Assessment Glossary for Elementary and Secondary Schools

Below is a brief glossary of assessment terminology to facilitate understanding of the ACPS assessment program as outlined on the Division Assessment Calendar. While not exhaustive, it provides a general overview of division-wide assessments administered at the elementary and secondary level. Prior to administration, additional information will be available.

WIDA ACCESS: 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. As communication takes many forms, 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. Additional information on the ACCESS can be found at: WIDA ACCESS

Advanced Placement (AP): The AP (Advanced Placement) Program, administered by the College Board, allows high school students to take college-level courses and exams. These courses are designed to be equivalent to introductory college courses and are taught by specially trained high school teachers. Students who perform well on the corresponding AP Exams may earn college credit or advanced placement when they matriculate to college. Additional information on the AP can be found at: https://ap.collegeboard.org/

Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT®): The CogAT® is an untimed computer-based abilities test administered to second grade students 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 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 to be successful in school. Additional information on CogAT®can be found at: https://riversideinsights.com/k12-assessments/cogat

MAP Growth: MAP Growth is a computer-adaptive assessment administered in grades 2-12 in reading and math in fall, winter and spring to measure achievement and growth and measure students' progress compared to students in the U.S. MAP Growth aims 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. Principals and administrators can use the scores to see the performance and progress of a grade level, school, or division. Families can use MAP scores to set goals and support students' academic needs. MAP Growth is approved by the VDOE as an alternative to the Virginia Growth Assessment. 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.

PSAT: The PSAT 8/9 takes 2 hours and 14 minutes and consists of 2 sections: (1) the Reading and Writing section, and (2) the Math section. Most of the questions are multiple choice, though some of the math questions ask you to type in the answer rather than select it. The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®) is a part of the SAT® Suite of Assessments and is typically taken by students in grades 10 and 11. Structured similarly to the SAT, the PSAT/NMSQT measures the same knowledge and skills your child needs to succeed in college and career. Additional information on the PSAT can be found at: https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt

SAT: The SAT® is a globally recognized admissions exam used by colleges and universities around the world—including those that are test optional. Students take the test each year as a step on their path to college and career. Colleges also use scores to inform decisions on course placement, scholarships, and targeted support on campus. Additional information on the SAT can be found at: https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/sat

VALLSS (Virginia Assessment of Language and Literacy Skills Screening System) VALLSS K-3 and VALLSS 4-8:
VALLSS K-3 is the state-sponsored reading screener that is designed to show a child's level of risk for developing reading difficulties and provide teachers with information to plan instruction. VALLSS replaces the previous PALS screener. VALLSS includes subtests that measure decoding, encoding, and language, all of which are necessary to develop reading comprehension.

VALLSS 4-8 started in the fall of 2025 as the state-provided screening tool with the purpose of reducing the number of children with reading difficulty through early diagnosis and immediate intervention. By screening identified students in grades 4-8, participating school divisions determine students' mastery levels (Adequate, Approaching, or Well-Below) and receive incentive funds for providing intervention. All students in the Well-Below mastery level will receive an individualized reading plan and intervention services in addition to their regular classroom instruction.

Additional information on VALLSS K-3 and VALLSS 4-8 can be found at: https://literacy.virginia.edu/

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 VALLSS literacy results to produce a more comprehensive view of the whole child. Additional information on the VKRP can be found at by clicking on the VKRP tab at https://vaconnects.virginia.edu/#/home

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. The SOLs outline the basic knowledge and skills in the four essential academic content areas (English/Language Arts, 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: Virginia SOL Assessment Program and SOL Practice Items (All Subjects) | Virginia Department of Education.

Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Integrated Reading and Writing Component: Students in grades 5 and 8 will participate in the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Integrated Reading and Writing Component of the Standards of Learning (SOL). During the Integrated Reading and Writing online test, students will read a nonfiction passage in the content area of either history or science and then answer four to six questions about what they have read. One of these questions will be a writing prompt asking the students to write about what they have read. Additional information including practice items can be found on the VDOE website at: SOL Practice Items (All Subjects) | Virginia Department of Education.

WorkKeys Reading and Writing Assessments: The WorkKeys are tests created by ACT. The WorkKeys Writing test is an alternative assessment for the English End of Course (EOC) Writing SOL. Students are given the Writing WorkKeys for writing verified credit unless the parent notifies the school that their child will take the Writing SOL or use the AP Language & Composition Exam for verified credit. For the English EOC Reading course, any student who scores less than 400 on the Reading SOL will have the option to take the Reading WorkKeys as the alternate test for verified credit. https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/act-workkeys/act-workkeys-assessments.html