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# A TEXTBOOK CASE: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TEXTBOOKS, STANDARDIZED TESTING, AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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A TEXTBOOK CASE: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TEXTBOOKS, STANDARDIZED TESTING, AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

by

Megan P. Miller

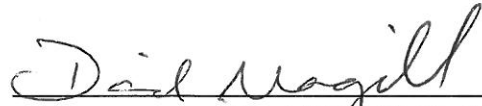
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master  
of Arts in English

Longwood University

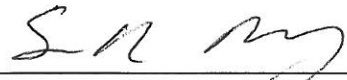
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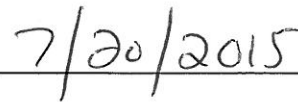
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## Introduction

There is an email that reliably arrives in my school inbox a couple of weeks before the students arrive for the first day of the year: “Football players will be available next week from noon until 3:00 pm. Sign up for one in the teacher workroom.” What, possibly, could high school teachers need with a group of strapping, 17-year-old males that necessitates a sign-up list and a mass email? Not remediation—school hasn’t started yet. Not detention—ditto. What they are needed for, though, is pack-mule services, moving hundreds of pounds of textbooks from their summer storage in huge, dusty bookrooms back into the classroom to be distributed on the first day of class. Literally unable to shoulder the weight themselves, most teachers employ these volunteers because, as anyone who attended a public school knows, textbooks are heavy, and there are a lot of them.

The textbooks physical presence, though, is marginal compared to their theoretical presence, as textbooks can drive almost every decision a teacher makes when preparing for a day, a week, a month, the year. For example, in my 11<sup>th</sup>-grade English classes at Grafton High School in York County, Virginia, there are two levels of understanding. One is that I am teaching American literature, its development, importance, people, and purpose; the other is that everything I teach will, in some way, better prepare my students for their SOL test at the end of the year. The textbook has been laid out to accommodate these dual interests, and the ancillary materials like workbooks, test materials, vocabulary guides, and supplementary videos all follow suit. And therein lies a larger point—textbooks serve a distinct purpose, but it’s not necessarily to provide the best, most well-rounded, most useful education to the students

using them. Rather, their purpose is to help students pass the state Standards of Learning (SOL) test, and the materials are calibrated to that end. The test is the focus; the SOL is the goal. And the textbooks are produced as much for the Virginia Board of Education, who decides the SOL standards, as for the students who will spend ten months using them. This arrangement impacts a student's education in multiple ways, few of them for the better.

As of the 2014-2015 school year, students in Virginia schools need twenty-two credits to graduate from high school with a standard diploma, and twenty-six credits to graduate with an advanced diploma, with the extra credits coming from one additional year each in math, laboratory science, history, and foreign language or fine arts. One credit is given for each year-long course a student completes with a passing grade. Of those twenty-two or twenty-six credits, six must be verified, meaning the student passed an SOL test at the end of the year. One verified credit must be from one each of the math, laboratory science, and history courses that a student takes, and two verified credits must come from the two 11<sup>th</sup>-grade English SOLs (the only year SOLs are offered for English). The final one comes from a course of the student's choice, provided he/she received both a passing course grade and a passing SOL grade in the course.<sup>1</sup> This means that students who cannot or do not pass at least six SOL tests cannot graduate. In math, science, and history classes, the students typically have two-to-three different SOLs to choose from; if they cannot pass the SOL for Geometry, then they can still get the verified credit from Algebra I. If the Chemistry SOL proves too difficult, then the Earth Science one will suffice. If they cannot or do not pass the 11<sup>th</sup>-grade English SOL, however, they do not

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<sup>1</sup> Graduation requirement information comes from the Virginia Department of Education website listed under "Instruction."

graduate. Period. Students who cannot earn the six verified credits can apply for a modified standard diploma, but these are usually only granted to special-needs students, and the modified status is noted on the transcript and the diploma itself. Students who cannot or do not receive a modified standard diploma will receive a certificate of completion and an application form for the GED exam.

The inclusion of verified credits and requirement for passing SOLs is a relatively new hurdle in the graduation process. The Standards of Learning were first adopted in 1995, and formal testing on the SOLs did not begin until the 1997-1998 school year. Those who graduated prior to 1998 would never have taken an SOL test.<sup>2</sup> For those who graduated prior to 2004, the tests would have had no impact on their graduation status<sup>3</sup>. But since 2004, things have changed dramatically. Because graduation rates go a long way toward determining accreditation for schools, getting students to pass the SOLs has become a fundamental part of the institutional mission of most high schools; the tests have become so important that in the weeks leading up to them, that students who are struggling are frequently pulled from other classes for remediation. In some Virginia counties, like York County, high schools stop holding classes at all during SOL testing and students come for the express purpose of taking the test. And students who can't pass the test on the first try are given after-school remediation by teachers who are paid \$22.00 an hour to function essentially as SOL coaches.<sup>4</sup> The time, effort, and resources

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<sup>2</sup> Implementation information and dates from VDOE press release

<sup>3</sup> Graduation requirement information from Christie's *Virginia Issues and Answers*

<sup>4</sup> Students can retake SOL tests as many times as is necessary for the to pass, up until they finish the school year in which they reach 19 years old, the maximum age of attendance for Virginia schools. In my experience, most students who do not pass by the time their cohort graduates will drop out (and possibly attempt the GED) rather than return to school for the sole purpose of passing SOL tests.

dedicated to the SOLs might indicate that these tests are rigorous, challenging, thorough, and incredibly efficient indicators of what a student has learned. Unfortunately, as will be explored later, they are not.

At most Virginia schools, students will receive at least four textbooks each academic year: literature, science, math, and history. Often there are more, either supplements for the core classes or additional ones for electives like drama, art, computer science, music theory, or psychology. Each book weighs around ten pounds. For a student who is assigned homework in each core class, he/she has two choices: lug 40 pounds of books out of school, onto the bus or into their car, into the house, and then reverse the course the next day; or, don't do the homework. If a large number of students opt for the latter option, the teacher's plan is thrown off schedule and learning is impeded; time in class must be devoted to completing the work meant for home, which then means reworking the rest of the day (or week or unit) to accommodate the lost time. And while this may seem like a small example, it's indicative of a larger problem—the textbook is so ingrained into the classroom atmosphere that much of the day is planned around it. In the English classrooms, most of the pieces of literature that are included in lessons are part of the textbook. Printing and copying multiple class sets of alternative texts is cost- and time- prohibitive and buying individual novels or collections is often not feasible due to budget constraints.

While this may seem like nothing more than a hassle, the need to plan weeks or months in advance, or to follow a division-approved and -paced curriculum, leads many teachers to simply give up because they have to know their lesson plan before they know if the books will ever arrive. In Virginia, teachers are required to submit yearly tracking

plans and pacing guides, as well as syllabi that list all material to be covered during the year to a supervisor before the start of school. If a teacher doesn't know whether or not books will be ordered, he/she has to gamble on whether the materials will arrive or just work with the textbook and materials on hand. This gives the textbooks enormous control over what is taught; the associated materials, everything from test banks to worksheets to reading guides to pre-written teacher discussion points and answers, extend that control into how the subject is taught.

A new textbook is delivered with seven or eight of these additional materials for teacher use. If a teacher chose to do so, he/she would never have to create any piece of teaching material on his/her own—the publisher has already written the tests and quizzes, provided questions to ask the class and then given the expected answers, outlined the vocabulary to be taught, and provided summaries, explanations, analyses, and common connections for each text. The teacher's version of a textbook, twice the size of the student version, is an amazing thing to behold for all that it offers. Again, though, whether or not what it offers is to the benefit or advantage of the students is an entirely different matter.

It's quite easy to demonize the SOLs and the textbooks, and perhaps not entirely difficult to demonize teachers who, following the path of least resistance, rely on them to do their jobs. But very real questions of educational accountability and responsibility brought the Standards of Learning and their textbook partners into the classroom, and these should not be forgotten.

Writing for Virginia Tech's *Issues and Answers* forum, Mark Christie details the inception of the SOLs was a response to the knowledge that “while many of our children

were doing quite well in our public schools, far too many were falling through the cracks and were left unprepared for success as adults in our economy and society” (Christie).

When Virginia first administered the tests in 1998, only 2 percent of schools achieved scores that would qualify for accreditation. By the 2005 assessment, 90 percent did.<sup>5</sup> To be sure, achieving an 88% rise in passing scores over the course of seven years seems impressive. Upon digging deeper, however, something becomes apparent—there is very little scholastic difference between the 90 out of 100 of students who passed the SOL in 2005 and the 98 out of 100 who failed it seven years prior.

Looking at other objective data, the 88% gain seems far less inspirational, less an indicator that students are being taught better by stronger teachers using rigorous coursework to increase achievement, and more a sign that the SOL tests themselves were gamed in order to boost pass rates and keep graduation rates high. Most tellingly, in comparing the SAT scores of students throughout the years 1998-2005, there is little increase, some years of decrease, but generally no change. In 1998, when 2% of VA students passed the SOL, the average SAT score for Virginia was 1017. In 2005, when 90% of students passed the SOL, the average SAT score was 1028 (the highest it has been since the implementation of the SOL tests). In 2014, when SOL remediation efforts in the face of redesigned history and English tests were stronger than ever, the average SAT score was 1010.<sup>6</sup> At best, then, the push for success on the SOLs netted a statistically meaningless 11-point gain on a national standardized test that only students who are college-bound even take. If the students who chose to enter into military service

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<sup>5</sup> Information from VDOE press release on 25 Oct. 2005

<sup>6</sup> SAT average yearly score data for Virginia provided by The College Board



or work force had taken the SAT, it's likely that the averages would drop significantly across all years.

It's not just national standardized tests that throw cold water on the SOL pass rates. The yearly graduation rates for Virginia bear out that the SOLs have less of an impact on student achievement than the VDOE likes to trumpet. If the 88% increase in the pass rate is meaningful, with so many students becoming more successful in the classroom, then a similar increase in graduation rate should accompany it; students who earn higher grades in school and experience success are more likely to complete their degree rather than drop out. In 1998, when there were only 2% of students passing the SOL, Virginia high schools had a graduation rate of 71% among 4-year cohorts. In 2005, when 90% of students passed the SOL, the graduation rate was 73%.<sup>7</sup>

In all, the SOLs do not seem to have achieved their goals; neither the SAT scores of students have risen appreciably since their introduction, nor has the graduation rate. Why, then, are these tests used at all? How, to paraphrase Mark Christie's statement, will the SOL help underserved Virginia students from falling through the cracks? How effectively do the hours of preparation for the SOLs, and the education dollars spent on writing, printing, distributing, scoring, and normalizing tests, to say nothing of the time spent preparing, tutoring, testing, and retesting the students who take them, effectively educate students? And beyond that, how are the textbooks, which are closely aligned to the Standards of Learning and the attendant tests, helping give students the critical thinking skills and world knowledge needed to lead productive lives? The answer,

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<sup>7</sup> Data obtained from the National Coalition of Education Statistics on Virginia public high school graduation rates. Private schools are not included because their students do not take SOL tests.

unfortunately, is that they aren't. The Standards of Learning criteria (which set the school curriculum), the SOL tests, and the textbooks are not doing their job; and, as I will show, students in Virginia public high schools who have matriculated under them are no better off than the students who graduated prior to their development. In fact, in many ways, they are worse off, leaving their schools with an education that has taught them, first and foremost, to perform well on a proscribed test.

## Classrooms in Virginia are SOL

For many organizations, the acronym associated with its name is reflective of some part of the mission: MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), PAWS (Progressive Animal Welfare Society), GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation). By organizing their acronym into a recognizable word, the group in question ties a natural association with it. Since 1998, Virginia schools have had a similar experience, but instead of feeling GLAAD or MADD, they are simply SOL.

The Standards of Learning (SOL) and the tests associated with them might have an unfortunate acronym, but what they lack in nomenclature they make up for in pervasiveness and influence. The Standards of Learning guide the curriculum for all core classes in Virginia public schools and the yearly SOL tests serve as a gateway between grade levels, subject levels, and ultimately graduation. The connection between the Standards of Learning, the SOL tests, school accreditation, curricula, and ultimately, day-to-day classroom operations is significant and (as current parents, students, and teachers well know) undeniable. What's also significant and undeniable, however, is that this nexus of standards, tests, and teaching practices has done very little to help improve actual student learning and achievement (as opposed to the illusion of student learning and achievement) and instead has done much to hamper both the intellectual growth, and, perhaps more importantly, the curiosity of Virginia's students. The very device that was supposed to improve and secure the education of Virginia's students has proven to be demonstrably counter effective.

The goals of the Standards of Learning are to “establish minimum expectations for what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade or course in

English, mathematics, science, history/social science and other subjects.”<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the tests themselves is straightforward enough: “SOL tests in reading, writing, mathematics, science and history/social science measure the success of students in meeting the Board of Education’s expectations for learning and achievement.”<sup>2</sup> Starting in the third grade, Virginia students are SOL tested at least every second year in their core classes; in some subjects, they are tested every year.<sup>3</sup> Student performance on SOL tests has direct, significant impact on the schools themselves, most notably as the primary determinant for accreditation. The criteria for accreditation, laid out by the VBOE, states that

Each school shall be accredited based, primarily, on achievement of the criteria established...as specified. The percentage of students passing the Virginia assessment program tests in the four core academic areas administered in the school with the accreditation rating calculated on a trailing three-year average that includes the current year scores and the scores from the two most recent years in each applicable academic area, or on the current year's scores, whichever is higher. 2. The percentage of students graduating from or completing high school based on a graduation and completion index prescribed by the Board of Education. The accreditation rating of any school with a twelfth grade shall be

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) website, Standards of Learning & Testing section.

<sup>2</sup> Taken from the VDOE website, Standards of Learning & Testing section.

<sup>3</sup> Within this paper, the term “students” refers only to students in Virginia public schools. Students in private, religious, or home schools are not required to take SOL tests.

determined based on achievement of required SOL pass rates and percentage points on the board's graduation and completion index.<sup>4</sup>

And while there are slightly different measures for non-traditional public schools (like the Governor's school or an alternative school), the vast majority of Virginia schools become accredited based either solely on SOL scores (if it is an elementary, middle, or junior high school) or on a combination of SOL scores and the graduation rate (for high schools). Thus, for the schools, accreditation depends on getting their students to pass the SOL tests; that means placing a not insignificant burden on the shoulders of eight-year-olds—and on those responsible for preparing them to test well.

