Assessment Glossary

ACCESS for ELLs 2.0: The Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) test is the state-designated assessment tool for English learners (EL students). WIDA ACCESS measures oral and written language skills of K-12 EL students. The goal of the test is to monitor students' progress in learning academic English. The test addresses both academic content knowledge and social aspects of language by assessing students' English language proficiency in five academic domains: social and instructional language, English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. There are four components of the test: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. For additional information visit https://wida.wisc.edu/assess/access

Advanced Placement: High school students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses must take the end-of-course AP examination to demonstrate their levels of understanding of college-level knowledge skills. Examinations are administered in May of each year. AP exam fees are paid for by ACPS (if the student chooses to be absent for an AP exam, the fee must be reimbursed). Examinations are scored on a five-point scale set by The College Board. AP scores are sent to students, their designated colleges, and their high school in July. A college that participates in the AP Examination Program determines full or partial credit for scores of three or better.

Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT®): The CogAT® is a computer-based abilities test that measures a child's cognitive skills or the skills involved in "learning how to learn." Cognitive refers to the reasoning process by which knowledge is gained. The CogAT® is a battery of tests that assesses three skill areas: verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal. It measures developed abilities, not innate abilities. Results can help teachers and parents identify young children who have well-developed learning skills, guide teachers in planning instructional activities, and provide insight regarding students who may need help in acquiring and developing the specific skills necessary to be successful in school.

Science Benchmarks: Science benchmark assessments are criterion-referenced tests currently administered at the conclusion of the first two grading periods of the academic year in grades 3-8 and Biology. These assessments are designed to measure students' proficiency levels relative to required curriculum standards at the conclusion of each grading period. Whenever possible, these curriculum benchmark assessments contain test items designed to reflect item-design features of Virginia Standards of Learning tests. Teachers, administrators, and professional learning communities can use aggregated and disaggregated benchmark assessment data to determine the levels of standards proficiency attained by students, and areas where re-teaching or intervention may be needed to help students attain standards mastery each quarter.

DESSA Social Emotional Learning Assessment: The DESSA (Devereux Student Strengths Assessment) is a nationally standardized, strength-based behavior rating scale that assesses students' social and emotional competence in grades K-12. The DESSA provides information about eight key social and emotional competencies aligned to the CASEL standards for social emotional learning. Students' scores on the DESSA can be used to identify a child's specific strengths and opportunities for growth in each of the eight social and emotional competency domains as well as inform the delivery of social emotional interventions within a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework. Additional information on the DESSA can be found at: https://apertureed.com/research/about-the-dessa/

MAP Growth: MAP Growth is a computer-adaptive assessment for measuring achievement and growth that measures students' progress in comparison with students in the U.S. The purpose of MAP Growth is to determine what a student knows and is ready to learn next across reading and math strands. MAP Growth can track students' individual growth over time – from whatever achievement level they are starting and regardless of grade. Teachers can use the score to inform instruction, personalize learning, and monitor the growth of individual students. School and division level staff can use the scores to see the performance and progress of a grade level, school, or the entire district. Families can use MAP scores to set goals and support students' academic needs. Additional information on MAP Growth can be found at: https://www.nwea.org/map-growth/

Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test® – Third Edition (NNAT®3): The NNAT®3 is a timed 30-minute nonverbal computer-based abilities test. The NNAT®3 was designed to utilize progressive matrices to allow for a culturally neutral evaluation of students' nonverbal reasoning and general problem-solving abilities. Nonverbal abilities measures were developed to assess reasoning and problem-solving abilities without requiring the student to read, write, or speak. The NNAT®3 measures developed abilities, not innate abilities. Results can help teachers and parents identify young children who have well-developed learning skills, can guide teachers in planning instructional activities, and can provide insight regarding students who may need help in acquiring and developing the specific skills necessary to be successful in school. A demo of the NNAT®3 assessment can be viewed here.

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS™): The PALS™ assessment is the State-provided screening tool for the Virginia Early Intervention Reading Initiative administered in grades K-3. PALS™ measures young children's understanding of fundamentals of literacy, including phonological awareness (awareness of the sounds of spoken words), alphabet knowledge, letter sounds, spelling, word concepts, recognition of words in isolation, and oral passage reading. PALS™ results provide diagnostic information about a child's progress in certain literacy areas. Additional information on the PALS can be found at: https://pals.virginia.edu/

SAT & PSAT: The Scholastic Assessment Tests (SAT) is a standardized assessment used by many colleges for admissions. The SAT takes approximately 2 hours and consists of two tests: the Reading/Writing Test and the Math Test. Additional details can be found at: https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/digital/educators
The Preliminary SAT (PSAT) is structured similarly to the SAT®, has the same sections and timing, and measures the same Reading, Writing and Math skills students learn in the classroom—the knowledge and skills a student needs to succeed in college and career.

Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP): The VKRP is an initiative led by UVA's Curry School of Education and expands the assessment of kindergarteners to include the school readiness domains of math, social skills, and self-regulation. These brief assessments are combined with the already administered PALS literacy results to produce a more comprehensive view of the whole child. Additional information on the VKRP can be found at: https://vkrponline.org/

Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments: The Virginia SOL assessments are required at grades 3 through 8 and for students enrolled in certain high school courses (labeled as End-of-Course or EOC). The SOLs outline the basic knowledge and skills in the four essential academic content areas (English, mathematics, science, and history/social science) that students should learn as they progress from kindergarten through high school. The SOL assessments measure students' mastery of the objectives specified in the SOLs. These SOL assessments are administered online and challenge students to apply what they have learned. The SOL assessments include "technology enhanced" items that require students to demonstrate critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, much as they do in response to classroom assignments from teachers. Additional information on the Virginia SOLs can be found on the VDOE website at: https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/student-assessment/virginia-sol-assessment-program

Virginia Grades 3-8 Reading and Mathematics Fall and Winter Growth Assessments:
The Virginia Growth assessments are required assessments developed by the State as "through-year" or "growth" assessments to support teachers in identifying gaps in grade-level content mastery in advance of the end-of-year assessments. The computer-adaptive growth assessments are aligned to the SOLs with fewer items than the end-of-year assessments and are based on the student's previous grade-level. Additional information on the Virginia Growth Assessments can be found on the VDOE website at:
https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/test_administration/growth-assessment/index.shtml