

# Elementary SOL Final Preparations Tip Sheet

As your school begins final preparations for the SOL tests, the Office of Student Learning would like to share a few tips and suggestions to support SOL review and preparation.

## Gentle Reminders:

**On the Week of the Test:** Minimize anxiety! Even a well-prepared student can feel pre-test anxiety. Encourage students to relax and to view the test as a chance to show what they have learned. Reassure them that it's natural to feel a little nervous and for them to try their best. Finally, some last pieces of advice to make everyone in the family feel prepared for the testing experience:

**The Day Before:** A good night's sleep the night before is most important. Test scores can be greatly affected when a child hasn't gotten enough rest.

**Test Day:** A good breakfast the morning of the test is a terrific brain booster; nutrients help to stimulate the brain. Don't forget last minute supplies, such as number 2 pencils.

## Mathematics

### Suggested Resources

- **Analysis of the Student Performance** (view in PowerPoint slideshow view – EXCELLENT resource)  
Narrated PowerPoint presentations should be watched and used to make instructional decisions  
[www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/performance\\_analysis/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/performance_analysis/index.shtml);
- **Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) Info** [www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/test\\_administration/cat/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/test_administration/cat/index.shtml);
- **Released Mathematics SOL Tests for 3-5:**
  - PDF versions of the Math 3-5 tests are posted on the VDOE website.  
[www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/released\\_tests/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/released_tests/index.shtml);
  - A Group Activity Practice (GAP) using these items is posted on the Mathematics Staff Communities page in a folder called "SOL Review";
  - Electronic whiteboard resources and a printed version are posted on the Mathematics Staff Communities page in a folder called "SOL Review";
- **SOL Practice Items** - All students should experience these on computers. Use the Teacher's Guide to walk students through these items in a whole group lab setting to ensure that students have received concise directions and practice using the tools needed for the math test. Note: new this year – TestNav 8 must be downloaded on computers before students can access these practice items [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/practice\\_items/testnav8.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/practice_items/testnav8.shtml);
- Resources located on the Mathematics Staff Communities page in a folder called "SOL Review"
  - **The PWCS Simulation Test** - Also available in PowerSchool Assessment (formally Interactive Achievement); and
  - **Math SOL Countdown Calendars** for 2017.

### Suggested Tips

- Be selective in what is used for test practice. It is best to practice in a format where students are engaged in discussion about solution strategies and test taking strategies;
- Use the Group Activity Practice (GAP) in May to review for the test;
- SOL released items and practice items may be used as warm-ups;
- Students should be showing work on all practice and when they take any math test; and
- Students should take the math assessments on computers that have a mouse.

## History and Social Science

### Suggested Resources

- Released Tests: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/released\\_tests/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/released_tests/index.shtml);
- VDOE Instructional Resources: <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/history/index.shtml>;
- VDOE Sample Lessons:  
[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards\\_docs/history\\_socialscience/2008/lesson\\_plans/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/history_socialscience/2008/lesson_plans/index.shtml);
- Prince William County Public Schools Social Studies web page under "Staff Communities"
- VDOE SOL Institutes Resources:  
[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/history/professional\\_development/institutes/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/history/professional_development/institutes/index.shtml); and
- Technology Enhanced Items (TEI) practice questions (**Field items only, these will not count toward student's score**)  
[https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/practice\\_items/](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/practice_items/).

### Suggested Tips

**Reminder: Assessment based upon 2008 History and Social Science SOLs and Curriculum Framework; field testing TEI based upon content common to the 2008 and 2015 History and Social Science SOLs and Curriculum Framework.**

- In Virginia Studies, VS.2g, the following additional language was amended or added to the curriculum. "Today, eleven American Indian tribes in Virginia are recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The names of the three additional tribes:

Cheroenhaka (Nottoway) Indian Tribe, the Nottoway Indian Tribe, and the Patowomeck Indian Tribe are included under the Coastal Plain (Tidewater) region”; and

- Sequencing of events is a crucial skill for understanding of the scope of history, therefore use of timelines and other sequencing strategies are important.