The goal for any school is to be fully accredited, and that means students must score at particular levels in particular subjects. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) sets the accreditation standards as follows: “With tests administered beginning in the academic year 2012-2013 for the accreditation ratings awarded for school year 2013-2014 and beyond, a school will be rated Fully Accredited when its eligible students meet the pass rate of 75% in English and the pass rate of 70% in mathematics, science, and history and social science.”<sup>5</sup> Schools that do not meet the requirements can be assigned to one of several categories, depending on the severity and length of the deficiency, with consequences ranging from something as minimal as having to design and implement a School Improvement Plan under the guidance of state officials, all the way to the school being forcibly closed or combined with another school. Since schools

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<sup>4</sup> Accreditation standards found on the VDOE website as cited.

<sup>5</sup> Prior to the 2013-2014 accreditation cycle, the pass rate requirements was 70% in all four core classes; new standards increased by 5% in English only. Information available on the VDOE website as cited.

are reviewed for accreditation each year, there is no “grace” period for a school that achieves high pass rates—the testing continues unabated the following year.<sup>6</sup>

And the term “unabated” can be used to describe not only the year-to-year testing and accreditation requirement, but also the pace of SOL testing within a single school year. The SOL testing window for the year opens for the first time in October, for students who either did not pass a test the previous year and need to retake it, or for “term graduates,” who are able to graduate before the traditional May date and need to test early (or who were scheduled to graduate the previous May and did not, because they either failed required classes or SOL tests).<sup>7</sup> Testing windows exist in all months after that through the end of the year, meaning that schools are in a perpetual state of test-anticipation; there is always an SOL test to be given, or a result to be waited for. A student who has a particularly difficult time passing one or more SOL tests may be tested in every window throughout the entire year, until he/she either passes, drops out, or receives permission for a waiver or alternative assessment if he/she is classified as special needs.<sup>8</sup> When the spring testing season arrives, the pace becomes increasingly relentless. At Prince Edward County High School, spring 2015 SOL testing begins on May 5th and ends on May 29<sup>th</sup> (the day before graduation) and includes nine school days where the

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<sup>6</sup> All accreditation information can be found on the VDOE website as cited.

<sup>7</sup> SOL tests can only be administered during certain weeks of the year, called “testing windows,” and the windows are dictated by the VDOE. Testing window information and dates are for the 2014-2015 school year and can be found at the VDOE website as cited.

<sup>8</sup> In some cases, “The Virginia schools administer alternative and alternate assessments to measure the achievement and progress of students with special needs,” and they can also substitute various Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, or SAT II tests for the SOLs if the student achieves a certain score. The full list can be found on the VDOE website as cited.

entire day is arranged around the SOL test.<sup>9</sup> The end result of this is a constant awareness of, and exposure to, the looming high-stakes tests—and, of course, of the potentially disastrous results if students perform poorly.

The consistency of testing pressure is not just apparent because of the cycle of testing, though; it is rooted in the layout of the classroom and the evaluation of the teacher. In Virginia school districts, teachers are required to display the SOL number and text that corresponds to each activity occurring in the classroom that day; accordingly, part of a teacher’s evaluation is based on whether or not this information is displayed clearly (can students see the SOL information easily when facing the board?) and accurately (are the SOLs displayed the ones actually being taught that day?).<sup>10</sup> In lesson planning, all activities and assessments have to be tied back to the SOLs and using released SOL test items as models for creating assessments is widely seen as a “best practice.”<sup>11</sup> The VDOE website offers a section called Instructional Resources for all core subjects; the content is pegged exclusively to SOLs. The SOLs, rather than helping focus instruction and content, have thus *become* the focus and content.

This was not always the case. The centrality of high-stakes testing, where standardized tests have a critical impact in the life of a student, teacher, or school, is a relatively recent development. The origin for high-stakes tests like the SOL can be traced back to the 1983 report written by Ronald Regan’s Commission on Excellence in

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix III for the master testing schedule for PECHS in Spring 2015.

<sup>10</sup> See Appendix IV for samples of various district teacher evaluation sheets that include this as a marker of teacher proficiency.

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix V for examples of lesson plan templates from various districts and Appendix VI for emails detailing SOL tutoring requests, teacher training seminars geared to SOL test achievement, and other correspondence that relates to the importance of SOLs tests.

Education. *A Nation at Risk*, as it was alarmingly titled, found a “need to make American education more rigorous and demanding” and called for the introduction of accountability measures “guided by experts who understand the requirements of business and the economy” (Johnson xvii). This approach was solidified with the passage of the bipartisan No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 under George W. Bush. From this point forward, “Since No Child Left Behind became federal law, every state has been required to test every child every year in third through eighth grade in math and reading, plus once in high school” (Kamenetz). In between those bookend years, though, Virginia introduced its own high-stakes tests, before the national requirement. While the term “Standard of Learning” had been used in Virginia since “the early 1980’s,” in the mid-1990’s a sharp decline in 4<sup>th</sup>-grade reading tests and SAT scores prompted the state to formalize the concept of distinct, common, standard requirements for all students. (VDOE) In 1995 a broad revision of state standards was completed, and beginning in 1998, the state adopted the SOL tests as their state-mandated graduation assessments.<sup>12</sup> And while the tests were initially a reaction to low reading and SAT scores in Virginia schools, the SOLs have morphed over time from a guiding framework to the determining factor in promotion and graduation for students and accreditation for schools.

It would not be fair to suggest that that standardized testing as a nationwide experiment has been a complete failure. Indeed, by several important measures standardized testing have succeeded. R. Murray Thomas, in his 2005 book *High Stakes Testing*, includes as examples of standardized testing’s success the following: “improved test scores.... schools [that] shed the ‘failing’ label... more time [that] is dedicated to

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<sup>12</sup> Information from the VDOE document *Historical Overview of the Standards of Learning Program*.



reading and math... students from disadvantaged minorities improve[ing] at a growing pace” (3). Those benefits, however, don’t come without trade-offs.

Like most standardized tests, the SOLs were designed to increase learning and post-secondary education achievement. Additionally, they were intended to address a perceived problem with instructors not being either thorough or rigorous enough in their teaching and assessment, leaving students without necessary knowledge and skills.

Jonathon Supovitz, an associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, explains that

Motivational theory is the predominant theory underlying test-based accountability. According to this concept, the extrinsic rewards and sanctions associated with the high-stakes test serve to motivate teachers to improve their performance. This presumes that educators require external pressure to improve their teaching. For those educators who already have a strong internal sense of responsibility to their profession, the research is inconclusive about the effects of external pressure. Some researchers have found that reward does not decrease intrinsic motivation (Cameron and Pierce, 1994), while others have concluded that tangible rewards often undermine internal motivations. (Deci et al.1999)

In essence, if the primary purpose of standardized tests is to improve student learning, the (largely unstated) secondary purpose is to improve teacher performance. If a teacher has students who perform poorly on standardized tests, he or she will receive instruction on how to become a better teacher, either through mentoring, professional development, or an action plan involving monitoring by administrators and department chairs. However, even if a teacher receives additional instruction, materials, and training to raise his/her

students' tests scores and is then successful in doing so, he or she has not necessarily become a more effective educator; that teacher may instead have become better in instructing students in a way that achieves higher test scores. And as *High Stakes Testing* reveals, the two outcomes are decidedly not the same.

Since instructors (for logically self-interested reasons) do not teach what is not likely to be tested, schools are also developing gaping curricular holes; courses in music, arts, theatre, and physical education and health, as well as unencumbered time for student reflection and self-directed study, are increasingly being reduced or eliminated in favor of test-emphasized subjects. One need only consider the diminishing time allowed lunch period in high schools. A December 2013 NPR story highlighted the problem:

Julia Bauscher, who is president of a national advocacy group called the School Nutrition Association, says administrators are under intense pressure to increase instruction time and boost standardized test scores. The lunch period is often the first place they look to steal time. '[They've] got to get in this many instructional minutes, and this is our expected annual yearly progress on the test,' she says.

'You've got two important and competing priorities there.'<sup>13</sup>

In most Virginia schools, students are given somewhere between 25 and 30 minutes for lunch, bell-to-bell, meaning that when their lunch bell rings they have that much time to leave class, get to the cafeteria, buy or unpack their food, eat, clean their area, and return to class.

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<sup>13</sup> Eric Westervelt via *All Things Considered*.

As unstructured time for students (like lunch and recess) becomes shorter, so does the time devoted to non-tested subjects. According to the 2011 National Educators Association (NEA) survey of teachers

two-thirds of teachers said many academic subjects had been crowded out by an increased focus on math and language arts. About half said art and music were being marginalized, while 40 percent said the same for foreign language; 36 percent for social studies; and 24 percent for science. The results were particularly striking at the elementary level, where 81 percent of teachers reported that extra time devoted to math or language arts meant less time for other subjects. Over 60 percent of middle school teachers and 54 percent of high school teachers reported the same in their schools.<sup>14</sup>

Math, literature, and reading, where most of the testing occurs, have usurped other subjects, giving students an incomplete education.

It's not just in Virginia that teachers feel the impact of testing; the implementation of NCLB has had similar effects nationwide. *Slate* magazine interviewed three teachers from Connecticut, Idaho, and New York on the impact of standardized testing on their classroom practices, and the answers were remarkable similar.<sup>15</sup> Matt Dicks, a teacher in West Hartford, Conn., saw clearly that standardized tests functioned as a means of assessing a teacher as much as a student. He explained, "It's not unreasonable for teachers to think 'This is my profession... I want to demonstrate my effectiveness through data, through the way my students perform, so I'm going to teach more to the test.' I certainly think that argument is out there and it's probably the majority of teachers." Teaching to

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<sup>14</sup> Survey results from neaToday.

<sup>15</sup> From the Slate.com *Ask A Teacher* podcast; originally published 29 May 2015.

the test isn't where the impact of standardized testing stops, though. Valerie Lake, who teaches at the Lower Manhattan Community School, described how she arranges her classroom planning around the test, explaining that "Well, I'm not going to do a narrative piece of writing in March... the test is in April... and they are not going to need to write a narrative on the state exam... it does affect the decisions that I make." And Zach Parker, who teaches at an International Baccalaureate school in Boise, Idaho, concluded "when you put so much emphasis on a test, like a vampire it sucks the life out of it and sucks the life out of trying to become a lifelong learner." Taken together, these three examples give an overview of how testing shapes the school year—teachers know the tests will be used to assess their effectiveness as a professional, so they adjust planning and curriculum to maximize test scores, which then reinforces to students that the only learning that matters is learning that earns a high score on a test. These three teachers are not alone; a 2014 survey asked 1500 K-12 teachers about their opinions on standardized testing, and the findings are similarly bleak: 30% of work time is spent on "testing related tasks, including preparing students, proctoring, and reviewing results of standardized tests"; 72% responded that there is moderate or extreme pressure to improve test scores; 42% reported that the emphasis has had a negative effect on their classroom.<sup>16</sup> Past research also shows that an emphasis on testing leads to a narrow, test-focused curriculum and poor student engagement and preparation. In 1991, Joan Herman and Shari Golan, writing for the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) and the UCLA Graduate School of Education, reviewed various studies on the effects of standardized testing and found that when high-stakes test

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<sup>16</sup> Survey results from neaToday.

scores influence teacher recognition and reward or student promotion, it leads to a narrowing of curriculum, a rise in teaching to the test, and an inclination of teachers to neglect materials that are not tested. They also found that most studies support the belief that teachers spend an excessive amount of time preparing for tests, and that “60% of teachers stressed test content over a long period of time.” They also report that most research found “fewer than 20% of teachers believe standardized tests reflect what has been learned over the year.” Perhaps most interestingly, they cite a 1988 study that determined “even teachers who viewed standardized tests as poor measures of student achievement still felt the need to spend a great deal of time on test preparation.”<sup>17</sup> Taken together, their findings reflect that even as early as 1988, teachers felt that standardized testing was a poor indicator of student learning and teacher achievement, but that it doesn’t stop teachers from spending large amounts of time on preparation and administration. These problems continue today; In October 2014, Arne Duncan, the U.S. Secretary of Education, said that “tests—and preparation for them— are dominating the calendar and culture of schools and causing undue stress for students and educators,”<sup>18</sup> while the NEA found that “Despite the high level of overall satisfaction, nearly half (45 percent) of surveyed member teachers have considered quitting because of standardized testing.”<sup>19</sup>

In essence, the culture of schools is becoming a culture of testing, where, from the first day of the year, teachers are preparing for, thinking about, and emphasizing to the

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<sup>17</sup> Information from *Effects of Standardized Testing on Teachers and Learners—Another Look*.

<sup>18</sup> Full statement can be found online per citation.

<sup>19</sup> Data from neaToday survey.

students that the real significance of the year is what happens in May, and not in the eight months leading up to it.

Teachers are not alone in feeling the weight of standardized tests as an accountability measure, though. As Anya Kamenetz, writing for NPR, emphasizes, “the state tests are tied to consequences for districts, schools and teachers as well as students. Districts are adding on benchmark, practice and interim tests, and that's how they get these multiplying and ballooning requirements. That's why the Council of the Great City Schools found that students are taking 113 standardized tests in grades K through 12.” The NEA reports “some districts have more than 30 tests a year in one grade. Pittsburgh has 35 tests in grade four, with nearly as many in some other grades. Chicago had 14 mandated tests for kindergarteners, and nearly as many in grades one and two.”<sup>20</sup> Kamenetz recounts her surprise at walking “into lower-income schools where the students' test scores are posted right in the front entryway. And the message is very, very clear that, you know, we care about you as a person and everything, but what really matters is the score that you post in April.”<sup>21</sup>

The belief that a multiple-choice test, given once at the end of the year, provides a meaningful measurement of student learning is fraught with problematic assumptions: that students take the tests seriously because they are told to; that it is possible to ask questions that are free from bias; that a year of learning can be adequately covered in 60 questions; that students all test equally well; that a three- or four- hour testing session is appropriate for children. Illustrating the last of these concerns is a study published by The

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<sup>20</sup> NEA figures from *High-Stakes Testing: How We Got Here and How We Get Out*.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted material from *The Past, Present, and Future of Standardized Testing*, aired originally on NPR 22 Jan 2015.

