



## FY 2020 Recommended Budget Budget Question

**Board Question #: 12**

**BUDGET QUESTION:** How do Spotsylvania's SOL scores rank statewide? How do they compare with the scores of surrounding jurisdictions?

**RESPONDING DEPARTMENT/OFFICE:** Schools

**RESPONSE:** At the February 12<sup>th</sup> School Board Budget Presentation to the BOS, the question that was heard was "How do we rank or compare" generally regarding SOL scores/performance. The current question appears to request a specific statewide ranking and comparison with "surrounding school divisions". In 2017 during the budget process, a similar question was asked, along with several other questions from BOS, CBRC and citizens. At that time, we provided a document that we developed in response. It is attached (Attachment 4A). Below is other information to be noted or considered:

- Standards of Learning Tests (SOLs) are administered annually for certain grades, content and/or courses. The most recent era of SOL testing could be fairly described as moving from minimum proficiency assessments to more rigorous assessments that require higher levels of critical thinking, knowledge retention and content skill acquisition.
- Every year, publicly, we have shared before the school board and referenced in presentations/discussions with the board of supervisors our school and division accreditation results to include overall scores and by student reporting categories.
- It is also important to note that the most rigorous, challenging assessment, accountability, and accreditation requirements have been implemented during a time when state and local funding levels have been there lowest.
- These new, more rigorous assessments, particularly in literacy and math, began to impact school divisions in terms of scores in 2013-14. At that end of that school year, 2014, our school division went from having all or almost all schools "fully accredited" based on SOL score performance, to 66%. 10 of our schools did not meet at least one of the required testing benchmarks in either English or Math. The next year, 2015, SCPS achieved significant improvement and had all but 2 schools designated as fully accredited. As an example of the improvement achieved during that year, our school division improved Math performance overall by 7%, going from scoring slightly below state averages to slightly above the state average.
- Following the 2017 budget deliberations and adoption (and after we first responded to this question), our schools and school division sustained and in many instances, improved grade level, course, student reporting categories, school and division SOL performance. Again, the majority of our schools showed growth or improvement.

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- Over the past few years, No Child Left Behind was reauthorized and is now the Federal Education Law...Every Student Succeeds Act. At the same time, our state was engaged in the development of a Profile of a Virginia Graduate and SOL reform. This process has yielded in our state, in alignment with ESSA, yet another accountability and accreditation model that is intended to place less emphasis on standardized testing, particularly at the high school level. While this new accountability/accreditation system does reduce the number of some previously required SOL tests, many other measures are now included/required, along with performance benchmarks, to promote and ensure improvement.
- This past year (2018), our school division achieved, for the first time since the new, more rigorous assessments were implemented, 100% of our schools (29/29) designated as fully accredited. This means that all of our schools met the required SOL benchmarks for accountability based on this year or last year rules.
- SOL scores have historically been calculated and reported in two different ways, using separate statistical formulas. Federal pass rates are reported strictly pass/fail (% of students who pass) while the State pass rates include not only current pass rates but factor in growth as well as other adjustments. Prior to 2018, Federal pass rates were calculated only one way. This past year, they were calculated two different ways. Either way, our school division, as was presented to the school board in October, exceeded all federal benchmarks for performance. The state SOL pass rates are now only compiled and reported including a growth methodology. All of our schools met or exceeded the state benchmarks for performance. The state no longer provides a division average or division accreditation, only school by school.
- Though we attempted to provide “rankings” in 2017, the state does not currently have a “ranking” system for SOL performance/scores.
- In 2018, most school divisions and the state SOL score averages using the Federal pass rates, declined. SCPS also saw declines, yet the state growth model SOL results demonstrated, in another way, that our school division continues to increase student learning even as our student learning needs have become more challenging and diverse. The decline experienced by school divisions across the state is due to the new manner in which scores are now being calculated.
- SOL data is disaggregated and used by our school division for the purpose of determining strategies and resources to address learning and achievement. Any comparisons with other schools and school divisions is to promote and support continuous improvement. In many cases, “comparing” SOL performance, not only from year to year, but school to school and division to division, can yield false or inaccurate conclusions since we have different students, different needs, different levels, different years and different assessments to consider in those comparisons.
- Virginia Profile of a Graduate, ESSA, and State accountability requires numerous assessments such as:
  - Chronic Absenteeism

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- Federal Graduation Index
- Graduation Completion Index
- On Time Graduation
- College and Career Readiness
- Career and Technical Credentialing Exam
- SOL Replacement test such as
- AP tests
- IB tests
- Work keys
- Literacy screenings such as:
  - Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)
  - Benchmark Assessment System (BAS)
  - Renaissance Learning – Star Reading Inventory
  - Lexia Learning
  - Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)

Also, attached (Attachment 4B) are just a few “surrounding” divisions to compare Federal pass rates in reading and math as one more point of reference (we included some divisions that are larger as well).

#### **ESTIMATE OF STAFF TIME SPENT ON RESPONSE:**