## Science

### Suggested Resources

- Publically released Science SOL tests and practice item sets in TestNav 8 on the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) page [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards\\_docs/science/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/science/index.shtml);
- SOL Assessment Review Manuals for grades 4 and 5 on the PWCS intranet page for the Elementary Science Staff Communities <https://our.pwcs.edu/cms/One.aspx?portalId=1504420&pageId=4838150>; and
- Online websites for reviewing content material and practicing released SOL test items: <http://www.solpass.org/> and <http://education.jlab.org/solquiz/>.

### Suggested Tips

- The best way to prepare students for the grade 5 SOL test is by reviewing science content for grades 4-5;
- Teachers should embed the review as part of their daily instruction;
- Assignments and assessments should reflect the type of questions students will experience on the SOL test, including multiple choice (requiring one correct answer), multiple response (requiring more than one answer), and items requiring interpretation of data, diagrams, and models; and
- Students should be provided with multiple opportunities to practice their test-taking skills on computers.

### Specific challenges from the 2016 SOL assessment:

Measuring length in centimeters; sequencing planets by size and distance; identifying common compounds and cellular structure; understanding phenomena related to light and sound; differentiating between variables and constants; and using data to make inferences.

## Language Arts

### Top Ten Ways to Prepare for the Elementary English SOL Test

- The best preparation for the reading SOL is to match instruction to each learner’s needs (i.e. some students might need work with character analysis; whereas, some will not). Current data will inform a teacher’s next steps in SOL preparation. Review data from CSAs or other assessments which target achievement on comprehension strategies for fiction and adjust instruction accordingly. Practice with these skills should be applied within the context of reading text authentically. **Working with these skills using worksheets or test-simulation documents, without authentic context, will provide little benefit to the student. This type of work will not elevate understanding to the level of rigor required of the English SOL Test.** Specifically, are students able to:

analyze character	analyze story elements	draw conclusions
evaluate author’s purpose	identify cause and effect relationships	interpret figurative language
make predictions	identify main idea and supporting details	summarize information

- The same as above holds true for nonfiction text. Specifically, are students able to:

identify main idea and supporting details	analyze text structure and organization	distinguish between cause and effect
summarize information	compare and contrast information	evaluate author’s purpose
use graphic features	identify sequence of events	use text features
make inferences	distinguish between fact and opinion	

- Students should be given ample time to read independently on a daily basis to prepare for the stamina required of the testing environment. Follow the link for six key elements of reading instruction: [http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational\\_leadership/mar12/vol69/num06/Every-Child,-Every-Day.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/mar12/vol69/num06/Every-Child,-Every-Day.aspx);
- Review data from assessments in the area of word analysis skills and adapt instruction to meet the needs of students;
- Students should have *daily opportunities to discuss* what they have read as a means of enhancing comprehension of text;
- Recognizing the reciprocal nature of writing strengthening reading, students should be writing daily; both *composing pieces and responding to what they have read*. For recommendations, see page 11 of: <http://bit.ly/1ppB8D5> (you may need to copy and paste this link in your browser to access);

- Students should have opportunities to read, think, and discuss *all genres* identified in the SOLs;
- Monitor student choice and selection of texts read to ensure *engagement and appropriate practice with comprehension strategies*;
- In addition to books, students should have opportunities to spend time independently *reading single passages*;
- Instructional decisions for literacy should be made based on the individual needs of the student. However, the Virginia Department of Education has provided documents to help teachers focus their efforts leading up to the English SOL Assessment: [SOL Test Blueprints](#) for each grade level, [Student Performance Analysis](#) for 2014 English SOL Administration, newly [Released Test Items](#) for each grade level provide a glimpse to how students will be tested, and examples of [Technology Enhanced Items](#); and
- Additionally, colleagues should consider the administration window for the end of year CSA assessment. Given the close alignment discovered between achievement on the CSA and achievement on the SOL test, this could serve as a tool to guide targeted and specific reteaching practices leading up to the SOL test. Therefore, schools may not want to wait until after SOL test administration to give this assessment.