American Institutes of Research (AIR), which examined the results when 30,000 students in total took the same test with the items in different position; the study found that “the correlation analyses for all tests except for Grade 3 Reading showed statistically significant results, indicating that there was a relationship between item repositioning on the tests and item difficulty” (Davis and Ferdous 7). In other words, as items appeared later in the test, they become harder for students to answer correctly, demonstrating that there is “support [for] the concerns of many educators who are apprehensive about whether there are fatigue effects on their state assessments due to the length of the tests” (7). Bias, unlike test fatigue, can be more difficult to prove. Daniel Korezt says in his book *Measuring Up: What Education Testing Really Tells Us* (2008) that “our information about bias is often incomplete... Techniques for identifying are limited, and evaluations of potential bias are often imperfect. And lack of bias for one group... need not imply a lack of bias for another” (279). What is clear, he notes, is that “Most people who use the scores from high-stakes tests—educators, policymakers, writers, parents, realtors—believe that they are unbiased indicators of improved learning” (279). There is good reason, he concludes, for skepticism on this point.

As a high school teacher who regularly engages with SOL testing, I can point to three recent examples that caught my eye as indicative of the types of problems that should give educators, parents, and politicians pause. On the 2015 Reading End-of-Course SOL, one of the questions asked about the meaning of the root of a certain word.<sup>22</sup> If a student already knows the meaning of that word, they will likely answer

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<sup>22</sup> SOL test security measures prevent giving the word or more specifics about the question, but such questions are frequently seen in the test, both practice versions and released actual versions.

correctly regardless of their knowledge of the concept of roots, prefixes, or suffixes. Alternately, a student who has never seen the word before is at a significant disadvantage, regardless of whether or not he/she has a strong grasp of roots, prefixes, and suffixes. What this reveals is that students can receive points towards passing the SOL if they happen to know the meaning of a particular word tested on a particular day, and not necessarily if they know the concept being assessed. In another test (since released and thus able to be discussed specifically) a question on the concept of simile refers to a line that referenced the high-end jeweler Cartier. For a student who has no experience with or knowledge of Cartier, this question is likely difficult, perhaps impossible, to answer without the necessary frame of reference. Finally, a teacher at Prince Edward County Elementary School related a story that, during the elementary math SOL, a student fell asleep several times during the test, each time being woken up and forced to resume work; the student was not asked why he was unable to stay awake, and the need to finish the test overrode how the frequent stops and starts may affect his ability to pass.

While these incidents perhaps are not enough to indict the testing process as a whole, they hint at several of the problems that beleaguer high-stakes testing and should call into question its usefulness as a means of measuring learning. Moreover, the tests are intertwined with the texts used in the classroom, each dependent on the other to maintain relevancy.



### Textual Evidence

Allow me to present two seemingly disconnected observations. The first is that when I was in middle school, one of my favorite short stories was “The Most Dangerous Game.” I loved the adventure, the wild setting, the descriptions, the unprecedented (to a 12-year-old) idea that someone could enjoy killing people for fun. It stayed with me for years, through college, stuck in the back of my mind as something I could recall, but never really expected to encounter again. And I didn’t, until I sat down with my own, very first, teacher’s edition of a textbook in my own, very first, high school English classroom in 2003. Opening to the table of contents, the very first work listed was “The Most Dangerous Game.” Initially, I was thrilled to re-read it, but about halfway through several thoughts dawned on me: I had read this story in my own English class 10 years earlier. It was written in 1924, almost 80 years prior. Thousands of other short stories had been written in the intervening time. Why are students still reading *this*?

And the second: Literature, like history, never ends. There will always be people putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) to record their lives, their experiences, their fears and concerns and triumphs, either in non-fictional accounts or through the actions and words of fictional personae. For teachers, the inexhaustible human drive to produce new works of art presents a practical problem: how are we possibly going to cover all of this in 40 weeks? The answer, of course, is that we won’t—choices will have to be made about what gets included and what gets excluded.

These two seemingly unconnected facts—that there is an ever-expanding body of literature that teacher must winnow down, and that the same short story I read in 1992 was still being taught in 2002—are actually a cause and its effect. The classroom teacher

lacks any real control in what gets read. The control is, rather, in the hands of textbook publishers; the publishers, who are beholden to standardized tests and focused primarily on sales (not students), are why ninth-graders are still reading “The Most Dangerous Game.”

A textbook, perhaps the most ubiquitous part of the American education experience, has a storied past itself. Unlike other types of texts, which may begin with the author’s ideas, an editor’s brainstorm, or the public’s request, the process of creating a textbook begins with a publisher; and while there are numerous houses--large and small--for trade publishing, for textbooks, the three largest publishers, McGraw-Hill, Pearson, and Houghton/Harcourt, account for 75% of all instructional material published in the United States.<sup>1</sup> While all three of these companies existed in the first wave of educational publishing the late 1800’s to early 1900s, they have grown in size and influence over the last 100 years, absorbing smaller regional and subject-specific publishing houses.<sup>2</sup> While these smaller houses may remain active in name, “the big three” largely control the publishing content of their subsidiaries as well.

With regard to the consolidation of textbook publishing, the impact of the arrival of state-wide curricula and state standardized tests like the Virginia SOL cannot be overstated. As states began to seek conformity and uniformity in their school systems, the

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<sup>1</sup> In her 2012 book *Tyranny of the Textbook*, Beverlee Jobrack cites this figure as a result of consolidation of companies. Textbooks may be published under other names, but these three companies own the smaller houses, having acquired them through consolidation. See Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup> Jobrack traces the start of education publishing to “the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries... Longman... in 1724... now an imprint of Pearson... Houghton Mifflin... in 1832... Harcourt Publishing... in 1905... McGraw-Hill... in 1888” (26-27).

need for a common textbook, or common standards within the textbook, became clear.<sup>3</sup> It would be difficult to establish and maintain state standards when dozens of different textbooks, each with different content, were in use. Where individual curriculum materials and specialized books had once been an advantage, now they were a disadvantage. Based on her research, Jobrack states that the development of educational standards, as well as the requirement that publishers meet those standards, has caused a “dramatic effect” on the educational publishing industry. These smaller regional and subject-specific publishing houses could develop different textbooks and supplementary materials based on the needs of individual learning communities to fit the demands of the area. Because of this specialization, these smaller publishing houses had stronger control over what was included, greater ability to find and hire writers with the necessary subject knowledge, and greater ability to add, delete, or change content as needed. Jobrack argues that

With increased focus on all these different areas, publishers developed instructional materials to respond to the needs of projects what would receive federal funding... as educational theories... were promoted... textbooks began to reflect new instructional practices... publishers responded with a completely different series to fit the desires of a school district... Within a subject area, curriculum materials were created to address different philosophies and teaching

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<sup>3</sup> According Michael Watt’s article published by the International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Material (IARTEM) in 2009, “Legislation standardising (sic) procedures adopting textbooks arose during the mid-nineteenth century in each state in response to the development of graded organisation (sic) requiring uniform textbooks for formal schooling in classes.”

methods. Educational publishers were able to find niche markets for a wide variety of materials. 28

The increasing demand for standardized state curricula, which only grew further once state standardized tests became *de riguer* with the passage of No Child Left Behind, reduced the demand for regional requirements, and publishing houses had to overhaul their texts to stay competitive. When this proved too expensive, the smaller houses sold out to larger publishers that had the means to create new, more expansive, and more detailed, but less specialized or adaptable, lines of textbooks. Additionally, “because most state standards are based on some version of national standards...all publishers must include much of the same content in their programs; as a result, there is little difference between textbooks from different companies, and little incentive for a smaller house to attempt to compete with one of the big three” (Jobrak 33).<sup>4</sup> Thus, what schools have been left with is a small selection of books for each grade level and subject, and little variation between them.

While on the one hand state-wide curriculum standards influence textbook development, on the other are state textbook adoption cycles. An adoption cycle is the multi-year schedule on which schools, districts, or states purchase textbooks. While twenty-eight states let their individual districts set their own adoption cycles, twenty-two states maintain that cycle on the state level, and every district in the state gets new textbooks based on it. Textbooks are usually cycled in three-to-five year periods, with

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<sup>4</sup> As noted in Watt’s *Research on the Textbook Publishing Industry*, “Sewall (2005) argues that the increasing concentration over the last 15 years... of the textbook publishing industry in the hands of four large companies has reduced the quality of textbooks... The attempt to satisfy the preferences of pressure groups, thereby homogen[ized] the content of textbooks” (14-15).

each subject cycling on a different year; for example, one year will cycle in new math books, the next year will bring new science books, the next, English and literature, and so on. Most significantly, though, of the twenty-two states that work on a state-wide adoption schedule (meaning every school in every district gets new books for every student in the designated subject that year), three of them are Texas, Florida, and California. If Pearson, McGraw-Hill, and Harcourt/Brace are the big three of the textbook publishing industry, then these states are the big three of the textbook adoption process.

Because these states contain millions of school-age students, the textbook industry aggressively competes for their business. The Center for Digital Education found that the states of Texas, Florida, and California “are the largest source of profits for publishers” so if McGraw-Hill loses out to Pearson in all three of the big states, their earnings are reduced considerably (Saetern).<sup>5</sup> Michael Watt also found that to be true, and found “publishers generally coordinated the development of textbooks to the cycles of state-level adoption states, especially Texas and California, as success in these states was likely to pay for development costs” (11). It would be difficult to create enough sales in other states to make up for the loss of even one of the big three, let alone all of them; thus, the big three states have considerable leverage in shaping the content of the books

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<sup>5</sup> Using the tools located on the Texas Transparency website, I was able to locate a \$52 million dollar payment from the Texas BOE to Pearson Education, titled *Textbooks for Public Free Schools* in October of 2015. The total payments under the same title sent to Pearson alone from Sept. 2014 through June 2016 were over \$61 million. In her article, Lai Saetern also found that “California, Texas and Florida represent about 30 percent of the total national book publishing market, according to the Center for Education Reform...California spends approximately \$400 million per year on textbooks, according to the California Open Source Textbook Project, while Texas spends approximately \$500 million per year, according to the Texas Education Agency. Florida's spending is closer to \$260 million per year, according to the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.”

that are developed by the big three publishers.<sup>6</sup> As consolidation proved, it is not economically viable to produce numerous versions of the same textbook to fit the individual needs of individual states or regions, so the standards and curricula demands of the big three states drive the content of the big three publishers, which then makes its way into the smaller states as they purchase the same books produced for Texas, California, and Florida.<sup>7</sup> The big three states also influence when, and with what regularity, textbooks were published, meaning that if important information, developments, or events occur outside of the standard cycle, all states have to wait for the information to become incorporated into their textbooks.<sup>8</sup>

The adoption cycles of Texas, California, and Florida aren't the only element from those states that influence textbook creation; the dominant religious, political, and

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<sup>6</sup> According to the NEA *Rankings and Estimates* report published in December 2010, for the 2010-2011 school year, Florida, California, and Texas had an estimated total of 13,665,512 students enrolled in K-12 schools, or more than 25% of the estimated total for all states plus D.C (49,162,463 students).

<sup>7</sup> This effect has a long history, in fact, as documented in Barbara Crane's *The "California Effect" on Textbook Adoptions* (1975); she states that as California made changes to their textbooks to suit desires by the State Board of Education "when publishers felt these changes would increase their national sales, the California modifications eventually became incorporated into national editions." The IARTEM also documents in its research summary that "research suggests that populous state-level adoption states influence the content of textbooks used across the USA" (13). Beverlee Jobrack found that "Publishers strategize based on the AAP (American Association of Publishers School Division) schedule... a publisher will plan on publishing a brand-new Texas edition of a science program targeted for the deadline for the Texas adoption. The publisher will incorporate the other states guidelines and then produce a national edition... It would be cost prohibitive to create a completely different program for each state. The following year, the publisher will revise its Texas/national edition and 'Californiaorize' it to submit in the California adoption... each state may give a state-specific cover and other elements, but the program is basically the same as that created for Texas or California" (13).

<sup>8</sup> Tulley's research indicates that "the periodic review and purchase of textbooks is achieved through prescribed "cycles," or periods of textbook usage... most often these states have established 4- to 6-year cycles, with different subject area textbooks adopted each year, on a rotating basis" (304).

personal beliefs of those states impact them as well. Sherry Keith notes “book publishers are the gatekeepers of ideas and knowledge”;<sup>9</sup> Lee Cronbach furthers the sentiment by noting that “banned books are still rare in our society; banned textbooks, on the contrary are numerous” (120). The sheer number of challenges to controversial textbook material, from the Scopes trial in 1925 to the Rugg textbook in the 1930s and 1940s to Kanawha County, WV, in 1974, to current, continuous debates over evolution, the Big Bang, American history, and sex education, indicate broad awareness of, and anxiety over, the influence of textbooks in shaping public knowledge and public discourse.<sup>10</sup> In his essay “Dilemmas of a Textbook Writer” (1969), William Bragdon notes, “It is an inescapable function of an American history text that it affects student’s attitudes towards their society. A traditional method of doing this is to get across the idea that everything American is better” (298). And even though “the public is unlikely to question instructional materials...when students do complain...there is a flurry of consternation

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<sup>9</sup> Discussed in her article *The Determinants of Textbook Content* and published in *Textbooks in American Society*.

