

Recommended Cut Scores for Phased-In Models



New, more rigorous standards in mathematics and English were approved by the Virginia State Board of Education in 2023 and 2024. To align with these higher expectations, Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) that convey the knowledge and skills required to demonstrate proficiency at each performance level on the mathematics and reading *Standards of Learning* (SOL) assessments were strengthened, and assessments were revised to fully align to the more rigorous standards. Current cut scores reflect proficiency levels for mastery of 2016 mathematics and 2017 English standards. Cut scores tied to the old SOL assessments are insufficient to reflect the higher expectations for student proficiency from the more rigorous academic standards.

This summer, 230 Virginia subject matter experts, including teachers, higher education representatives, parents, and business leaders from all 8 Superintendent Regions participated in the standard setting process to determine cut scores for mathematics and reading SOL assessments. Recommendations were shared with Superintendent, who made minor modifications to recommended cut scores to strengthen alignment with national benchmarks and ensure high expectations for students in every grade and subject.

Drawing on best practices and lessons learned from other states, a multiyear phased-in approach to fully implement cut scores is recommended to maximize student success while raising expectations for all students. A phased-in approach paired with meaningful support provides educators and families with the time, resources, and guidance necessary to prepare students to meet higher proficiency expectations.

The phased-in models presented in this document introduces an “approaching” performance level. The addition of the approaching level ensures student growth toward proficiency is recognized and provides school divisions with critical information to identify students in need of support.

Table 1 presents the Superintendent’s recommended cut scores. Tables 2-5 introduce an “approaching” performance level to recognize student growth toward proficiency during the cut score transition period. The approaching performance level is phased out at the end of the transition period. Tables 2 and 3 present the recommended approaching cut scores for reading and mathematics under a 4-year phased-in model, while tables 4 and 5 present the recommended approaching cut scores under a 5-year phased-in model. In both models, performance cut scores for below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced remain consistent, as outlined Table 1. Only the approaching performance level increases each school year to reflect steady progress toward proficiency. Additionally, both models begin the phased-in approach in the 2025-2026 school year and would be incorporated in the state’s accountability system after input from stakeholders.

The proposed phased-in implementation model will be brought before the Board in October for a decision, after additional meetings with stakeholders.

Recommended Performance Level Cut Scores

Table 1: Superintendent’s recommended performance level cut scores.

Reading Performance Level Cut Scores				
	Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Grade 3	408	409	444	502
Grade 4	414	415	451	514
Grade 5	401	402	446	510
Grade 6	389	390	449	515
Grade 7	375	376	449	511
Grade 8	385	386	449	516
End-of-Course (EOC) Reading			479	543
Math Performance Level Cut Scores				
Grade 3	375	376	443	521
Grade 4	383	384	445	518
Grade 5	378	379	445	511
Grade 6	379	380	433	507
Grade 7	387	388	430	508
Grade 8	387	388	430	503
Algebra I			453	518
Algebra II			443	505
Geometry			452	510

Approaching Performance Level Cut Scores for the 4-year Phased-In Model

Table 2: Approaching performance level cut scores for reading in the 4-year phase-in model.

Reading Approaching Cut Scores							
School Year	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Reading EOC
2025 - 2026	418	426	414	413	413	413	420
2026 - 2027	426	435	424	425	425	425	439
2027 - 2028	435	443	434	437	437	437	458
2028 - 2029	Phased Out						

Table 3: Approaching performance level cut scores for mathematics in the 4-year phase-in model.

Mathematics Approaching Cut Scores									
School Year	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Algebra I	Algebra II	Geometry
2025 - 2026	410	411	411	408	408	408	413	411	413
2026 - 2027	421	422	422	416	415	415	426	422	426
2027 - 2028	432	433	433	424	424	422	439	433	439
2028 - 2029	Phased Out								

Approaching Performance Level Cut Scores for the 5-Year Phase in Model

Table 4: Approaching performance level cut scores for reading in the 5-year phase-in model.

Reading Approaching Cut Scores							
School Year	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Reading EOC
2025 - 2026	416	423	411	409	409	409	415
2026 - 2027	423	430	420	419	419	419	431
2027 - 2028	430	437	429	429	429	429	447
2028 - 2029	437	444	438	439	439	439	463
2029 - 2030	Phased Out						

Table 5: Approaching performance level cut scores for mathematics in the 5-year phase-in model.

Mathematics Approaching Cut Scores									
School Year	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Algebra I	Algebra II	Geometry
2025 - 2026	408	409	409	407	406	406	410	408	410
2026 - 2027	417	418	418	413	412	412	421	416	420
2027 - 2028	426	427	427	420	418	418	432	425	431
2028 - 2029	435	435	435	426	424	424	443	434	441
2029 - 2030	Phased Out								