added, “If a teacher asks for a score, I give it to them.”

In reference to the drop in SOL test performance of many GWC ES students when they move to other schools such as Albert Hill Middle School, Ms. Joyner said, “When I have approached Dr. Yates about discrepancies [with students’ scores while at GWC ES and after leaving GWC ES], she dismisses me – she does not listen to me.”

During her interview Dr. Yates said, “Nobody has ever talked to me about the scores of Albert Hill [Middle School] students.”

When shown the response change data for the SOL tests administered earlier this spring, Dr. Yates said that the data did not make sense to her. She stated, “I don’t test the children so I don’t know why all of these changes would happen. This does not make sense to me.”

### **Impact of Parent Refusals on the Spring 2018 SOL Test Administration**

Once it was determined that all SOL tests administered through June 1, 2018, would be invalidated and re-administered to students, this information was communicated to GWC ES parents and students. A letter from the RPS Superintendent was sent home with students on June 5, 2018, and planning at the school began immediately to re-administer 336 SOL tests and complete the first-time administration of the remaining SOL tests by the close of the school year.

Questions were raised by parents and the community about whether students were required to participate in the re-administration of SOL tests. The RPS Superintendent communicated via Twitter on June 6, 2018, that parents had the right to “opt out” of the retesting at GWC ES. While Virginia regulations do not provide for what is sometimes referred to as an “opt out policy” regarding the SOL assessments, parents may refuse to have their student participate in one or more of the required tests. Under normal circumstances, if parents refuse to have their student participate in a required SOL assessment, a “0” score is assigned. Because these retests were the result of a test irregularity at GWC ES, students will receive a score report with “NS” for no score and no penalty will result for the student.

A parent refusal form was sent home with students for parents to complete if they did not want to have their child participate in the re-administration of the SOL tests. The information spread quickly through the GWC ES community, and parents began returning signed forms to refuse having their students participate. While the refusal forms were intended for the re-administration of SOL tests, some parents used the forms to refuse participation in the initial test attempts, as well. The GWC ES principal and assistant principal each described the response rate of parents refusing the spring 2018 SOL tests as unprecedented and far exceeding the typical response rate for any paperwork ever sent home requiring parental action.

It was reported to RPS staff and VDOE staff by anonymous sources and during student interviews that individuals went to students’ homes to encourage parents to refuse to have their children be retested. One teacher reported hearing that the PTA President was working in the community to get parents to opt out and that Ms. Alexis was getting parents to sign the form at the van pick up. A student reported that a teacher, Ms. Cartwright, came to the house between the first and second test attempts to have a parent sign the refusal form. Another student said an adult came to the house with a refusal form for a parent to sign. When asked by VDOE staff about this, Ms. Cartwright indicated that although she is in Gilpin Court often – she sometimes takes students home – she did not know anything about this.

When VDOE staff shared these details with Dr. Yates, she stated, “It would be a concern that Ms. Cartwright went to a student’s home and collected forms.” Dr. Yates denied having any knowledge of any effort to collect refusal forms from parents. “I one hundred percent had no idea any of this was going on. I take insult to this.”

Given the high number of parents who refused to have their children participate in further administration of SOL tests, fewer than 150 valid tests were administered to GWC ES students in the spring 2018 SOL test administration. Approximately 570 SOL test records were expected at GWC ES in spring 2018.

The following data indicate the number of parent refusal forms received by grade level in spring 2018:

- 47% of third grade students’ parents refused to have their child test (38 of 81)
  - 63% of refusal forms were returned in three days, June 6, 7, and 8 (24 of 38)
- 76% of fourth grade students’ parents refused to have their child test (56 of 74)
  - 54% of the refusal forms were returned in three days, June 6, 7, and 8 (30 of 56)
- 94% of fifth grade students’ parents refused to have their child test (58 of 62)
  - 76% of the refusal forms were returned in three days, June 6, 7, and 8 (44 of 58)

In total:

- 70% of students’ parents refused to have their child test (152 of 217)
  - 65% of the refusal forms were returned in three days, June 6, 7, and 8 (98 of 152)

### **Procedural Issues and Concerns during SOL Testing**

Information gathered in the initial round of student interviews conducted by RPS and VDOE staff confirmed reports from anonymous sources that proper procedures were not being followed during the administration of SOL tests at GWC ES. This led to the VDOE decision to suspend SOL testing at GWC ES until corrective actions could be implemented and to require that SOL tests be re-administered to students to ensure the validity of the tests.

All SOL testing policies and procedures are documented in the [SOL Test Implementation Manuals](#) and the [Examiner’s Manuals](#) that are provided to school divisions four weeks prior to the start of the test administration for division- and school-level staff to prepare for testing. In addition, the *School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement* (Appendix, Figure A.2, pp. 31-34), a document that all school division staff who are involved in the administration of SOL tests must review and agree to prior to administering tests, includes the following statements regarding procedures:

All SOL tests must be administered strictly in accordance with the instructions provided in the SOL test manuals. This includes, but is not limited to, adhering to procedures for the handling, distribution and use of test materials and test manipulatives, adhering to specific requirements associated with test accommodations (e.g., read-aloud accommodation, dictation to scribe, etc.), and reading all SOL test directions to students exactly as written. SOL test directions must not be paraphrased, altered, or expanded without prior authorization from the Virginia Department of Education through the Division Director of Testing unless the Examiner’s Manual allows flexibility in providing specific directions.”

All GWC ES staff participating in the administration of SOL tests signed the *2017-2018 School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement* (Appendix, Figure A.2, pp. 31-34) indicating they had read, understood, and agreed to adhere to all policies and procedures regarding SOL testing.

In addition to the procedural issues raised during GWC ES student and staff interviews, VDOE staff observed and addressed issues as the administration of SOL tests resumed. Details of the procedural issues are as follows:

#### **Prior to SOL testing**

- **Test Setting - Requirements:** Prior to the start of SOL testing, all schools are required to establish appropriate test settings in the locations (e.g., classrooms, computer labs) where SOL tests will be administered. As detailed in the Examiner's Manuals (section 4.5), "... all curricular materials and materials related to test content and test-taking strategies that might influence student performance or provide an unfair advantage" must be removed or covered.

**Observations at GWC ES:** A number of the rooms used for test administration were not properly prepared for testing. VDOE staff directed examiners in these rooms to remove or cover remaining curricular materials or advised that certain content area tests could not be administered in some locations.

#### **During SOL testing**

- **Test Directions - Requirements:** All SOL test examiners are required to be familiar with the directions for administering the test. As detailed in the Examiner's Manuals (section 4.8), "All directions that Examiners must read aloud to the students are in bold type so that they stand out from the rest of the text. This text must be read exactly as written ... It is essential that you become familiar with these instructions in this manual before test administration and that you follow them exactly as they appear."