<sup>10</sup> John Scopes, a high-school science teacher, faced a trial in Tennessee for teaching his students about evolution; at the time, he was using a state-approved textbook. The trial and subsequent appeals drove the writing of a new law that forbids teaching evolution without a “qualifying statement that evolution is a theory and not a scientific fact” that still exists today (Farrell 7). Harold Rugg wrote a series of history and social studies textbooks for high school students that were immensely popular in the 1930s and 40s; Rugg outlined several “pervasive social problems and issues” in his books as he discussed the development of America, but the groups like “the National Association of Manufacturers, the Advertising Federation of America, the Hearst Press, the American Legion, and other ultra-right-wing groups and individuals... viewed any study of unsettling ideas and problems in American life as anti-American” (Farrell 7-8). The rewrite of the Advanced Placement US History standards to reveal a more problematic view of historical events like colonization, slavery, immigration, and social policy has prompted several states, including Virginia, to set up independent review boards to challenge the changes. Evolution, the elements of sex education, and scientific theory as it conflicts with Christian creationism are consistent places of conflict for teachers and schools.

and the district administration defends the materials or abandons them” (Jobrak 7). As a result, “these controversies result in a reversion to older materials that do not inspire any controversy,” and instead rely on the same content, authors, materials, and excerpts that have served in the past; this is why, again, works like “The Most Dangerous Game” persist. Teachers know that it functions well as an introduction to a core literary concept (plot) and is unlikely to cause problems with parents or administrators.<sup>11</sup> In point of fact, when a book (trade or textbook) is challenged, “Due to the commitment of librarians, teachers, parents, students and other concerned citizens, most challenges are unsuccessful and most materials are retained in the school curriculum or library collection” where students and teachers remain free to use it (ALA). However, with standardized tests looming, teachers and administrators are loathe to lose teaching time to challenged materials, or take the risk of using a work that students may not understand or that teachers may not be as initially effective teaching. When a school’s accreditation, and perhaps a teacher’s job, rests on test scores, there is little incentive to experiment.

There is nothing inherently bad about “The Most Dangerous Game,” of course. But there are also thousands of other short stories available to teach children the basics of plot, setting, and characters, and thereby provide some diversity among what students learn, as well as some exposure to other authors, points of view, and experiences. Yet the desire to stick with what is safe, what has worked in the past, what teachers have already

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<sup>11</sup> The American Library Association (ALA) releases yearly lists, as well as a “Top 100” list of challenged and banned books used in the classroom and in school libraries. The list for 2000-2009 includes many classic and popular teaching titles like *The Kite Runner*, *Black Boy*, *Fahrenheit 451*, *Beloved*, *The Things They Carried*, *The Giver*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. These, along with most of the other titles on the list, are generally not included in the textbooks that were I reviewed. They are available for purchase from the publishers as paperbacks.



prepared for, and what parents and administrators remember themselves, outweighs any benefits that might accrue from substituting authors that are less well known, more modern, more racially and ethnically diverse, and perhaps more attuned to students in school today. Older ideas about what students “should” learn, based largely on what current teachers and administrators themselves learned, and what the textbooks offer, stifles the adoption of other materials that, in time, might themselves be seen as works everyone ought to have read. As it stands, because they were taught that *Romeo and Juliet* or *The Scarlet Letter* or *The Odyssey* are canonical works needed in every educational experience, teachers have no compelling reason to find room for much else. As Jobrak puts it, “As a teacher, once you have figured out how to survive and have a bank of lesson plans, you are very reluctant to change and will select new material that requires the least amount of change” (20). Though she notes, “there is no intentional malice in this process,” she also adds that even if some new material is adopted, “the status quo is maintained” (21). A teacher’s time in the classroom is necessarily limited by factors beyond his/her control, and with only 40 weeks, and a list of “must teach” works, any variant is either ignored or left until after the standardized tests, when the year is winding to a close and students have begun to check out; after all, the stuff that *really* matters would be part of SOL preparations.

This trend was noted as early as 1967, when, in his book *The American Schoolbook*, Hillel Black explained that “to provide the *mass cultural education* that it seems the majority of educators demand, the textbook publisher frequently makes sure that the intellectual content of schoolbooks does not surpass the broadest... lowest, level of... interest and ability” (58). To illustrate the direct impact of a state’s preferences on

textbooks, Black relates an incident involving an elementary-level science textbook. In a unit on animal reproduction, the author had included references to sperm and egg cells; though “an elementary-school principal... and a science teacher... okayed the inclusion... the [Florida] salesman said we had gone a little too far to be safe” (21). Because the book might not be adopted in conservative Florida due to this, the textbook (which would be marketed to all states) went to press discussing animal reproduction without ever mentioning that sperm and eggs are involved. Less than 10 years later, Myra Sadker, then-dean of the school of education at American University, noted that “the twelve most popular secondary history texts.... allocated to the women’s suffrage movement... two sentences. . . . [T]ypically there is more space given to the six shooter... than to the experiences and struggles of frontier women.”<sup>12</sup> In a 2012 article, Christina Agiro, in her study of textbooks used in Christian classrooms, noted that a biography on John Winthrop and his development of the British colonies “omits women’s presence or contributions” to the establishment of the colonies and that “his only account of a women is of a negative behavior” (224). She argues that these omissions and contextualizations are due to the Christian audience that the textbook was geared towards, who would want to see men and women in traditional (and sexist) roles.

To illustrate the problems associated with (to borrow Jobrak’s phrasing) “reversion to older materials that do not inspire any controversy,” I examined five American Literature textbooks published between 1965 and 2013 as well as one general literature book from 1964, which are shown below.

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<sup>12</sup> From the essay *Diversity, Pluralism, and Textbooks* by Myra Sadker, published in *The Textbook and American Society*.

Title	Publisher	Year of Publication
Exploring Life Through Literature	Scott, Foresman and Company	1964
American Literature	Houghton Mifflin	1965
The American Experience	Prentice Hall	1991
Elements: Literature of the United States	Holt, Reinhart and Winston (Harcourt Brace)	2000
The American Experience	Pearson/ Prentice Hall	2007
Literature: American Literature	Holt McDougal	2013

In the 1964 text, of 109 total pieces of literature included, 70% were written by white men; the breakdown of the remaining 30% came from white women (14%), black men (5%), black women (4%), men of other races (6%), and women of other races (3%). In the 1965 American Literature textbook, white men account for 86% of the works included; white women make up the next 13%, and a lone piece by a black man accounts for the final 1%. It is perhaps not surprising that textbooks from the 1960s, compiled during the heat of the civil rights movement, lack diversity. It is more difficult to understand the surprisingly similar track record of more recent publications. In the 1991, 2000, 2007, and 2013 textbooks, the percentage of works by white men ranged from 53% to 59%, white women from 13% to 21%, Black men from 6% to 11%, Black women from 4% to 10%, men of other races from 5% to 12%, and women of other races from 2% to 7%. In other words, even as textbooks increase in size to accommodate passing years, the ratios of male to female and black to white authors has remained largely the same, despite the increasing diversity in public school students, their backgrounds, and their experiences.

While the numbers themselves tell a significant part of the story, there is more to be gleaned. Because it's not just that students are reading works primarily by white men and women, it is also that they are reading many of the same works by many of the same people in each book, regardless of who published it. As noted above, each textbook came from a different publisher yet contained almost the exact same works and authors. In the American Literature books survey, out of 105 authors, 42 of them were in at least 4 out of 5 textbooks. 23 more were in 3 out of 5 textbooks. The most common repeating authors are male early American authors like William Bradford, Edward Taylor, Jonathan Edwards, and Thomas Paine, who were in every book examined; apparently no student can escape high school without first passing through *Of Plymouth Plantation* and "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." In contrast, Primo Levi, Malcom X, and Martin Luther King Jr. were in one book each. The remaining 30 authors, who were in only two or one textbooks, were usually the female or minority writers, being substituted for each other, so that in textbooks where Toni Morrison was absent, Zora Neale Hurston took her place, but both authors were not in the same textbook. The result of this is that when students are taught a unit on the Harlem Renaissance (to take one notable example), they are really being taught a unit on Langston Hughes. When they learn about female American poets, they are really only learning about Emily Dickinson. When they learn about Chinese-American culture, they are learning only Amy Tan's point-of-view. And while these authors are all *excellent* examples, they are not the *only* examples.

There are no awards given for superior textbooks, and little honor or cachet for the editors who piece them together. Textbooks are workhorses, and as such have little glamour associated with them. What is associated with them, though, is money. Because,

as noted above, school districts must replace their books every five years or so, and usually replace a different subject every year based on a cycle, the steady income stream is highly desirable for publishers. Because textbook adoption committees rely on large purchases to control costs, the actual expense can be difficult to quantify with precision.<sup>13</sup> By examining textbook catalogues and then looking at the adoption practices of real-world schools, some suggestive findings emerge.<sup>14</sup>

The Pearson Company offers a so-called “program set” of English Language Arts materials that spans from grades 6-12.<sup>15</sup> This sequential programming of course texts encourages states and districts to purchase all of their texts for these grades through Pearson as a way to promote continuity and avoid overlap; purchasing books for different grades from different publishers means there is no guarantee that students will not encounter the same material in different books in subsequent grades, so there is incentive to invest in the whole program.

In its 2015 catalog, Pearson offers the student edition of the English textbook for \$85.97 to \$89.97, depending on the grade level. Teacher’s editions range from \$130.47 to \$140.97. For the 2012-2013 school year, the largest high school in Virginia was T.C.

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<sup>13</sup>Tulley found that the third most important determining factor of textbook adoption committees was “to reduce textbook costs” behind uniformity of curriculum and ensuring the selection of the highest-quality textbooks. (295)

<sup>14</sup> A study by the CATO institute found “that very few state education departments provide complete and timely financial data that is understandable to the general public,” making it hard to tease out exactly how much any state spends just on textbooks, and likely impossible to determine the amount on literature textbooks, thus justifying a somewhat speculative approach to arriving at final figures. Virginia in particular earns a D- for transparency.

<sup>15</sup> The other two “Big Three” publishers have similar programs, costs, and materials as those offered by Pearson.

Williams, located in Alexandria, which had 2,906 students enrolled.<sup>16</sup> If the adoption committee for T.C. Williams chooses Pearson as the provider of literature books for its high school (grades 9-12) alone, not counting the middle school texts in grades 6-8, Pearson stands to earn over a quarter of a million dollars from that single high school. If they manage to become the preferred provider of textbooks in Texas, then that quarter-million becomes almost pure profit, removing only the cost of printing the textbooks since, as Michael Watt found, the cost for development would be covered by the Texas sales. Since there are thirty high schools in Virginia with enrollments exceeding 2000 students, capturing even one-third of that market means enormous profits for the company based on just student editions alone. Likewise, losing out to another publisher in four or five of the top-30 enrollment schools where Pearson had previously been the book of choice means a gross profit loss of over a million dollars. In total for the 2013-2014 school year, the state of Virginia had 1.273 million students enrolled in school;<sup>17</sup> because of book replacement cycles, all of those students received at least one new book that year, and possibly more. In high school, where student editions average in the \$80.00 range,<sup>18</sup> there were over 376,000 students enrolled, and the potential for over 30 million dollars in sales if every school district selects at least one of Pearson Publishing's books to buy.

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<sup>16</sup> Data on school enrollment was obtained through the Virginia High School League website; the data was provided to them by the Virginia Department of Education as projected enrollment for the 2012-2013 school year, which was then used to determine size classification for competition, e.g, Division 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A, or 6A.

<sup>17</sup> Data obtained from the Virginia Department of Education website and is based on their enrollment surveys from all schools in Virginia, both public and private.

<sup>18</sup> Data obtained from the Pearson Publishing Company online 2015 catalog.

The money does not end with student edition textbooks though; publishers have created dozens of add-ons to the courses to help address every aspect of the student-teacher experience.<sup>19</sup> These include CDs with the literature selections read aloud, reading comprehension workbooks (which must be replaced yearly), grammar and writing workbooks (also replaced yearly), CDs that offering writing help to students, test banks with questions for quizzes and test, English as a Second Language materials, activity kits and online teacher centers, vocabulary flashcards, and “coaching” software for achieving success on Common Core standards. All of these items must be purchased in addition to the \$80.00+ student edition (and \$135.00+ teacher edition), and come with 6-year digital licenses, which must be renewed or replaced at the end of the 6-year period. Districts are also encouraged to sign-up for “fulfillment” programs at discounted prices to replace used workbooks at current prices. Full-length literary works (from elementary school books like *The Diary of Anne Frank* and *The Westing Game* to high school standards such as *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Great Expectations*, and much of Shakespeare’s oeuvre) can also be purchased from Pearson, and come with Pearson-aligned guides, further encouraging districts, schools, and teachers to purchase all of their classroom materials from a single publisher rather than choosing smaller educational- or literary-based houses for even the widely published texts.

Moving beyond books and ancillary materials themselves, publishing houses have begun to cast their net into the professional development areas of education. Since all states require that their teachers earn recertification (usually every five years), and one way to earn it is by attending conferences, the publishing houses have begun to hold their

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix II for item and price list from the 2015 Pearson catalog.

own. Pearson offers conferences, webinars, and institutes, with the cost for a conference ranging between \$250.00 for an online-only development session to \$450.00 and \$700.00 for an in-person conference.<sup>20</sup> In short, publishing companies can now control every aspect of what happens within a classroom: the pieces of literature that are read, the questions that are asked on tests and quizzes, the materials used to understand the meaning of the text, the activities that are done within the class, the training of the teacher who uses the materials, and even the state recertification of that teacher. The textbooks are specialized to the state tests, in this case the Virginia SOLs, and contain practice SOL questions, writing prompts, vocabulary, and targeted information based on what the Virginia Board of Education gives them. While there is nothing inherently evil about a single entity (or two or three in the case of textbooks) seizing so much control, it is certainly worth considering the potential ramifications for the educational system on which so much of the American experiment has always depended—and continues to depend.

In terms of practical applications, a student attending public schools in America will likely have the majority of his/her educational text exposure come from only three different publishers, possibly fewer. Because of the reliance on multiple-choice, standardized, state-developed tests for graduation, to which the publishers are carefully aligning their course texts, this same student will see little practical variation from what the publishers puts on the page, in the workbook, or on the testing materials.<sup>21</sup> Outside

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<sup>20</sup> Data collected from the Pearson instructional resources website.

