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Contact: Charles B. Pyle, Director of Communications, (804) 371-2420
Julie C. Grimes, Communications Manager, (804) 225-2775

VDOE Schedules Extra Day for SOL Writing Tests ***Decision Gives School Divisions Time to Make Up Instruction Lost to Snow***

School divisions may delay administration of the essay portion of Standards of Learning (SOL) writing tests until March 17 to allow for the make up of instruction interrupted by winter storms in January and February, Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright announced today. State writing assessments also may be administered during the first week of March as originally scheduled.

“This has been an extraordinary winter — even in areas of the state that typically do not miss a lot of instructional time because of snow and ice,” Dr. Wright said. “This additional date for the essay component of the writing test will provide flexibility for school divisions whose schedules have been significantly disrupted.”

SOL writing tests are taken by students in grades 5, 8 and once in high school — typically in the 11th grade. The assessments measure writing skills acquired over multiple years, rather than content taught within a single year or semester. The writing test includes a multiple-choice component and a short essay written by students in response to a prompt.

While school divisions may also choose to delay the multiple-choice section, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) says schools should adhere to the standard practice of having students complete this portion of the assessment before they are given the writing-prompt component. Student responses to both components must be packaged and shipped for scoring by March 24.

“If there are further weather-related disruptions, we will work with affected school divisions to the extent possible given the timeline for scoring the tests and reporting the results to students and parents in a timely manner,” Dr. Wright said.

School divisions administer SOL tests in reading, mathematics, history/social science and science during three four-week-long windows in the spring. Divisions select a window most suited to their calendar and are free to schedule testing within their selected window.

As during previous years when school divisions experienced major disruptions due to winter weather, VDOE will allow severely impacted divisions to shift testing to a later window.

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