**Observations at GWC ES:** Examiners reported to VDOE staff during interviews that they had deviated from the test directions provided in the Examiner's Manual. The standardized test directions were used for all tests once VDOE staff began observing sessions, although assistance was needed from VDOE staff in some sessions to direct the examiner to certain sections in the Examiner's Manuals during testing.

- **Monitoring Testing and Answering Questions - Requirements:** Once students have started their tests, examiners are required to monitor testing and answer students' questions appropriately. Each Examiner's Manual (sections 5.2.1 and 5.3.1) outlines examiner expectations such as "... monitor the testing process by moving as unobtrusively as possible about the room ..." and "Help must not be given on any test items." The manual states, "Examples of prohibited help include, but are not limited to: pronouncing words, rewording the question, providing hints and clues, giving reminders, and/or giving verbal indications or non-verbal cues about the correctness of a student's answer."

**Observations at GWC ES:** It was confirmed during student interviews with RPS and VDOE staff that GWC ES examiners and proctors monitored students' tests and provided inappropriate assistance to students during the test. This was done in the form of reviewing students' answers,

rewording questions, providing hints, directing students to re-read certain parts of the test, and providing clear cues to students about whether their responses were correct or incorrect. Inappropriate assistance was not provided to students in the test sessions observed by VDOE staff beginning on June 5, 2018.

- **Appropriate Assistance During Testing - Requirements:** Each Examiner’s Manual (sections 5.2.1 and 5.3.1) outlines several potential questions that students may raise and includes details of how examiners should respond appropriately so students are not advantaged or disadvantaged during the testing process. This includes questions such as how to use the online testing tools, how to navigate in the test, and how to use the zoom or magnification feature.

**Observations at GWC ES:** During the time VDOE staff observed testing, it was clear that some examiners and proctors were not familiar with this information. VDOE staff directed individuals on how to respond appropriately, including providing page numbers in the Examiner’s Manual where the specific information was located so the examiner could respond correctly.

- **Specific Directions for the Reading Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) - Requirements:** In the computer adaptive version of the grade 3, 4, and 5 reading tests, certain online screens appear to direct students through different parts of the test. Each Examiner’s Manual (section 5.2) provides examples of these transition screens with descriptions of what is to occur. The manual states, “When students encounter these [transition] screens and have questions or concerns, the Examiner/Proctor may read the screen(s) to the student and/or use the descriptions above to assist in providing directions to the student for navigating the screen.”

**Observations at GWC ES:** When the “caution screen” (Figure 1, page 7) appeared for students, VDOE staff observed that students regularly looked to the examiners for direction, and on multiple occasions, the examiner or proctor did not read the transition screen to the student or prompt the student to read the screen as the manual directed. During student interviews, some said they were told to raise their hand when they got to the “triangle screen” and then told to go back to the beginning of the set of questions to review their answers.

- **Proper Implementation of Test Accommodations – Requirements:** Test accommodations are changes in the administration of the SOL test which result in an adjustment to how the test is presented or how the student responds to test items. Test accommodations do not alter the content being assessed or the meaning of the resulting scores, but they do provide equal access to the test for students with disabilities. When used appropriately, test accommodations reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student’s disability without impacting learning expectations or providing an unfair advantage. The Examiner’s Manuals detail the test accommodations available to students with disabilities and the conditions for administering tests properly with accommodations.

**Observations at GWC ES:** Through student and staff interviews at GWC ES, VDOE staff learned that some test accommodations were not implemented according to state assessment policy, in particular, the read-aloud accommodation where the student’s disability requires that test content be read aloud to the student. In some situations at GWC ES, computer adaptive read-aloud tests were administered to multiple students in the same testing room. Because students are not administered the same test items during computer adaptive tests, read-aloud

accommodations on computer adaptive tests must be administered to students individually as prescribed in the Examiner's Manual.

During interviews, GWC ES students and staff confirmed instances where two students were administered separate computer adaptive read-aloud tests in the same room with an examiner and a shared proctor. The requirement of having a designated proctor or recording for each read-aloud test session was not followed. The Examiner's Manual indicates, "The test administration must be recorded or proctored throughout the entire read-aloud test administration."

In other test sessions, students receiving a read-aloud accommodation were administered their tests in rooms with students who were not to receive the read-aloud accommodation. This resulted in all students in the room essentially receiving the read-aloud accommodation. The Examiner's Manual indicates, "Students administered a read-aloud test (an Examiner reads the test to the student) must be tested in a 'read-aloud only' test room."

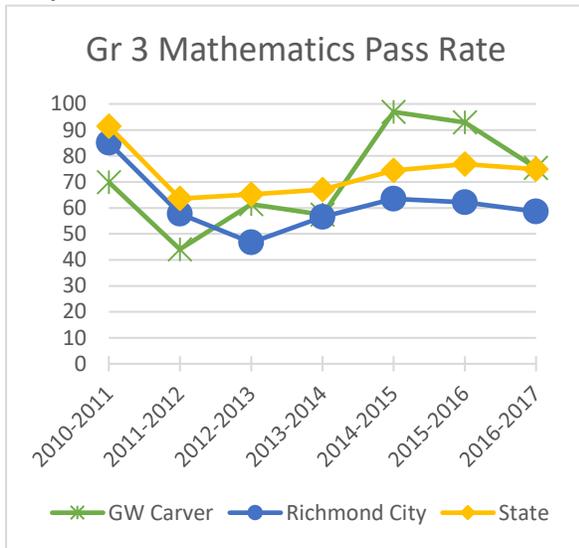
VDOE staff reviewed a list, provided by the RPS Testing Office, of SOL test accommodations to be provided to students at GWC ES. While not a specific violation of SOL test accommodations, the labels of the accommodations being provided were not the same as that used throughout the SOL Test Implementation Manuals and the Examiner's Manuals. This could lead to confusion when attempting to confirm the testing requirements in the test manuals for a certain accommodation. Also, the list of test accommodations appearing in the GWC ES document included accommodations that are not allowable and cannot be provided during an SOL test. The accommodations listed in the RPS document which are not allowed during SOL testing included, but were not limited to: check work frequently to ensure understanding, read difficult material to the student, highlight important text for the student, and break material into manageable parts for the student.