<sup>21</sup> Page 5 of the 2015 Pearson catalog states “Designed and built around the Common Core State Standards, this comprehensive program gives educators and students a clear pathway to success by integrating instruction, practice, and real- world application for all learners,” and the phrase “Common Core” is found on 40 of the catalogs 117 pages. The



material is likely to be relegated to single-day units, extra credit assignments, or end-of-year activities to fill time.

When teachers step out of the textbook curricula, it can cause unrest among those who develop the standards. Recently, California teacher Michael Godsey made the news for replacing his unit on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with the podcast *Serial* in order to teach Common Core lessons on critical thinking, analyzing and presenting evidence, and interpreting literary and narrative devices. As *Slate* writer Matt Colette notes, "*Serial* unspools its story in the same conversational language students use every day but still gives Godsey a chance to talk about the same things he can get at with Shakespeare: characters, reliable narrators, story structure, foreshadowing." Godsey's experiment, which he considers a success, falls flat for Carol Jago, who helped develop the Common Core standards for the state. As Collette reports, "There's a broad misunderstanding of this point, Jago said. She does see value in teaching something like *Serial*, but not at the expense of the classics. 'It'd be better,' [Jago] says, 'as a one-day exercise, perhaps paired up against something like Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, not a month-long unit on its own.'" What's left unmentioned is that traditional text for which Jago is advocating has itself already been tailored to the Common Core standards Jago helped to create. *In Cold Blood* is available for purchase from the Big Three publishers; Pearson offers it as part of a \$567.00 CD-ROM set, replete with study guides and practice questions.<sup>22</sup>

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Common Core is a set of national standards; Virginia uses the SOL standards and thus would receive the state-specific book.

<sup>22</sup> The novel is available as a stand-alone from Pearson for \$11.47, but to get the audio version, the CD-ROM set is required.

As shown, the publishing houses have ample reason to lobby assiduously in order to be chosen by state adoption committees (and then later individual districts, if the districts get a say in what books they receive). And as Jobrack found, the publishers have several methods for increasing the odds of their textbooks being chosen, from lowering prices in order to undercut competitors, to packaging ancillary materials in order to increase value, to providing snacks to school teachers prior to their vote on which materials to choose.<sup>23</sup> That makes a box of donuts one of the best investments there is.

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<sup>23</sup> In *Tyranny of the Textbook*, Jobrak lists a series of reasons why a specific textbook will be chosen for adoption in a school system; all of these are ways publishers attempt to sway the vote.

## Conclusion

What does all of this information about No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the SOLs, the standardized testing industry, textbooks and textbook companies mean to those who are at the center of it all—teachers and students?

In a survey of 46 teachers, all of whom responded with the understanding that their quotes could be used but not their names, I was able to glean some interesting insights into who uses textbooks and how.<sup>1</sup> Most strikingly, 74% of the teachers responded that their textbook's use value is limited, and that they have to find and use additional resources for their classes. One teacher lamented that “Many of the reading selections are not engaging,” and that “many of the activities in the book do not get past knowledge and comprehension” while higher-order thinking skills and analytical responses fall by the wayside. This teacher finished by noting “Questions that claim to be application only ask about ‘real world’ connections, which get tired quickly.”

Most teachers reported that they are able to incorporate materials beyond assigned textbooks—with great effort and little-to-no economic support. Half of the teachers responded that they have, in the past, wanted to “order additional materials... but been unable to because money spent on textbooks took up funding.” When asked to elaborate, several teachers provided some illuminating commentary. One Virginia teacher reported “my district chose to go with the new consumable interactive workbooks written by the developers of the SOL (Pearson). Unfortunately, the traditional textbooks were

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<sup>1</sup> Survey was written and distributed by me via SurveyMonkey. Respondents were not asked to give their name or identifying school information. Respondents were told that their answer could be quoted as part of this thesis. Current and former teachers received an invitation to complete the survey, and a total of 48 respondents from around Virginia participated. See Appendix VIII.

collected,” which means not only that she lost a familiar resource, but also that now the Pearson materials are the only ones the students interact with unless unapproved ones are brought in. Moreover, since the workbooks are consumable materials, they must be repurchased each year, reinforcing the economic stake Pearson has in the classroom; it provides a dependable source of income for the company.<sup>2</sup> And since Pearson (like other major producers of such textbooks) writes the tests, there is an incentive for school districts to use the Pearson company for the materials, locking in the cycle. Another teacher added that “I would like to use some other resources... but cannot use them because the money is dedicated to the textbook and consumable resources.”

With limitations on funding, teachers who need additional materials to supplement the textbooks (and 74% said they did) often have to pay for them on their own, or ask parents to cover the cost. Of the 46% who are unable to get funding for additional materials, 28% buy the materials themselves or sought other funding, like parents or grants, while 6% obtain them less than legally (via copyright violation like photocopying or internet printing), and 2% ask the students to pay for them. One teacher, wrote “when so much money is dedicated to the suite of resources provided by the textbook company, it makes it almost more of a political issue to use other resources. Even if other money is available, the question that is often asked when requesting other funding is ‘have you used all of the resources at your disposal already?;’” this essentially ends the conversation, because with all of the resources packaged into the textbook group, it is almost impossible to answer in the affirmative. It also ignores the larger point,

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<sup>2</sup> Consumable materials, like workbooks, flashcards, graphic organizers, and notebooks are only meant to be used for one year; students write directly on the materials or manipulate them in other ways, making them impossible to re-use.

which is that if the textbooks provide inadequate materials to begin with (like a lack of minority or female writers, or modern pieces of literature) then using the supplementary materials provided will not fill the gap. And as one teacher said, “knowing materials wouldn’t be ordered, it was much easier to find resources online and either run classroom copies or direct students to online texts.” And while that can be a reasonable measure for some supplementary items (like a literary text that was recently published, a newspaper article, or a magazine essay), it’s not a solution to a poor textbook or lack of diverse materials. If schools are going to buy thousands of dollar worth of textbooks each year, then teachers need to be able to use them in their classrooms. Running class sets of copies is time-consuming, expensive, and wasteful of resources, and presenting texts to students online makes it difficult to teach annotation skills, and active reading strategies, while also putting students without internet and computer access at home or at school at a distinct disadvantage.

It is worth noting that teachers who do not teach SOL (or standardized tested) classes also tend to use textbooks less frequently. For some, it’s a matter of not being able to find a textbook that suits them; as an art teacher reported, “it lacks the variety I need. Also contemporary artists are not in there.” An elementary school teacher no longer uses textbooks because they “are things the students cannot read and they have not been updated in years.” A photography teacher indicated that she did not use her book much because it was from 1991. Since non-SOL courses are less important to schools in the NCLB era, it would make sense that non-SOL teachers feel less pressured to use an approved text. As someone who moved from teaching all SOL tested courses to teaching untested electives, I can verify that; I do not have to participate in any of the mandatory

reviews, benchmark tests, and practice SOL tests that core subject teachers do. Because elective classes are not associated with SOL tests and pass rates, there is more freedom to experiment with materials, units, and activities. If an activity for a music class is unsuccessful, the teacher can either try again or move on; if an activity is unsuccessful in an English 11 class, the teacher has to re-teach and then readjust to make up for the lost time.

So that is what has been lost as textbooks have become the primary choice for classroom materials in SOL classrooms—the freedom to choose stand-alone texts, the ability to order a variety of materials from sources other than the textbook companies, and the flexibility to pick and choose materials from a large number of sources without having to resort to unethical means like copyright violations or charging students for their classroom materials. With that comes the loss of diversity, as most authors in the major literature textbooks, at least, are white and male. Students miss out on hearing a variety of voices in literature and reading the works of authors who fall outside of the mainstream. Unless their teacher is willing to devote extra time to finding, formatting, printing, photocopying (or buying) additional readings and materials, the literary world of the students becomes very narrow and very narrowly tested, where the end game for the school becomes not how much the student has engaged with and enjoyed their literary experience, but how well the student can identify a simile or define a word, which is reinforced through the textbook itself with its standardized test structure and focus. Moreover, as mentioned before, a massive company like Pearson, who both writes the tests and sells materials to prepare for the tests, reinforces this cycle.

As a final question, I asked the teachers in my survey if they found it problematic that Pearson writes the tests and also sells textbooks aligned to them; almost 60% did. The teachers cite issues like the company having “a monopoly” and a “conflict of interest,” with one individual complaining that the company “swallows massive amounts of education dollars that could be better spent in the schools.” And while Pearson may be the largest player in the textbook and testing game, they are not the only one; to return to an earlier statistic, the three largest textbook companies account for 75% of all instructional materials published in the U.S.

It would be a disservice to suggest that textbooks and standardized testing are without some merits. Textbooks provide a stable and predictable source of readings and questions, tailored to a variety of student achievement levels. Standardized tests are able to generate clear data on how schools, their students, and their teachers are performing—on the standardized tests. At the cost of limiting student exposure to ideas, lifestyles, and source variety, in other words, this model provides incomplete and unreliable data, which in turn leads to misinformed decisions about how best to educate students. One final cost: many millions of dollars are spent annually (in Virginia alone) on in support of the SOLs.

What then, is the way forward? If standardized tests like the SOL are both poor indicators of student learning and also expensive and time-consuming, how can student learning, growth, and development be measured? If they are an unsatisfactory measure of teacher achievement, then how can classroom teachers be fairly assessed? And, perhaps most importantly, if the textbook industry is underserving students by providing materials that lacks currency, diversity, and variety, then what is a better option? It’s hard to say

with definitiveness, but there are some options that are beginning to find their way into schools and classrooms.

For the literature classroom, one way would be to rely more on primary sources—full-length novels, journal articles, short story collections, books of poetry, novellas, and individual plays—rather than on the selection of excerpts and recycled works that exist in textbooks. An advantage to this approach would be that students could begin to see a work in its entirety, rather than in an isolated excerpt or only as part of a larger anthology. Ideally, studying individual primary sources, selected by the teacher or the school or the district, rather than mass-produced textbooks, would allow for a greater diversity among the materials that students throughout a city, state, region, or country read, giving wider variety to historically marginalized categories of writers. It could also allow for areas to build on their own literary histories, rather than a largely East-Coast one.<sup>3</sup> In reading-centered subjects other than English, such as social studies or science, the same approach would also be beneficial for the same reasons.

Testing might be a more difficult factor to reduce, as large swaths of decisions about funding, control, and accountability are determined by test results, despite the fact that test scores are imperfect indicators of student and teacher achievement. And even if standardized testing maintains its dominance as the assessment tool for students and teachers, and as the primary tool for many decisions on, the data itself is suspect and should be examined. Gerald Bracey, writing for *Educational Leadership*, indicated that the test scores themselves, after so much time and effort has gone into getting them, are rarely used properly. While test scores are used for promotion and graduation, and for

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix VII for a comprehensive list of authors in all six books studied, as well as the frequency with which each author appears.



teacher accountability and school accreditation, Bracey identifies a glaring problem: rarely are the actual scores referenced or used—instead, only pass rates matter. Thus, a teacher who has an 80% pass rate with students all scoring in the top percentages looks the same as a teacher with an 80% pass rate whose students all scored the lowest possible percentages. A student who passes the SOL with a 401 (passing scores are 400-600) looks the same as a student who passes with a 599. Some schools recognize higher scores as “passing advanced,” but that in-house designation is not carried over into public pass rates. As he says, “if we focus only on the proficiency cutoff, it doesn’t matter whether the student exceeds it by one question or 40. We’re looking at how many kids can jump over the barrier, not how high they can jump” (87). This is especially problematic when one of the goals of standardized tests is to lessen the divide between white and minority students, referred to in education as “closing the achievement gap.” Using the pass rate instead of the actual score can make the progress towards closing the gap seem much better than it actually is. Using a fictional sample, he demonstrates how “if we look only at passing rates, black students have reduced the gap from 40 percent to 30 percent. But if we look at scores, the gap has actually increased from 16 points to 24 points.”<sup>4</sup>

While there are movements to reduce the number of standardized tests that students take and to mitigate on the aggressive testing schedule, the restructuring or removal of NCLB, with its required tests in grades 3-8 and at least one per year in high school, would be the most significant step. Some progress has already been made towards this goal. Republican senators began work on a bill in December 2014 that would eliminate the federal mandate for yearly testing and “leave decisions about testing

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<sup>4</sup> From “How to Avoid Statistical Traps”, originally published in *Educational Leadership* and reproduced in *Schools in Society: A Sociological Approach to Education*.

schedules up to states. Some would likely stick with annual assessments, while others would try out gradespan testing and still others would mix and match, GOP aides say. That's an idea that's likely to prove popular with education organizations, including the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers," both groups that have advocated for similar measures in the past (Klein).<sup>5</sup> Furthering the goal of removing NCLB testing requirements, in February of this year Florida governor Scott Walker eliminated one of the high school language arts tests in response to concern that students in his state are over-tested.<sup>6</sup> And there are parental grassroots efforts to dismantle the rigorous testing schedule, including the gaining momentum of the "opt-out" choice, where parents simply refuse to let their children be tested. For example, CNN reported that during the New York tests given in April 2015,

according to one of the groups leading the opt-out movement here—the New York State Allies for Public Education— 156,000 students refused to take this week's English exam, and that's with just from 50% of the districts reporting their numbers. With approximately 1.1 million students eligible to take the tests in grades 3-8 in New York, that means at least 14% of students are projected to sit out this year. (Wallace)

The same article gives examples of parents opting out in growing numbers in Indiana (where the state Superintendent of the Year encouraged parents to avoid testing week at school) and in New Jersey, while the activist group FairTest is dedicated to replacing standardized testing with more holistic methods of evaluation.

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<sup>5</sup> Gradespan testing is tracking students' test scores from one grade to the next to monitor their progress over the course of several years.

<sup>6</sup> Per Valerie Strauss in *The Washington Post*.

And there are many other ways to evaluate how much a child has learned that are more organic than a once-a-year, one-size-fits-all test; portfolios that collect student work throughout the year, major projects that synthesize the information covered in different units, and the newly-emerging trend of Project-Based Learning (PBL) that asks students to solve identified real-world problems using classroom skills. Such options would allow for a greater range of creativity and diversity in evaluation that is not possible with a single end-of-year test while still generating meaningful data with which to evaluate the performance of students and teachers.

A final alternative for assessment is what Valerie Shute, a Florida State University professor calls “stealth assessment,” or collecting data in the background while students work with software and websites all year. Anya Kamenetz, writing for NPR, asserts that “it presents the opportunity to eliminate the time, cost and anxiety of ‘stop and test’ in favor of passively collecting data on students' knowledge over a semester, year or entire school career.” The value in this approach, she continues, is that stealth assessment doesn't just show which skills a student has mastered at a given moment. The pattern of answers potentially offers insights into how quickly students learn, how diligent they are, and other big-picture factors.” Speaking to Kamenetz, Kimberly O’Malley assures her that “Invisible, integrated assessment, to me, is the future...We can monitor students' learning day to day in a digital scenario. Ultimately, if we're successful, the need for, and the activity of, stopping and testing will go away in many cases.” What makes O’Malley so certain that stealth assessment is the future? It’s hard to say, exactly; but she is a senior Vice President at Pearson Education, a company who will likely loom large in education for years, and who just might turn out to be an ally, not an enemy.

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# Appendix I

Appendix 1  
Textbook Publisher Ownership

**McGraw-Hill**

Barnell Loft  
Bennett  
Benzinger  
Contemporary  
Creative Publications  
The Grow Network  
CTB (California Test  
Berueau)  
Dolch  
Economy  
EDL Educational  
Development Labs

Everyday Learning  
Glencoe  
Gregg  
Ideal/Instructional Fair  
Jamestown  
Laidlaw  
Landoll  
Lippincott  
Living & Learning  
Macmillan  
McCormick Mather  
Meeks Heit

Merrill  
Mimosa  
National Textbook Company  
Open Court  
Optical Data  
Palmer  
Random House  
RGA/Lowell House  
Thompson Learning  
Tribune Learning  
Webster  
Wright Group

**Pearson**

Addison Wesley  
Addison-Wesley Longman  
AG  
Alemany Press  
Allyn & Bacon  
altonaED  
Celebration Press  
Chancery Software  
Cisco Press  
Cobblestone Publishing  
Computer Curriculum  
Corporation  
Cuisenaire Company  
Dale Seymore  
DDC Publishing  
Dominie Press, Inc.  
eCollege  
Educational Management  
Group

Ellis Horwood  
ELLIS  
Family Education Network  
Fearon  
Ginn & Company  
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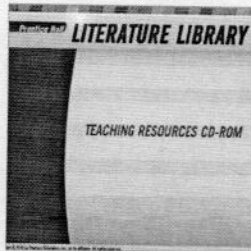
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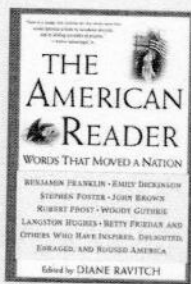
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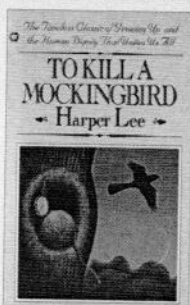
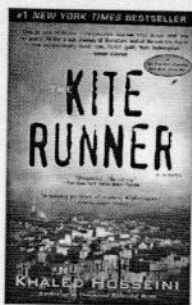
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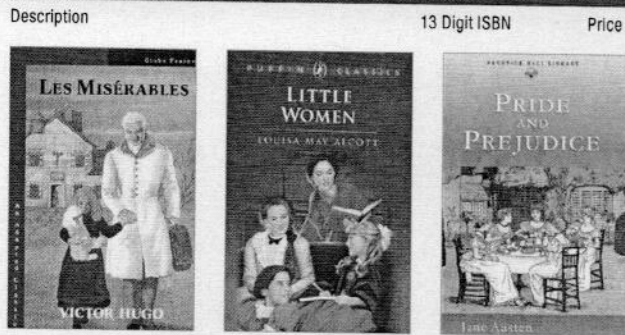
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<i>Christmas Carol, A</i> , Charles Dickens	9780822493556	7.97
<i>Count of Monte Cristo, The</i> , Alexandre Dumas	9780835909891	7.97
<i>Crime and Punishment</i> , Fyodor Dostoyevsky	9780822493532	7.97
<i>Cyrano</i> , Edmond Rostand	9780835913997	7.97

Description	13 Digit ISBN	Price
<i>David Copperfield</i> , Charles Dickens	9780822493396	7.97
<i>Deerslayer, The</i> , James Fenimore Cooper	9780822492856	7.97
<i>Doll's House, A</i> , Henrik Ibsen	9780835914048	8.97
<i>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i> , Robert Louis Stevenson	9780822492559	7.97
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<i>Ethan Frome</i> , Edith Wharton	9780822493549	7.97
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<i>Heart of Darkness</i> , Joseph Conrad	9780822493402	7.97
<i>House of the Seven Gables, The</i> , Nathaniel Hawthorne	9780835910736	7.97
<i>Hunchback of Notre-Dame, The</i> , Victor Hugo	9780822493419	7.97
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<i>Jungle, The</i> , Upton Sinclair	9780835910484	7.97
<i>Last of the Mohicans, The</i> , James Fenimore Cooper	9780822492153	7.97
<i>Little Women</i> , Louisa May Alcott	9780835935883	7.97
<i>Lord Jim</i> , Joseph Conrad	9780130237057	7.97
<i>Macbeth</i> , William Shakespeare	9780835912327	7.97
<i>Mayor of Casterbridge, The</i> , Thomas Hardy	9780822493426	7.97
<i>Moby-Dick</i> , Herman Melville	9780822493501	7.97
<i>Moonstone, The</i> , Wilkie Collins	9780822492207	7.97
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<i>Oliver Twist</i> , Charles Dickens	9780835910781	8.97
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<i>Red Badge of Courage, The</i> , Stephen Crane	9780822493563	7.97
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<i>Wuthering Heights</i> , Emily Brontë	9780822493570	7.97

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# Appendix III

## 2015 Spring SOL Schedule Summary

Click on the individual tabs to see each day's schedule



<b>Tuesday, May 5</b>	<b>Wednesday, May 6</b>	<b>Thursday, May 7</b>	<b>Friday, May 8</b>
Alg. II & Term Grad/Retesters	English 11 Reading	Chemistry	Alg. I & Geometry

<b>Tuesday, May 5</b>	<b>Wednesday, May 6</b>	<b>Thursday, May 7</b>	<b>Friday, May 8</b>
Testing 6 Lunch 4 Block 5 Block 1 Block 2	Testing 1 Lunch 4 Block 6 Block 7 Block 3	Testing 5 Lunch 4 Block 7 Block 2 Block 3	Testing 3 Lunch 4 Block 5 Block 6 Block 1

<b>Monday, May 11</b>	<b>Tuesday, May 12</b>	<b>Wednesday, May 13</b>	<b>Thursday, May 14</b>	<b>Friday, May 15</b>
E. Science & Term Grads	VA/US History	Biology	WH I	WH II

<b>Monday, May 11</b>	<b>Tuesday, May 12</b>	<b>Wednesday, May 13</b>	<b>Thursday, May 14</b>	<b>Friday, May 15</b>
Testing 4 Lunch 5 Block 6 Block 1 Block 7	Testing 6 Lunch 4 Block 7 Block 2 Block 3	Testing 3 Lunch 4 Block 5 Block 6 Block 2	Testing 2 Lunch 4 Block 7 Block 1 Block 3	Testing 7 Lunch 4 Block 5 Block 1 Block 2

<b>Monday, May 18</b>	<b>Tuesday, May 19</b>	<b>Wednesday, May 20</b>	<b>Thursday, May 21</b>	<b>Friday, May 22</b>
English 11 & Term Grads Make-Up Expedited Retakes	Alg. II Make-Up & Expedited Retakes	Alg. I & Geometry Make-Up Expedited Retakes	Chemistry Make-Up Expedited Retakes	E. Science & T. Grads Make-Up Expedited Retakes

<b>Tuesday, May 19</b>	<b>Wednesday, May 20</b>	<b>Thursday, May 21</b>	<b>Friday, May 22</b>
Regular Bell Schedule	Regular Bell Schedule	Regular Bell Schedule	Regular Bell Schedule

<b>Monday, May 25</b>	<b>Tuesday, May 26</b>	<b>Wednesday, May 27</b>	<b>Thursday, May 28</b>	<b>Friday, May 29</b>
Memorial Day	Biology Make-Up/ Expedited Retakes	VA/US History Make-Up & Expedited Retakes	World History I & II Make-Up & Expedited Retakes	Make-Up & Expedited Retakes

<b>Tuesday, May 26</b>	<b>Wednesday, May 27</b>	<b>Thursday, May 28</b>	<b>Friday, May 29</b>
Regular Bell Schedule	Regular Bell Schedule	Regular Bell Schedule	Regular Bell Schedule

# Appendix IV

## The York County School Division Formative Observation

Name: [REDACTED]

SOL: AP English 11

Date: 12/06/10

School: [REDACTED]

Evaluator: [REDACTED]

Lesson Topic: Scarlet Letter Soc Sem

Subject/Grade: English/11

Performance Domain	Observed	Not Observed
<b>I. Planning</b>		
<i>Designs curricular units which reflect the long range plan.</i>		
1. specified in instructional objectives the concepts or content to be taught	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Identifies individual and group needs and plans appropriate strategies to engage all students in learning.</i>		
1. Plans appropriate strategies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Develops daily lesson plans that are clear, logical and sequential</i>		
1. Lesson plans are useful and easy to follow	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Incorporates technology activities into lesson plans to support SOLs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>States methods for evaluating the accomplishment of objectives</i>		
1. Assessment methods are appropriate for objective being taught	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Areas of commendation:** Lesson plans were aligned to curriculum and SOL standards..

**Areas of Concern:**

<b>II. Delivery of Instruction</b>		
<i>Motivates students to learn</i>		
1. Demonstrates enthusiasm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Uses reinforcement appropriately	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Treats students with respect	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Expresses high expectations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Creates a climate for effective teacher-student communication</i>		
1. Encourages student involvement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Uses clear, precise language	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Uses appropriate questioning techniques	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. balances participation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Uses instructional strategies that promote student learning</i>		
1. Demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Uses materials appropriately	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Uses a variety of teaching techniques	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Paces the lesson appropriately	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Engages all students in the learning experience	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Transfer of learning is evident from past to present to future	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Differentiates instruction to meet individual needs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Groups students appropriately	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Uses appropriate instructional technology-based resources to support Technology SOLs and other instructional objectives</i>		
1. Demonstrates proficiency in the use of instructional technology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Engages students in technological learning experiences	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Areas of Commendation:** [REDACTED] encouraged and assisted students as they worked and transitioned through activities.

**Areas of Concern:**

<b>Performance Domain</b>	<b>Observed</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
<b>III. Classroom Management</b>		
<i>Manages classroom procedures</i>		
1. Organizes tasks for group work and manages groups so most students are engaged at all times	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. handles daily routines which facilitates smooth transitions, resulting in little loss of instructional time	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Manages student behavior</i>		
1. Monitors student behavior at all times	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Responds to misbehavior appropriately	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Areas of Commendation:** Students were engaged and behaved appropriately during lecture and discussion.

**Areas of Concern:**

<b>IV. Evaluation and Assessment of Student Progress</b>	<b>Observed</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
<i>Establishes clear, reasonable and meaningful work expectations</i>		
1. Matches work requirements to student capabilities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Holds students accountable for work performance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Confirms student understanding of work expectations and evaluation standards	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Uses a variety of methods to assess student performance and achievement</i>		
1. Uses assessment techniques (oral, non-verbal, and written) appropriate both for the individual student and for the learning objective being measured.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Uses teacher-made, division-approved, and state-mandated tests effectively to monitor student performance and progress.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Incorporates strategies to prepare students for SOL and standardized testing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Monitors and reports student progress</i>		
1. Monitors student progress before, during and after instruction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Provides prompt, corrective and meaningful feedback	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Organizes, maintains, and uses records of student progress in accordance with division and state regulations and policies	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Uses evaluation results to make instructional decisions</i>		
1. Uses evaluation and assessment feedback to monitor and adjust instruction as needed to promote student mastery of learning objectives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Re-teaches material and/or accelerates instruction when appropriate based on evaluation and assessment input.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Areas of Commendation:** Mrs. Miller asked questions to ensure comprehension and offered clarification throughout lesson.

**Areas of Concern:**

**Gradebook:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Meets Expectations**

Yes  No

**Plan book:** \_\_\_\_\_

Yes  No

**Uses prescribed instructional materials:** \_\_\_\_\_

Yes  No

**Remarks:** Great activities and wonderful rapport with students!

**Post-Observation Date:** 12/07/10

**Evaluator's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Teacher's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_





# Woodside High School Classroom Look For's

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Subject 11 H

Period 6

High & Clear Expectations	Evidence
Behavioral objective is clearly communicated and visually displayed. ✓ Objective ✓ Agenda	<i>"The Raven" - meaning &amp; symbolism</i>
Rubrics help students understand expectations. Criteria and models for good work are clearly communicated.	
✓ Students are actively engaged in the learning. There is evidence of classroom routines.	<i>students volunteering to answer questions</i>
✓ Checkpoints and timelines help students complete work.	
Active Use of Knowledge	Evidence
✓ Reading strategies are used to increase content retention. ✓ Summarizing	<i>Quoting from text to answer questions about poem</i>
✓ Writing is a focus in the classroom and evident in the strategies taught. ✓ Writing to Learn ✓ Writing to Demonstrate Learning	<i>Journal, notetaking</i>
Graphic organizers are used for note making and for understanding textbooks. ✓ Note Taking ✓ Similarities and Differences	
Different learning styles are addressed; strategies, activities and assessments are varied; choices are provided to students.	
Technology is used as a learning tool. Assignments require the use of technology.	
Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)	Evidence
✓ Higher level thinking is evident in activities, and discussions and is fostered by collaboration and problem solving.	<i>Oral knowledge (Johnson)</i>
✓ Questioning techniques and strategies are appropriate for checking understanding and include a focus on synthesis, evaluation, and analysis.	<i>Give textual evidence</i>

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

*Great questioning techniques*

Observer \_\_\_\_\_

Date 1/12/07

Arrival Time 1:40

Departure Time 1:50



Observation Log 2005-2006

Writing portfolio checked: \_\_\_\_\_



### 1. Professional Knowledge

*The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, and the developmental needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.*

- Effectively addresses appropriate curriculum standards.
- Integrates key content elements and facilitates students' use of higher level thinking skills in instruction.
- Demonstrates ability to link present content with past and future learning experiences, other subject areas, and real world experiences and applications.
- Demonstrates an accurate knowledge of the subject area(s) taught.
- Demonstrates skills relevant to the subject area(s) taught.
- Bases instruction on goals that reflect high expectations and an understanding of the subject.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of the age group.