### **III. GWC ES SOL TEST DATA: PRIOR TO SPRING 2018**

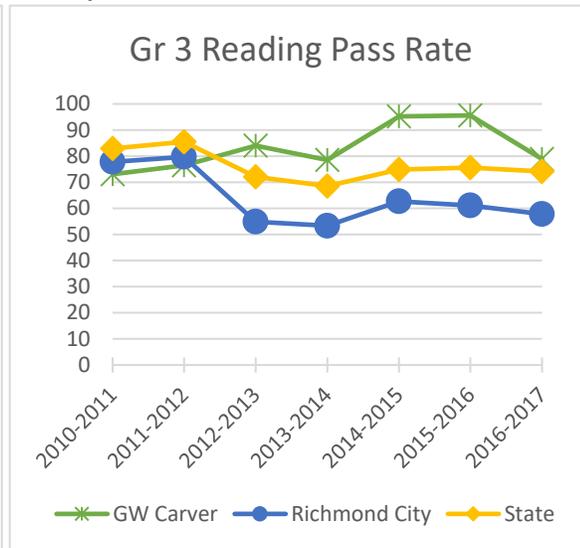
#### **SOL Test Pass Rate Data: GWC ES, RPS, and Virginia**

Graphs 1 through 8 represent the pass rates for the SOL tests administered in grades 3, 4, and 5 for all students at GWC ES, in RPS, and in all schools in Virginia. The data points and trend lines can be used to compare the performance of all students at GWC ES, RPS, and all schools in Virginia on these tests over a seven-year period. Notes are provided following the graphs to identify specific changes that occurred within the seven-year period represented.