Comments:

Evident     Not Evident

### 2. Instructional Planning

*The teacher plans using the Virginia Standards of Learning, the division's curriculum, effective strategies, resources, and data to meet the needs of all students.*

- Uses student learning data to guide planning.
- Plans time realistically for pacing, content mastery, and transitions.
- Plans for differentiated instruction.
- Aligns all lesson objectives to the division's curriculum and student learning needs.
- Develops appropriate long- and short-range plans and adapts plans when needed.
- Communicates and consults with colleagues to enhance student learning through thoughtful, collaborative planning.

Comments:

Evident     Not Evident

### 3. Instructional Delivery

*The teacher effectively engages students in learning by using a variety of instructional strategies in order to meet individual learning needs.*

- Engages and maintains students in active learning.
- Builds upon students' existing knowledge and skills.
- Differentiates instruction to meet the students' needs.
- Reinforces learning goals consistently throughout lessons.
- Uses a variety of effective instructional strategies and resources.
- Incorporates instructional technology, as applicable, to enhance student learning.
- Communicates clearly and checks for understanding.

Comments:

Evident     Not Evident

Wells Elementary School Learning Walks 2010-2011

Teacher Name:

Date	Time	Mastery Objective (exp=posted; int=not posted; admin observation)	Cog Lev	Instructional Strategies/Closure Activity

1) **Knowledge:** recalling facts, terms basic concepts and answers; 2) **Comprehension:** Demonstrate understanding of facts and ideas by organizing, comparing, translating, interpreting, giving descriptions and stating main ideas; 3) **Application:** Solve problems to new situations-apply acquired knowledge, facts, techniques and rules in a different way; 4) **Analysis:** Examine and break information into parts by identifying motives or causes. Make inferences and find evidence to support generalizations; 5) **Synthesis:** Compile information together in a different way by combining elements in a new pattern or proposing alternative solutions; 6) **Evaluation:** Present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, validity of ideas or quality of work based on a set of criteria.

**Tulsa Public Schools – The Tulsa Model  
Walk-Through Form**

Teacher:

Date:                      Time:

Period, Class or Grade Level:

Short visits, commonly known as walk-throughs (less than 10 minutes), do not require an Observation Form or an observation conference. Completion of a walk-through form is not required, but when used, it must be on the Tulsa Model Walk-Through Form.

**Classroom Management** (a checkmark in the box indicates behavior / action is in evidence)

- Teacher exhibits an overall awareness of what is happening in the classroom.
- Teacher optimizes academic learning time (uses minimal time to complete non-instructional tasks).
- Teacher interacts with students in a professional and positive manner; mutual respect is evident.
- Classroom procedures, rituals and routines are visible and evident.
- Student disruptions are addressed.
- Classroom environment is safe and orderly.
- Students are in compliance with school policies and procedures while in the classroom.

**Instructional Effectiveness** (a checkmark in the box indicates behavior / action is in evidence)

- An appropriate strategy is being utilized as a bell ringer activity and/or transition activity.
- Unit objectives are in evidence through the use of essential questions, prompts or other methods of guidance which are visible to students.
- Content is presented in a sequential manner with introduction focusing on developing background knowledge, new concepts being presented and closure emphasizing the lesson or unit objective.
- Teacher monitors student understanding by moving around the room and interacting with students.
- Student participation is encouraged and most learners are engaged.
- Students are presented with information that requires the application of Level 2 or above thinking skills.
- Teacher implements strategies to provide timely student feedback.
- Examples of student work are posted in classroom, when appropriate.
- Technology is effectively integrated into classroom to enhance instruction.

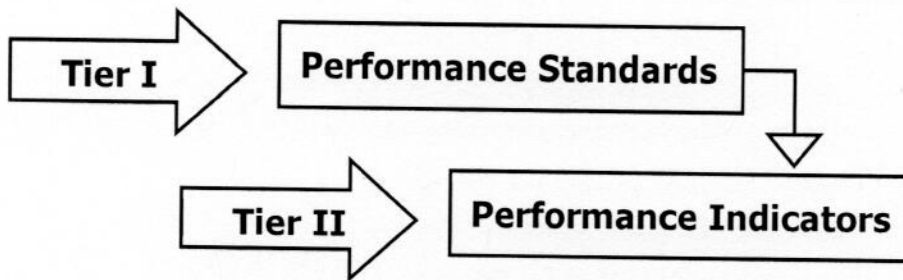
Other Research-Based Strategies:

KWL    QAR    Word Wall    Other \_\_\_\_\_

---

Feedback (optional):

The expectations for professional performance are defined using a two-tiered approach.



## PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Performance standards refer to the major duties performed. There are seven performance standards for all teachers.

### **Performance Standard 1: Professional Knowledge**

The teacher demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum, subject content, and the developmental needs of students by providing relevant learning experiences.

### **Performance Standard 2: Instructional Planning**

The teacher plans using the Virginia Standards of Learning, the school's curriculum, effective strategies, resources, and data to meet the needs of all students.

### **Performance Standard 3: Instructional Delivery**

The teacher effectively engages students in learning by using a variety of instructional strategies in order to meet individual learning needs.

### **Performance Standard 4: Assessment of and for Student Learning**

The teacher systematically gathers, analyzes, and uses all relevant data to measure student academic progress, guide instructional content and delivery methods, and provide timely feedback to both students and parents throughout the school year.

### **Performance Standard 5: Learning Environment**

The teacher uses resources, routines, and procedures to provide a respectful, positive, safe, student-centered environment that is conducive to learning.

### **Performance Standard 6: Professionalism**

The teacher maintains a commitment to professional ethics, communicates effectively, and takes responsibility for and participates in professional growth that results in enhanced student learning.

### **Performance Standard 7: Student Academic Progress**

The work of the teacher results in acceptable, measurable, and appropriate student academic progress.

## MEASURES OF STUDENT PROGRESS

The *Code of Virginia* requires that school boards' procedures for evaluating teachers address student academic progress; how this requirement is met is the responsibility of local school boards. Though not mandated, the Board's *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Teachers* recommend that each teacher receive a summative evaluation rating, and that the rating be determined by weighting the first six standards equally at 10 percent each, and that the seventh standard, student academic progress, account for 40 percent of the summative evaluation. There are three key points to consider in this model:

1. Student learning, as determined by multiple measures of growth, accounts for a total of 40 percent of the evaluation.
2. At least 20 percent of the teacher evaluation (50 percent of the growth measure) is comprised of growth as determined from the Virginia state growth measure, student growth percentiles, when the data are available and can be used appropriately.
3. Another 20 percent of the teacher evaluation (50 percent of the growth measure) should be measured using one or more alternative measures with evidence that the alternative measure is valid. **Note:** Whenever possible, it is recommended that the second growth measure be grounded in validated, quantitative measures, using tools already available in the school.

It is important to understand that *less than 30 percent* of teachers in Virginia's public schools will have a direct measure of student progress based on Standards of Learning assessments results. The median student growth percentile may be used as one direct measure of student progress when the data are available for a minimum of 40 students and growth data are available for at least two years. However, there must be additional measures for the remaining 70 percent of teachers, and to ensure there are one or more additional measures for teachers who can appropriately use the student growth percentile as one of multiple growth measures in the evaluation. Quantitative measures of growth based on validated achievement measures that already are being used locally should be the first data considered when determining local growth measures; other measures are recommended for use when two valid and direct measures of growth are not available.

## STUDENT GROWTH PERCENTILE SCORES

It is generally acknowledged that if test data are to be used to inform teacher performance evaluations, it is critical to control for students' prior achievement.<sup>a</sup> While there are a variety of approaches to controlling for prior achievement, VDOE has determined that the student growth percentile (SGP) methodology can be used as a valid measure of relative student growth using Virginia's current assessment system, and can continue to be used as tests change and the system evolves. The SGP statistical models are multiple years of data from Virginia Standards

<sup>a</sup>Domaleski, C. & Hill, R. (2010). Considerations for using assessment data to inform determinations of teacher effectiveness. Center for Assessment. Available at: <http://www.nciea.org/papers-UsingAssessmentData4-29-10.pdf>.

of Learning (SOL) assessments statewide, linked by unique student identifiers, to calculate SGPs. At the student level, SGPs describe the progress students make from one year to the next compared to students with similar SOL achievement history. This provides an understanding of how much progress students made based on where they started—regardless of whether they started as low, moderate, or high achieving students.

Student growth percentiles provide student-level progress information for students at all achievement levels. SGPs range from 1 to 99, where higher numbers represent higher growth and lower numbers represent lower growth, relative to students who have similar achievement histories (i.e., similar SOL test scores). The statistical method works independently of SOL performance levels. Therefore, nearly all students included in the SGP calculations no matter the scores they earned on past SOL tests, have equal chances to demonstrate growth across the range of percentiles on the next year's test.<sup>b</sup>

SGPs describe the percentile for **change in achievement**, not absolute achievement. Percentiles are values that express the percentage of cases that fall below a certain score. When applied to student achievement data, a student's SGP represents the percent of students who have similar prior academic achievement and who earned lower scores on the SOL test. For example, a student who earns an SGP of 90 earned an SOL score that was as high as or higher than 90 percent of the other students statewide who had similar academic histories on SOL tests. Only 10 percent of students with similar prior achievement histories earned higher scores. Equivalently, a student with an SGP at or above 90 occurs only 10 percent of the time and reflects, similar to height and weight percentiles used by doctors and parents, how extraordinary a student's current achievement is, taking account of where they started.

By taking account of where students start, comparing students to students with similar achievement histories (or academic peers), the SGP provides a measure on which students, regardless of achievement levels, have equal potential to demonstrate relatively high or relatively low growth each year. Thus, in practice, it is important to understand that:

- low-achieving students can show high growth, yet still not reach the achievement levels needed to demonstrate proficient mastery of state academic content standards.
- high-achieving students can show low growth relative to other high-achieving students and, yet, still demonstrate proficient or advanced mastery of state academic content standards.<sup>c</sup>

The combination of SGPs and proficiency data provide information about the amount of growth—and effort needed—for students to meet their SOL achievement goals in the future.

<sup>b</sup>In the initial statistical models, based on SOL data from 2006 through 2009, elementary school students who earned high advanced proficient scores for two consecutive years were not evenly distributed across the scale. However, all students who were impacted by this finding have documented growth that is, at minimum, on the high end of the scale from 1 through 99. This finding is unlikely to have a significant impact when SGPs are used as an indicator of student progress in teacher performance evaluation, because these students' progress will be documented as being high. This find, representing a ceiling effect in certain assessments, is explained in more detail in the technical documentation VDOE developed on student growth percentiles. Further, this issue will be addressed as new assessments are developed to measure student achievement based on standards revised in 2009 and 2010.

<sup>c</sup>As of June 2011, VDOE will remove students who score 600 on two consecutive tests from the SGP calculations.

# Appendix V

# Henrico County Public Schools Technology Integration Lesson Plan

**Lesson Title:**

**Teacher:**

**School:**

**Grade Level:**

**List specific content and technology SOLs which will be taught during this lesson:**

Content Strand: \_\_\_\_\_ SOL#: \_\_\_\_\_

Content Strand: \_\_\_\_\_ SOL#: \_\_\_\_\_

Content Strand: \_\_\_\_\_ SOL#: \_\_\_\_\_

Content Strand: \_\_\_\_\_ SOL#: \_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson Overview:**

**Objectives and Goals:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Approximate Time Required to Complete the Lesson:**

**Tools Needed:**

**Tasks/Activities:**



Harrisonburg City Public Schools Lesson Plan Template

Date:	Length of Lesson:
Grade/Subject/Class:	Unit/Theme:
Teacher:	Standard:
(A1, B8) Content Objective(s): <i>concept, understanding, and skills</i>	
<p>(A1) Language Objective(s):          post → discuss/read aloud → teach and practice → assess</p>	<p>(A1) Key Vocabulary:</p>
(A4) Instructional Materials/Resources:	
<p><b>Lesson Differentiation:</b> <i>English Language Learners, Advanced Learners, Gifted Learners, Learners with Special Needs</i>          (A2, A3, B5, B6, B9, B11, B12, B13, C14, D16, D17)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Method of Pre-Assessment</li> <li>• What (check all that apply and describe in corresponding column)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Content</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Process</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Product</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	



## Lesson and Unit Plan

Subject Area

Lesson Elements	
Topic	
Enduring Understandings	
Essential Questions	
Standards	
Content Objectives	
Language Objectives	
Key Vocabulary	
Materials	
Procedure: Motivation	
Presentation	
Practice	
Application	
Plan for Differentiation/ Accommodation / Adaptation (see page 3)	
Formative or Summative Assessment	
Home School Connection	

**GRADE X STANDARDS-BASED WORKSHEET**  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS — SUBJECT

**STANDARD**

A *standard* is a statement of what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Depending on the content area, there are typically 35 to 60 standards per grade. For purposes of helping teachers prioritize and organize instruction, standards are identified as “power” or “connecting.”

Power standards and connecting standards are grouped together to create units of instruction. The *standards-based worksheet* is designed to support instruction at the individual standard level. Teachers should use the worksheet to guide a series of classroom activities that reinforce mastery of the concepts and skills embedded in the standard.

The worksheets in this guide are exemplars and focus exclusively on the power standards contained in each of the instructional units. Teachers are encouraged to develop their own worksheets for connecting standards, based on these examples.

The standard, and its number, should be listed on the worksheet.

**Concepts:**

*Concepts* are ideas and information that students need to know. They are listed as the nouns in the standard statement.