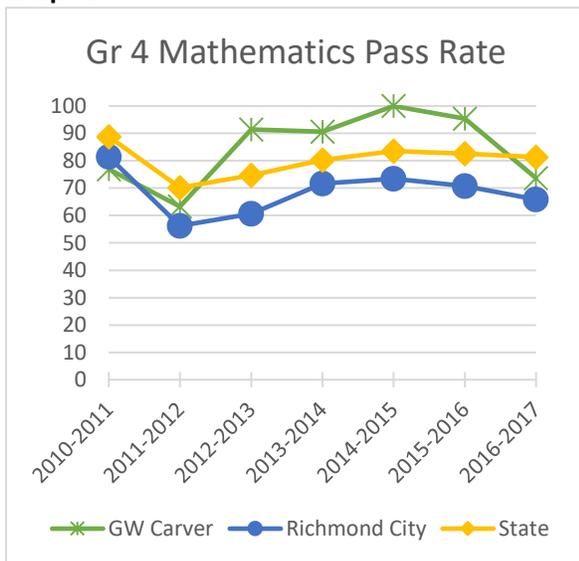
**Graph 1:**



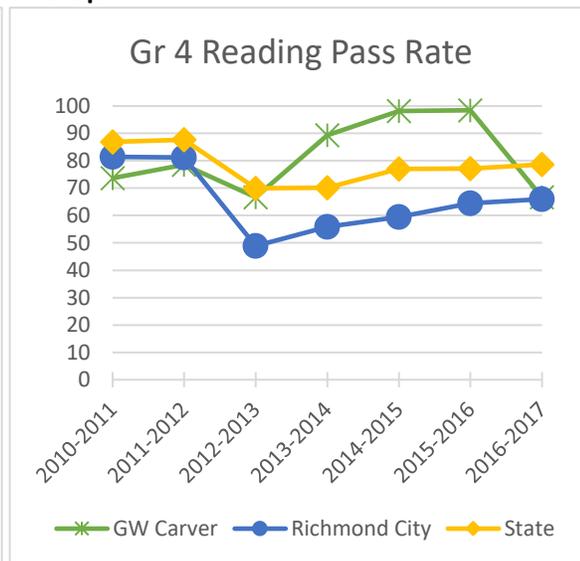
**Graph 2:**



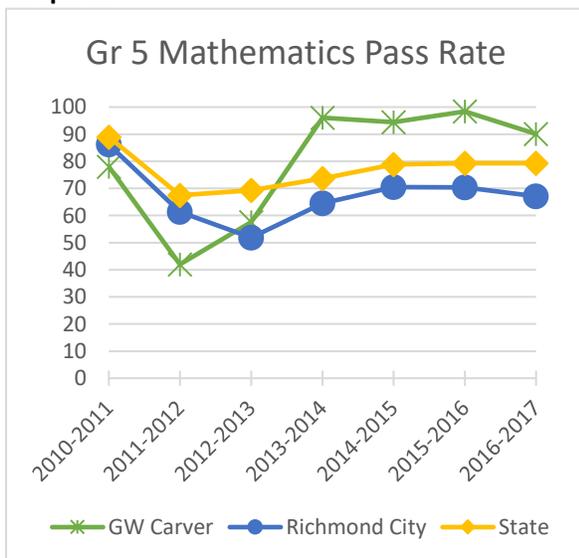
**Graph 3:**



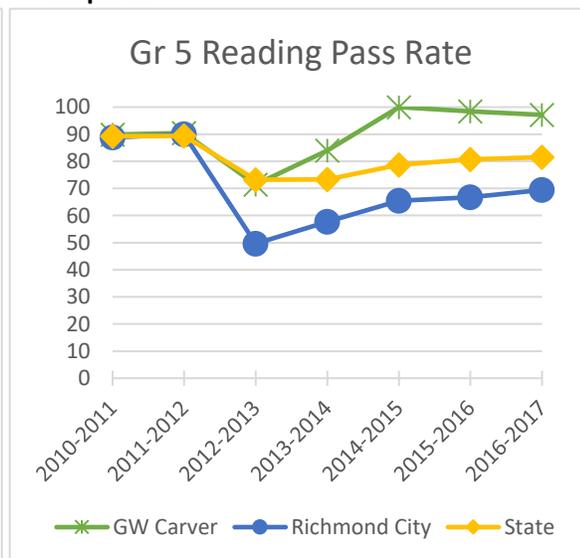
**Graph 4:**



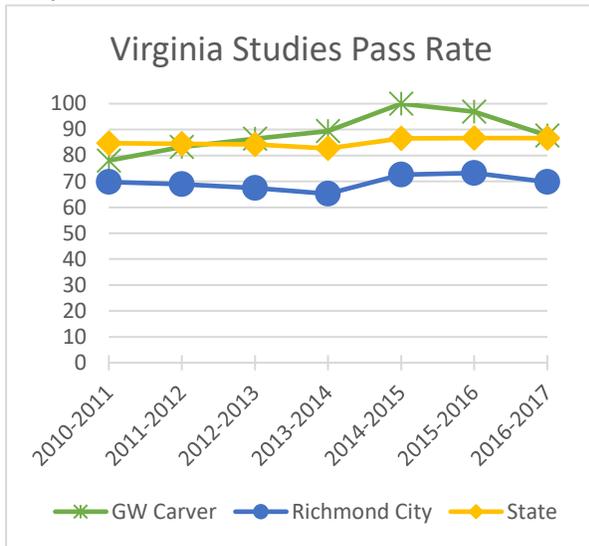
**Graph 5:**



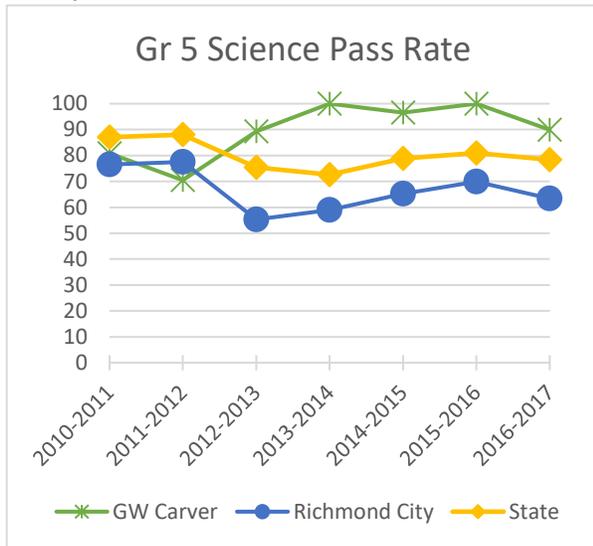
**Graph 6:**



Graph 7:



Graph 8:



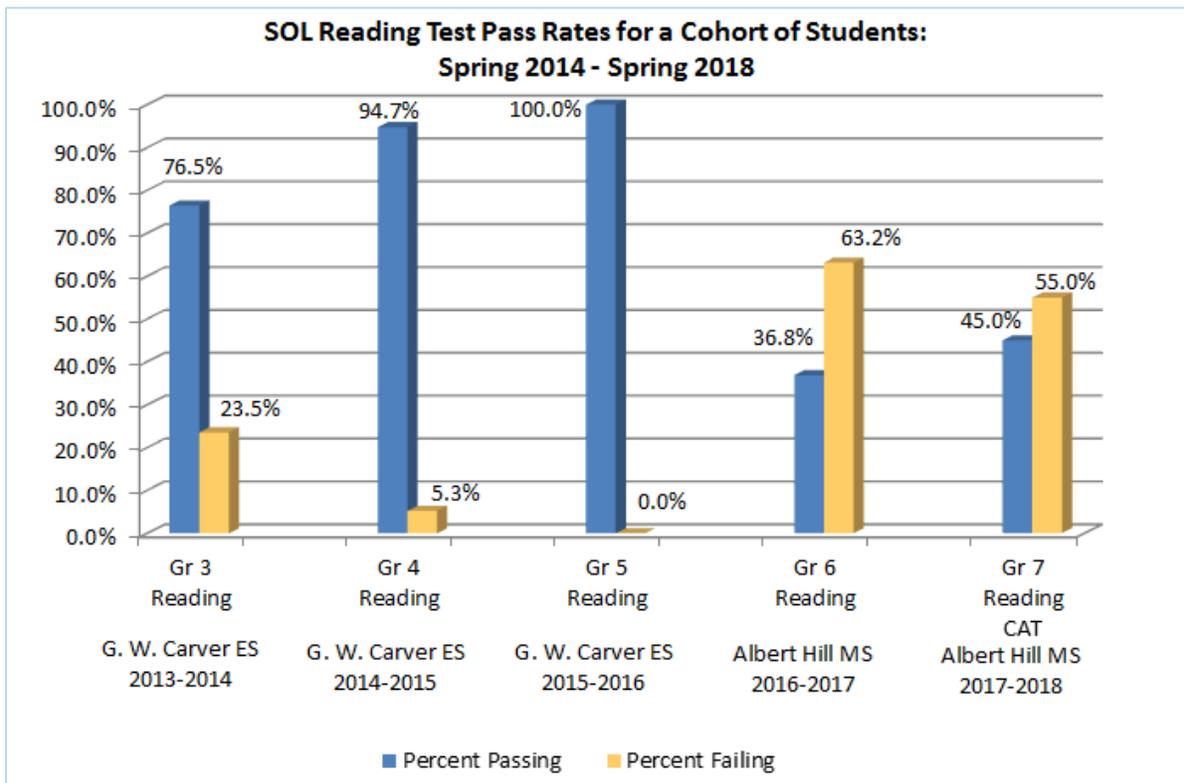
Notes regarding Graphs 1 through 8:

- Mathematics (2011-2012): New SOL Mathematics tests were implemented in 2011-2012 to assess the revised Mathematics SOL adopted by the Virginia Board of Education in 2009. Historically, decreases in pass rates have occurred when new tests are implemented as schools work to align their curriculum and instruction to changes in content and rigor of the new standards and assessments.
- Mathematics (2015-2016 and 2016-2017): The grade 3 mathematics test was transitioned from a traditional test to a computer adaptive test (CAT) in spring 2016, and the grades 4 and 5 mathematics tests were transitioned from traditional tests to CAT in spring 2017. With traditional tests, students are able to navigate throughout the entire test and review and change their responses prior to submitting their test. In a computer adaptive mathematics test, a student responds to a test item, and the next item presented to the student is selected based on how the student performed on the previous items. Because a computer adaptive test is customized for each student based on their performance as they proceed through the test, students are not able to go back and change their response to an item after they have navigated to the next test item.
- Reading and Science (2012-2013): New SOL Reading tests and new SOL Science tests were implemented in 2012-2013 to assess the revised English SOL and the revised Science SOL that were adopted by the Virginia Board of Education in 2010.
- Reading (2016-2017): The grades 3, 4, and 5 reading tests were transitioned from a traditional test to a computer adaptive test (CAT) in spring 2017 similar to the transition that occurred with mathematics tests. The elementary reading tests, however, adapt after a student finishes a reading passage and its associated set of test questions rather than after each individual test item like the mathematics tests. As a result, in computer adaptive reading tests, students are able to navigate among the items that are associated with a passage and review and change their responses, but after moving beyond that passage and set of items, students can no longer return to review and change their responses to those items.

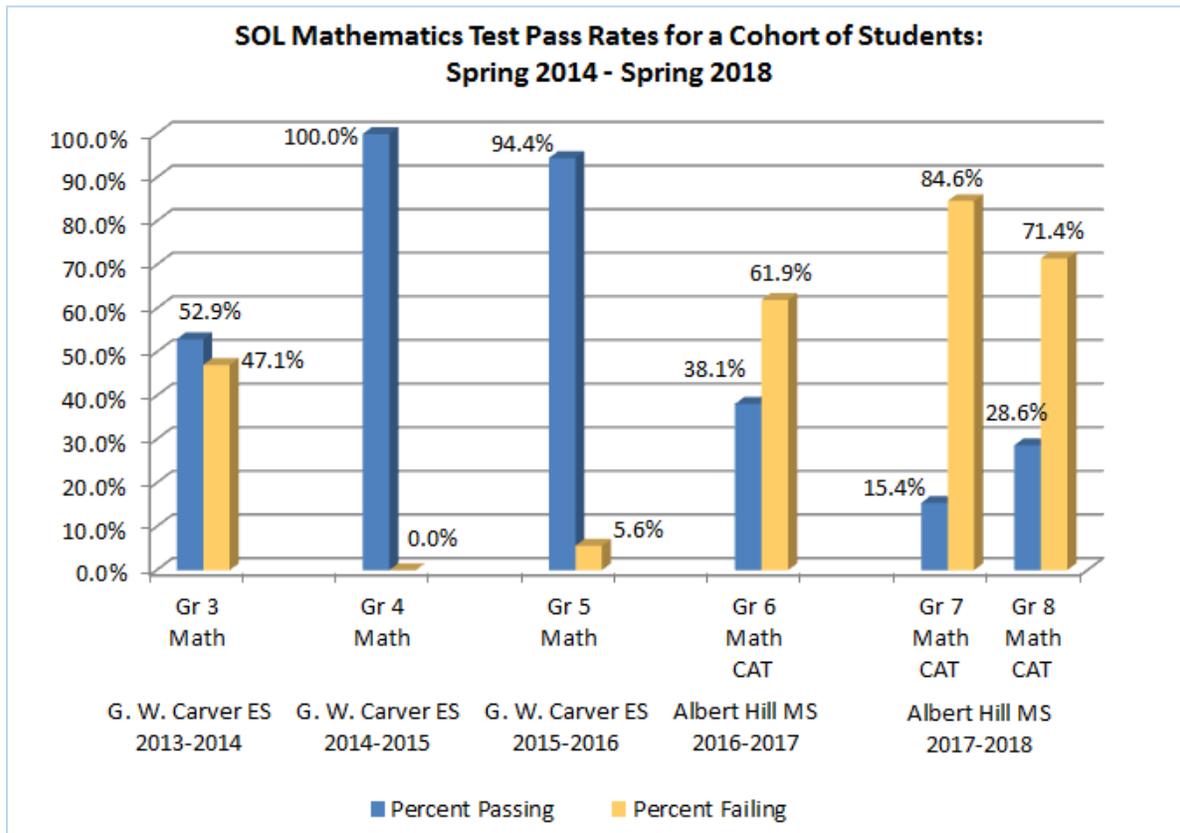
**GWC ES Students' SOL Test Performance: A Cohort of Students**

Another specific concern raised to VDOE staff from multiple sources was how GWC ES students perform academically after leaving GWC ES. SOL test data for a cohort of GWC ES students were examined. Graph 9 represents the performance of a cohort, or single group of students, on the SOL Reading tests administered in grades 3, 4, and 5 while attending GWC ES and then in grades 6 and 7 when the cohort was attending Albert Hill Middle School in RPS. Graph 10 represents the performance of the same cohort of students for the SOL Mathematics tests.

**Graph 9.**



Graph 10.



**SOL Test Performance of Students Transferring To and From GWC ES**

VDOE staff also conducted a review of SOL test scores of students who transferred between GWC ES and other schools both in and outside of RPS. Examples of the results are shown in Tables 7 and 8. SOL test scaled scores range from 0 to 600. Scaled scores earned below 400 are categorized as failing, while scores ranging from 400 to 499 are categorized as Pass/Proficient and from 500 to 600 as Pass/Advanced.

**Table 7: SOL Reading Test Scores of Students Transferring To and From GWC ES**

	School	2015	2016	2017	2018	Test
<b>Student A</b>	GWC ES			506		Gr 3 Reading
	Other ES				306	Gr 4 Reading
<b>Student B</b>	GWC ES			480		Gr 3 Reading
	Other ES				362	Gr 4 Reading
<b>Student C</b>	GWC ES		516			Gr 3 Reading
	GWC ES			542		Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES				278	Gr 5 Reading

	School	2015	2016	2017	2018	Test
<b>Student D</b>	GWC ES			404		Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES				297	Gr 5 Reading
<b>Student E</b>	GWC ES	429				Gr 3 Reading
	GWC ES		493			Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES			319		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				359	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student F</b>	Other ES		267			Gr 3 Reading
	GWC ES			423		Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES				389	Gr 5 Reading
<b>Student G</b>	Other ES		304			Gr 3 Reading
	GWC ES			447		Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES				215	Gr 5 Reading
<b>Student H</b>	GWC ES			474		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				326	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student I</b>	GWC ES		509			Gr 4 Reading
	GWC ES			479		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				359	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student J</b>	Other ES	317				Gr 3 Reading
	Other ES		300			Gr 4 Reading
	GWC ES			479		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				272	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student K</b>	Other ES	361				Gr 3 Reading
	GWC ES		447			Gr 4 Reading
	GWC ES			482		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				323	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student L</b>	GWC ES			573		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				297	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student M</b>	Other ES		358			Gr 4 Reading
	GWC ES			533		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				362	Gr 6 Reading

**Table 8: SOL Mathematics Test Scores of Students Transferring To and From GWC ES**

	School	2015	2016	2017	2018	Test
<b>Student N</b>	GWC ES			512		Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES				320	Gr 4 Mathematics
<b>Student O</b>	GWC ES		464			Gr 3 Mathematics
	GWC ES			473		Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES				274	Gr 5 Mathematics

	School	2015	2016	2017	2018	Test
<b>Student P</b>	Other ES		232			Gr 3 Mathematics
	GWC ES			456		Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES				277	Gr 5 Mathematics
<b>Student Q</b>	GWC ES			479		Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES				371	Gr 4 Mathematics
<b>Student R</b>	Other ES		341			Gr 3 Mathematics
	GWC ES			475		Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES				335	Gr 5 Mathematics
<b>Student S</b>	Other ES		416			Gr 3 Mathematics
	GWC ES			473		Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES				294	Gr 5 Mathematics
<b>Student T</b>	GWC ES			430		Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES				351	Gr 4 Mathematics
<b>Student U</b>	GWC ES			447		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				362	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student V</b>	GWC ES		547			Gr 4 Mathematics
	GWC ES			468		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				418	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student W</b>	GWC ES			460		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				378	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student X</b>	Other ES	346				Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES		331			Gr 4 Mathematics
	GWC ES			445		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				326	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student Y</b>	GWC ES			441		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				352	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student Z</b>	Other ES		352			Gr 4 Mathematics
	GWC ES			438		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				365	Gr 6 Mathematics

**SOL Test Performance of Students Transferring To and From Schools *other than* GWC ES**

To provide context for the scores of GWC ES students transferring to and from other schools as detailed in Tables 7 and 8, the SOL test scores for some students transferring to and from schools *other than* GWC ES are provided in Tables 9 and 10.

**Table 9: SOL Reading Test Scores for Students Transferring To and From Schools *Other Than* GWC ES**

	<b>School</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Test</b>
<b>Student 1</b>	Other ES	347				Gr 3 Reading
	Other ES		316			Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES			384		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				296	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student 2</b>	Other ES	368				Gr 3 Reading
	Other ES		372			Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES			342		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				322	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student 3</b>	Other ES	340				Gr 3 Reading
	Other ES		358			Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES			330		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				290	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student 4</b>	Other ES	340				Gr 3 Reading
	Other ES		338			Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES			333		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				336	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student 5</b>	Other ES	254				Gr 3 Reading
	Other ES		287			Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES			302		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				368	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student 6</b>	Other ES	429				Gr 3 Reading
	Other ES		400			Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES			403		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				438	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student 7</b>	Other ES	375				Gr 3 Reading
	Other ES		430			Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES			425		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				412	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student 8</b>	Other ES	481				Gr 3 Reading
	Other ES		509			Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES			489		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				514	Gr 6 Reading
<b>Student 9</b>	Other ES	429				Gr 3 Reading
	Other ES		438			Gr 4 Reading
	Other ES			430		Gr 5 Reading
	Other MS				427	Gr 6 Reading

**Table 10: SOL Mathematics Test Scores for Students Transferring To and From Schools *Other Than* GWC ES**

	<b>School</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Test</b>
<b>Student 10</b>	Other ES	291				Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES		271			Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES			339		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				359	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student 11</b>	Other ES	408				Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES		441			Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES			407		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				374	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student 12</b>	Other ES	313				Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES		314			Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES			332		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				340	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student 13</b>	Other ES	319				Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES		384			Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES			300		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				328	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student 14</b>	Other ES	346				Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES		379			Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES			409		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				393	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student 15</b>	Other ES	393				Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES		473			Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES			400		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				453	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student 16</b>	Other ES	442				Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES		493			Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES			428		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				456	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student 17</b>	Other ES	433				Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES		436			Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES			440		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				403	Gr 6 Mathematics
<b>Student 18</b>	Other ES	477				Gr 3 Mathematics
	Other ES		503			Gr 4 Mathematics
	Other ES			432		Gr 5 Mathematics
	Other MS				447	Gr 6 Mathematics

## GWC ES SOL Test Expedited Retake Data

Concerns about GWC ES students' SOL test performance on expedited retakes as compared to students' initial attempts were raised to VDOE staff. A review of expedited retake data for GWC ES resulted in the information shown in Table 11. Spring 2015 was the first SOL test administration in which expedited retakes were available for elementary school students.

**Table 11: Expedited Retake Data for GWC ES from Spring 2015 through Spring 2017**

Content Area	Test Administration	Number of Expedited Retakes Administered	Expedited Retake Pass Rate	Average Score Change between a Student's First Test and Expedited Retake
Mathematics	Spring 2015	14	71.4%	Increased by 48 points
	Spring 2016	Less than 10	100%	Increased by 84 points
	Spring 2017	33	90.9%	Increased by 94 points
Reading	Spring 2015	11	90.9%	Increased by 43 points
	Spring 2016	Less than 10	100%	Increased by 113 points
	Spring 2017	31	96.8%	Increased by 89 points
Science	Spring 2015	Less than 10	100%	Increased by 70 points
	Spring 2016	None	NA	NA
	Spring 2017	Less than 10	100%	Increased by 63 points
Virginia Studies	Spring 2015	None	NA	NA
	Spring 2016	Less than 10	100%	Increased by 93 points
	Spring 2017	Less than 10	100%	Increased by 115 points

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. Based on an extensive review of the school's SOL test data in combination with statements from various GWC ES students and staff, the VDOE concludes inappropriate assistance was provided by some GWC ES staff members to a significant, undetermined number of GWC ES students during the initial administration of the SOL tests through June 1, 2018. Individuals violated the *2017-2018 School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement* (Appendix, Figure A.2, pp. 31-34). The specific sections of the *2017-2018 School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement* in which violations occurred are listed below. It is important to note that GWC ES students were **not** at fault or responsible for these violations.

# 2. All persons are prohibited from providing students with answers to secure test items, suggesting how to respond to secure test items, or influencing student responses to secure test items. Prohibited actions include, but are not limited to, the following: providing clues or hints, providing reminders of content or testing strategies, prompting students to correct or check/recheck specific responses, permitting access to curricular

materials (e.g., textbooks, notes, review materials, bulletin boards, posters, charts, maps, timelines, etc.), or using voice inflection, facial gestures, pointing, gesturing, tapping, or other actions to indicate a response or accuracy of a student's response.

# 4. Reading or reviewing any part of a secure test (e.g., test items, answer options, passages, pictures, diagrams, charts, maps, etc.) before, during, or after the test administration is a violation of test security unless an Examiner is reading the test items as part of an accommodation (e.g., read-aloud, interpretation/ transliteration, etc.) or is reviewing the test items in preparation for providing that accommodation.

# 10. All persons are prohibited from attempting to formally or informally score secure SOL tests or individual test items. Prohibited actions include, but are not limited to, creating an answer key, reviewing or scoring a student's SOL item response or responses, reviewing or scoring student scratch paper, or tracking student performance on test items.

These violations relate to the Code of Virginia, [§ 22.1-292.1. Violations related to secure mandatory tests.](#)

2. Based on statements by various GWC ES students and staff, the VDOE concludes that an extensive number of SOL tests administered through June 1, 2018, were not administered in accordance with the policies and procedures detailed in the [SOL Test Implementation Manuals](#) and [Examiner's Manuals](#).

## **V. ACTIONS**

In response to the investigation, RPS must implement the following actions:

1. By Friday, September 21, 2018, RPS division-level staff will develop: 1) a plan to evaluate whether additional instructional supports are necessary for any former GWC ES student entering middle school for the first time in 2018-2019 and 2) a plan to implement any additional instructional supports needed for these students.
2. By Friday, September 21, 2018, RPS division-level staff will develop: 1) a plan to evaluate whether additional instructional supports are necessary for GWC ES students entering the fourth and fifth grade in the 2018-2019 school year and 2) a plan to implement any additional instructional supports needed for these students.
3. Prior to the administration of SOL tests in 2018-2019, the RPS Superintendent or a designee will share the details of this SOL test irregularity and the investigation with division-level staff and GWC ES staff so individuals are aware of the specific test security violations that occurred.
4. Prior to the administration of SOL tests in 2018-2019, the Division Director of Testing and other RPS division-level staff will engage school administrative teams from all Richmond Public Schools to ensure school administrators are aware of SOL testing policies and procedures as related to this test irregularity and provide appropriate support to their School Test Coordinators to ensure proper implementation of SOL testing policies and procedures.

5. The RPS Superintendent or a designee will refer to *Chapter 22. Licensure Regulations for School Personnel* in the *Virginia Administrative Code*, specifically *Section 690* or [8VAC20-22-690](#) for procedures to follow regarding acts related to secure mandatory tests as specified in [§ 22.1-292.1](#) of the *Code of Virginia*.
6. In spring 2019, an RPS division-level staff member familiar with SOL testing procedures will observe SOL test administration training and daily SOL testing at GWC ES during the Spring 2019 SOL Non-Writing Test Administration to ensure SOL testing policies and procedures are followed. Observations will be shared daily with the Division Director of Testing.
7. In 2019-2020, an unannounced audit of SOL testing will be conducted by division-level staff during the Spring 2020 SOL Non-Writing Test Administration at GWC ES.

In response to the investigation, the VDOE has completed or will complete the following:

1. Because the VDOE could not determine the integrity of the test results at GWC ES for any tests administered prior to June 5, 2018, all SOL tests administered prior to that date and all Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) assessments completed in 2017-2018 have been invalidated. Students who did not participate in the re-administration of SOL tests in spring 2018 and students who completed VAAP assessments in 2017-2018 will receive score reports that reflect No Score (NS).
2. A request will be made to the Virginia Board of Education at its September 2018 meeting to withhold school accreditation for GWC ES. This request is based upon a provision in the [Regulations Establishing the Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia](#) as follows:  
[8VAC20-131-390. Accreditation.](#)  
D. A school's accreditation rating may be withheld by action of the board for any school found to be in violation of test security procedures pursuant to [§ 22.1-19.1](#) of the Code of Virginia.

**APPENDIX**

Figure A.1: *Test Ticket Transmittal Form and Affidavit for Examiners/Proctors*

<b>APPENDIX C</b>	<i>Test Ticket Transmittal Form and Affidavit for Examiners/Proctors</i>			
<b>STANDARDS OF LEARNING ASSESSMENTS</b>				
<i>2017–2018 Non-Writing Test Administration</i>				
Division Name: _____	School Name: _____			
Date: _____				
<p><b>Directions:</b> Use this transmittal form to track and verify the distribution of Student/Proctor Testing Tickets. After testing has been completed, each Examiner/Proctor and all individuals who administered a Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessment must read and affirm the statement in the Affidavit column.</p>				
Examiner's Name (Proctor's Name)	Quantity of Test Tickets Issued to Examiner/Proctor	Examiner's initials (Proctor's initials) verifying receipt of the secure test tickets.	STC Initials verifying return of the secure test tickets.	Examiner's/Proctor's Affidavit <b>My signature below affirms, I administered the Standards of Learning Assessment(s) according to the School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement.</b>

Figure A.2: The 2017-2018 School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement

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<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>STANDARDS OF LEARNING (SOL) ASSESSMENTS</b> <b>2017–2018 SCHOOL DIVISION PERSONNEL TEST SECURITY AGREEMENT</b>
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The *School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement* that follows should be read and understood by all school division personnel. All individuals who may be exposed to secure test items and those involved in the administration of Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments (including, but not limited to, Examiners, Proctors, Interpreters, and Scribes) **MUST** read, understand, and agree to adhere to the following:

1. Students must never be exposed to unreleased (secure)<sup>1</sup> test items (except while completing an official SOL test attempt) or exposed to answers to secure test items. **Using secure test items in any form (including reworded test items) at any time is a violation of test security.** If in doubt whether test items are secure, contact your Division Director of Testing for assistance.
2. All persons are prohibited from providing students with answers to secure test items, suggesting how to respond to secure test items, or influencing student responses to secure test items. Prohibited actions include, but are not limited to, the following: providing clues or hints, providing reminders of content or testing strategies, prompting students to correct or check/recheck specific responses, permitting access to curricular materials (e.g., textbooks, notes, review materials, bulletin boards, posters, charts, maps, timelines, etc.), or using voice inflection, facial gestures, pointing, gesturing, tapping, or other actions to indicate a response or accuracy of a student's response.
3. Examiners should be in possession of secure test materials only on the day they are administering a test and only for the specific test being administered. For the paper SOL *Writing* tests only, Examiners are not permitted to open sealed packages of prompts more than 30 minutes before the administration of the short-paper component.
4. Reading or reviewing any part of a secure test (e.g., test items, answer options, passages, pictures, diagrams, charts, maps, etc.) before, during, or after the test administration is a violation of test security unless an Examiner is reading the test items as part of an accommodation (e.g., read-aloud, interpretation/transliteration, etc.) or is reviewing the test items in preparation for providing that accommodation.
5. Any Login IDs and passwords issued for the administration of Virginia SOL Assessments are secure and must remain confidential.
6. Logging into or navigating throughout a secure online test by anyone except the student whose name appears on the Student Testing Ticket is a violation of test security. Any exceptions to this must first be authorized by the Virginia Department of Education through the Division Director of Testing.
7. Capturing **ALL OR ANY PART** of a secure test **is a violation of test security.** Prohibited actions include, but are not limited to, copying, photographing, recording, outlining, or summarizing test content or details regarding the secure test content. Any exceptions to this must first be authorized by the Virginia Department of Education through the Division Director of Testing.
8. All SOL tests must be administered strictly in accordance with the instructions provided in the SOL test manuals. This includes, but is not limited to, adhering to procedures for the handling, distribution and use of test materials and test manipulatives, adhering to specific requirements associated with test accommodations (e.g., read-aloud accommodation, dictation to scribe, etc.), and reading all SOL test directions to students exactly as written. SOL test directions must not be paraphrased, altered, or expanded without prior authorization from the Virginia Department of Education through the Division Director of Testing unless the *Examiner's Manual* allows flexibility in providing specific directions.
9. Sample items are included at the beginning of each SOL test and are the only items on the SOL test that may be used with students to review, as directed in the *Examiner's Manual*, test item format and procedures for indicating responses. Students should also be provided with opportunities prior to the day of their test administration to become familiar with SOL test item formats and how to indicate responses. Resources such as SOL Practice Items are available for these purposes on the Virginia Department of Education website.
10. All persons are prohibited from attempting to formally or informally score secure SOL tests or individual test items. Prohibited actions include, but are not limited to, creating an answer key, reviewing or scoring a student's SOL item response or responses, reviewing or scoring student scratch paper, or tracking student performance on test items.
11. All persons are prohibited from altering, in any manner, student responses to secure SOL test items. Prohibited actions include, but are not limited to, erasing or deleting student responses, changing student responses, or providing responses to items left unanswered or partially unanswered.

<sup>1</sup>SOL test items remain secure before, during, and after all test administrations until such time that the Virginia Department of Education publishes the test item on its website, as released. The end of a test administration does NOT indicate secure SOL test items are released.

Figure A.2: The 2017-2018 School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement (continued)

<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>2017–2018 SCHOOL DIVISION PERSONNEL TEST SECURITY AGREEMENT</b>
Page 2 of 2	
<p>Complete the following prior to participating in any SOL test administration activities involving secure test materials:</p> <p><b>Check the Non-Writing Test Administration:</b>      <input type="checkbox"/> Fall 2017      <input type="checkbox"/> Spring 2018      <input type="checkbox"/> Summer 2018</p> <p>I acknowledge that I will have access to the Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments for the purpose of administering an SOL test. I also acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to adhere to all elements of the <i>School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement</i> and the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I have read the legislation passed by the Virginia General Assembly (§ 22.1–19.1 Action for violations related to secure mandatory tests and § 22.1–292.1 Violations related to secure mandatory tests).</li> <li>2. I understand that if test security procedures are not followed, my license may be suspended or revoked and/or I may be assessed a civil penalty for each violation.</li> <li>3. All known or suspected violations of SOL test security shall be reported to appropriate school division personnel or to the Virginia Department of Education. To contact the Virginia Department of Education to report a known or suspected violation, call student assessment staff at (804) 225-2102, or mail details to Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement, Virginia Department of Education, P.O. Box 2120, Richmond, VA 23218-2120.</li> </ol> <p><b>Please be sure to sign and return the <i>School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement</i> to the appropriate test administrator before participating in any SOL test administration activities involving secure test materials.</b></p>	
Signed:	Print Name:
Position:	Date:
School:	Division:

Figure A.2: The 2017-2018 School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement (continued)

<b>APPENDIX A</b>	<b>General Assembly Legislation</b>
<p>Please read legislation passed by the Virginia General Assembly (§ 22.1–19.1 Action for violations related to secure mandatory tests) regarding the repercussions of violating test security.</p>	
<p><b>§ 22.1–19.1. Action for violations related to secure mandatory tests.</b></p>	
<p>A. The Office of the Attorney General, on behalf of the Board of Education, may bring a cause of action in the circuit court having jurisdiction where the person resides or where the act occurred for injunctive relief, civil penalty, or both, against any person who knowingly and willfully commits any of the following acts related to secure mandatory tests required by the Board to be administered to students:</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Permitting unauthorized access to secure test questions prior to testing;</li><li>2. Copying or reproducing all or any portion of any secure test booklet;</li><li>3. Divulging the contents of any portion of a secure test;</li><li>4. Altering test materials or examinees' responses in any way;</li><li>5. Creating or making available answer keys to secure tests;</li><li>6. Making a false certification on the test security form established by the Department of Education;</li><li>7. Excluding students from testing who are required to be assessed; or</li><li>8. Participating in, directing, aiding or abetting, or assisting in any of the acts prohibited in this section.</li></ol>	
<p>For the purpose of this subsection, "secure" means an item, question, or test that has not been made publicly available by the Department of Education.</p>	
<p>B. Nothing in this section may be construed to prohibit or restrict the reasonable and necessary actions of the Board of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, or the Department of Education or their agents or employees engaged in test development or selection, test form construction, standard setting, test scoring, reporting test scores, or any other related activities which, in the judgment of the Superintendent of Public Instruction or Board of Education, are necessary and appropriate.</p>	
<p>C. Any person who violates any provisions of this section may be assessed a civil penalty not to exceed \$1,000 for each violation. Furthermore, any person whose administrative or teaching license has been suspended or revoked pursuant to § 22.1-292.1 may be assessed a civil penalty for the same violation under this section and the reasonable costs of any review or investigation of a violation of test security.</p>	
<p>All civil penalties paid to the Commonwealth pursuant to this section shall be deposited into the Literary Fund.</p>	
<p>D. For the purpose of this section, "person" shall not mean a student enrolled in a public school.</p>	
<p>Please read legislation passed by the Virginia General Assembly (§ 22.1–292.1 Violations related to secure mandatory tests) regarding the repercussions of violating test security.</p>	
<p><b>§ 22.1-292.1. Violations related to secure mandatory tests.</b></p>	
<p>A. The Board of Education may suspend or revoke the administrative or teaching license it has issued to any person who knowingly and willfully commits any of the following acts related to secure mandatory tests administered to students as required by this title or by the Board of Education:</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Giving unauthorized access to secure test questions;</li><li>2. Copying or reproducing all or any portion of any secure test booklet;</li><li>3. Divulging the contents of any portion of a secure test;</li></ol>	
Spring 2018 Standards of Learning Assessments	Non-Writing Test Implementation Manual
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Figure A.2: The 2017-2018 School Division Personnel Test Security Agreement (continued)

4. Coaching or assisting examinees during testing or altering test materials or examinees' responses in any way;
5. Making available any answer keys;
6. Failing to follow test security procedures established by the Department of Education;
7. Providing a false certification on any test security form required by the Department of Education;
8. Retaining a copy of secure test questions;
9. Excluding students from testing who are required to be assessed; or
10. Participating in, directing, aiding, assisting in, or encouraging any of the acts prohibited by this section.

For the purposes of this section, "secure test" means an item, question, or test that has not been made publicly available by the Department of Education.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit educational personnel from providing input to administrators or other authorized personnel, including school board members and members of the General Assembly, except when done in a manner that violates test integrity or security regarding the accuracy, clarity, or propriety of test items or test administration procedures.

B. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit or restrict the reasonable and necessary actions of the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, or the Department of Education in test development or selection, test form construction, standard setting, test scoring and reporting, or any other related activities which, in the judgment of the Superintendent of Public Instruction or the Board of Education, are necessary and appropriate.

C. Any suspension or revocation imposed for the acts enumerated in this section shall be rendered pursuant to Board regulations promulgated pursuant to the Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.) and § 22.1-298.1, governing the licensure of teachers.