Identifying concepts (and skills, below) is part of a systematic process of “unwrapping standards,” which helps teachers to develop a deeper understanding of the standard when planning instruction and assessment. Listing these concepts can help the teacher to develop activities and assessments that relate to the standard.

All concepts (i.e., nouns) in the standard should be listed in bullet form.

**Skills:**

*Skills* are what students are expected to do to demonstrate mastery of the concepts and content. They are listed as the verbs in the standard statement. A single skill may apply to multiple concepts.

By listing these skills, teachers begin to see and understand how they correlate to Bloom’s Taxonomy of thinking skills, which teachers will use when planning performance tasks and assessments within the engaging scenario (below).

All skills (i.e., verbs) in the standard should be listed in bullet form. When a skill applies to multiple concepts, the concepts are listed in parentheses after the skill.

---

**Big Ideas:**

*Big ideas* are statements derived from a deep understanding of the concepts or content; they are enduring ideas that can apply to more than one area of study and can be the answer to the essential questions (below).

Big ideas provide a broad perspective, purpose, and rationale. They are what we want students to discover and remember long after instruction ends, such as “authors write with a purpose” in the accompanying grade 4 reading/English language arts sample worksheet. They explain what students are doing, as well as how and why it relates to larger ideas.

Big ideas should be bulleted, stated clearly and simply, and in the teacher’s voice. Three or four should be identified for each standard.

---

**Essential Questions:**

*Essential questions* focus on conceptual and factual understandings to be investigated within the big idea. They are open-ended and communicate the fundamental and crucial elements of the content. For example (from the accompanying grade 4 reading/English language arts sample worksheet): “How do you identify the main points of a text?”

Essential questions help students reflect on their learning before, during, and after classroom instruction so that the students find themselves working with the big ideas in their own words. They are meant to engage inquiry and raise important conceptual or philosophical issues. They should be shared with the student at the beginning of instruction and should guide the teacher in the development of performance tasks.

Essential questions should mostly be “how” or “why” (vs. “what”). A minimum of four questions should be developed and listed for each standard.

---

**Engaging Scenario:**

An *engaging scenario* is the “hook” into a series of performance tasks (below) designed to attract and hold student interest. For example (from the accompanying grade 4 reading/English language arts sample worksheet): “A research assistant is required to summarize an article for his/her boss.” It sets the context for the series of tasks and connects learning to the real world.

In an engaging scenario, students are learning practical skills and concepts in a relevant context that encourages the learner to think, reflect, and decide. Students begin the series of performance tasks within the engaging scenario after they have experienced some instruction to introduce them to the big ideas and essential questions. The most effective engaging scenarios often are collaborative and project based, giving students multiple paths for completing the performance tasks.

Teachers should describe the engaging scenario or context for the performance tasks. Teachers are encouraged to use a real-world setting where students are required to enter a “role” to complete the tasks.

---

# M<sub>2</sub>21 Martinsville Moving to 21st Century Skills

Lesson Topic: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Grade Level/ Subject: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Teacher: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Date: [Click here to enter text.](#)

## Stage 1 -Desired Results for the Lesson

**Content Standard(s):** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Understanding(s)/Goals:**

Student will understand: [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Essential Question(s):** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Student Objectives Outcome(s):**

Students will be able to: [Click here to enter text.](#)

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills Focus: Check 2**

- Research & Information Fluency
- Communication & Collaboration
- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Creativity & Innovation

**Research-Based Instructional Strategy:**

- Non-linguistic representation
- Similarities/Differences
- Advanced Organizer/ Thinking Map
- Cooperative Learning
- Questioning
- Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

## Stage 2 -- Assessment Evidence

**Performance Task(s):** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Other Evidence:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

## Stage 3 - Learning Plan

**\*Vocabulary:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**\*Prerequisite Skills:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Materials and Resources:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Introduction:**

**Anticipatory Set:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Rationale:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Body:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Conclusion:** [Click here to enter text.](#)

\* Use these sections to plan for pre-teaching Tier 2 and 3 students.

Prince Edward County High School  
Lesson Plan

Content/ Topic:	Subject/Grade:
Teacher:	Week of:
SOL objective(s) with number and words	
Review or Warm Up Activity	
Lesson Objectives - <i>the student will be able to:</i> Day1- Day2- Day3- Day4-	
Direct Instruction of Content by Teacher: <u>Day1-</u>  <u>Day2-</u>  <u>Day3-</u>  <u>Day4-</u>  Student Activities to Achieve Objectives:  <u>Day 1</u>  Chunk 1-  Chunk 2-  <u>Day 2</u>  Chunk 1-  Chunk 2  <u>Day 3</u>  Chunk 1-  Chunk 2-  <u>Day 4</u>  Chunk 1-  Chunk 2-	

Closure: (summarize and review)

Assignments and Homework:

<p><b>Assessment of Learning: (Formal)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Check and Correct Homework</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Student Drill</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Quiz</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Test</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Presentation</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Project</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Written Report</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Individual Conference</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Other:</li></ul>	<p><b>Assessment for Learning: (Informal)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Observation</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Walk Around</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Signaling</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Choral Response</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Class Work</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Oral Questioning</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Discussion</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Self-Evaluation</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Conferencing</li></ul>	<p><b>Resources: Text and Technology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Textbook</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Manipulatives:</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Software</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Internet</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Overhead</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> TV/VCR</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> PowerPoint</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Supplemental materials</li></ul>	<p><b>Differentiation Strategies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Stations</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Centers</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Partner/ Peer</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Manipulatives</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Varied Grouping</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting Questions</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Choice of assignment</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Use of Rubrics</li></ul>
<p><b>Power Strategies - Research Based (Marzano):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Questions, Cues and Advance Organizers</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Identifying Similarities and Differences</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Cooperative Learning</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Nonlinguistic Representation</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Notetaking and Summarizing</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Homework and Practice</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Generating and Testing Hypothesis</li></ul>		<p><b>Recommendations for Future Use:</b></p>	

# Appendix VI



**Miller, Megan**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Friday, April 17, 2015 5:03 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** student

RE: [REDACTED]

The student mentioned above has been identified as needing extra remediation in a core content class. If you are willing and the student would not disrupt your course and their absence can be excused, please allow the student to visit your course during his or her PE class or elective course. This should not be abused by the student and please encourage him to come but only as deemed fit by all parties. If this is something that you would not be willing to allow the student to do, simply ask them to go back to their regularly scheduled class or not to leave. These students have been identified as needing extra help to pass their SOL for on time graduation. If the student does come to your class please make sure to send an email to their elective teacher to be marked present.

Thank You

Principal  
Prince Edward County High School  
1482 Zion Hill Rd  
Farmville VA 23901  
434-315-2130

## Miller, Megan

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**From:** Smith, Maurice W.  
**Sent:** Friday, March 06, 2015 2:54 PM  
**To:** Stokes, Amesia H.; Adams, Lynzie; Collins, Amber; Zava, Robert G.; Williams, Susanne; Socha, Haley; Fulcher, Sarah A.; Miller, Megan; Ramsey, Melody; Overstreet, Rachel N.; Simon, Lisa V.; Ford, Dewey; Tibbs, Jessica S.; Walker, Kristina; Bartee, Catherine C.; Nance, Patsy; Pruitt, John; Copeland, John; Scott, James E.; Pierce, Devin; McGowan, Joshua  
**Cc:** HS Administrative Team; Gilliam, Julie; Smith-Tucker, Suzanne; Parker, Kasey; Carter, Jennifer; Jones, Tora  
**Subject:** SOL Writing In-Service- March 9 - CTC 150  
**Importance:** High

To: Examiners & Proctors

From: Dr. Maurice Smith

Re: SOL Writing In-service  
**March 9, 2015**

Date: March 6, 2015

On **Monday, March 9, 2015**, a SOL In-service will be held during planning periods 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th period in **CTC Rm 150** (Mrs. Stroble's former room). **Please report on time. This meeting is mandatory.**

The following teachers will be administering/proctoring the Writing SOL tests for 2015:

Examiners	Proctors	
Stokes	Bartee	
Adams	Nance	
Collins	Pruitt	
Zava	Copeland	
Williams	Scott	
Socha	Womack	
Fulcher	Clark	
Miller	Pierce	
Ramsey	McGowan	
Overstreet		
Simon		
D. Ford		
Tibbs		
Walker		

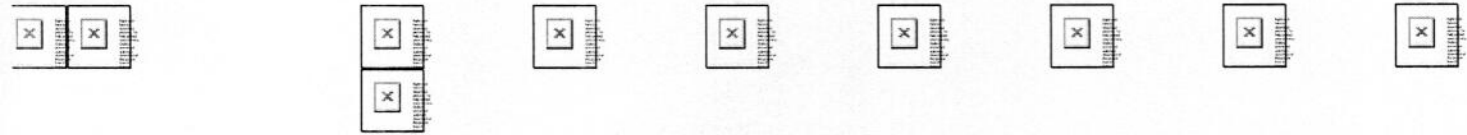
**PECHS**  
**SOL On-Line NON-WRITING TESTING SCHEDULE**  
**Seniors & Underclassmen Final Exam Schedule**  
**A.P. Testing Schedule**  
**MAY 4 – June 4, 2015**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
4 *SOL Training ----- AP Chem.	5 Alg. II & Term Grads ----- AP Calc.	6 English 11 (Reading EOC) ----- AP English Lit.	7 Chemistry	8 Alg. I & Geometry ----- AP U.S. History
11 Earth Science & Term Grads ----- AP Biology	12 VA/US History	13 Biology ----- AP Engl. Lang.	14 World History I	15 World History II
18 English 11 & Term Grads Make-up Testing/Expedited Retakes	19 Alg. II Make-up Testing/ Expedited Retakes	20 Alg. I & Geometry Make-up Testing/Expedited Retakes	21 Chemistry Make-up Testing/Expedited Retakes ----- 1st & 2nd Pd Senior Exams/History ROS Test	22 Earth Science & Term Grads Make-up Testing/Expedited Retakes ----- 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Pd Senior Exams/History ROS Test
25 Memorial Day	26 Biology Make-up Testing/Expedited Retakes ----- 5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Pd Senior Exams/History ROS Test	27 VA/US History Make-up Testing/Expedited Retakes ----- 7 <sup>th</sup> Pd & Makeups Senior Exams/History ROS Test MAP Testing	28 World History I & II Makeup Testing/Expedited Retakes ----- MAP Testing	29 Make-up Testing/Expedited Retakes ----- MAP Testing
June 1 1st & 2nd Pd Exams/History ROS Test MAP Testing/Teacher Made Assessment	June 2 3 <sup>rd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Pd Exams/History ROS Test MAP Testing/Teacher Made Assessment	June 3 5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Pd Exams/History ROS Test MAP Testing/Teacher Made Assessment	June 4 Last Day of School 7 <sup>th</sup> Pd Exams & Makeups/History ROS Test MAP Testing/Teacher Made Assessment	June 5 Teacher Workday

**Miller, Megan**

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**From:** Innovative Teaching Strategies Conference <info@innovativeteach.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 23, 2015 2:58 PM  
**To:** Miller, Megan  
**Subject:** Fredi Lajvardi: Extracurricular STEM & Problem-Based Learning



**EARLY REGISTRATION CLOSING MARCH 31ST!**

Fredi Lajvardi gained national recognition when an *ABC Nightline* feature highlighted his undocumented inner-city students. When his disadvantaged team decided to enter a national robotics competition, they chose the university category – against the likes of Virginia Tech and MIT – because the sting of losing would be less. George Lopez plays Fredi in the new theatrical release, *Spare Parts*.



**Watch the trailer from the *Spare Parts* movie.**

In order for these students to successfully compete in this highly competitive “extracurricular STEM”, Fredi had to remove the “obstacles” (family, financial, transportation etc.) so team members didn’t have a reason to give up. Then he told them, “Here’s the problem, there’s the Internet; go solve it.”



**Watch Fredi Lajvardi discuss his work with the “Stinky” robotics team.**

Fredi Lajvardi will present a keynote session at the Innovative Schools Summit

Las Vegas – which includes the Innovative Teaching Strategies Conference, as well as the Wired Differently Conference, the School Discipline Conference and the Girl Bullying Conference. Registrants can attend any Summit session on a space-available basis.

The Innovative Teaching Strategies Conference will provide an opportunity for teachers, administrators, curriculum directors and other educators to learn about new insights and strategies for reaching and teaching students PreK-12. It will emphasize evidence-based and novel instructional practices from national-exemplary programs.

**FEATURED SPEAKERS INCLUDE:**



**Rafe Esquith**  
Master Teacher  
Motivator & Author  
of *Teach Like Your Hair's on Fire!*



**Lisa Navarra**  
National Speaker &  
Founder Child Behavior  
Consulting



**Dr. Thomas Armstrong**  
Author, Speaker &  
Neurodiversity Expert



**Alfie Kohn**  
Author & Lecturer on  
Education, Parenting &  
Human Behavior



**Molly Barker**  
Founder, Girls on the  
Run International



**Fredi Lavjardi**  
STEM Educator,  
Inspiration for *Spare  
Parts* Movie



**Early Registration \$325**

**(Until Mar. 31st)**

*Regular Registration \$425*

**FEATURED TOPICS INCLUDE:**

- New Approaches to Using Technology as a Teaching Tool
- Innovative Applications Based on Brain Research
- New Insights for Using Positive Behavior Supports
- Recommended Do's and Don'ts
- Strategies for Reaching Students Who Are Negative Toward School
- How to "Teach Like Your Hair's on Fire" - the Methods and Madness Used by Master Teachers
- New School Improvement Initiatives Learned from National-Exemplary Programs
- Techniques for Teaching Unmotivated Learners
- Special Considerations for Reaching Economically Disadvantaged Students
- Project-Based Learning Strategies
- Tips for Teaching Academic Resiliency
- Working with Students in Inclusive Settings
- Instructional Techniques for Gifted Learners
- Classroom Management Techniques the Increase Instruction Time
- **Strategies that Work in a Common Core World**
- How to Empower Students to Think Critically and Be Creative
- Creative, Fresh, Ready-to-Use Activities and Techniques for Teachers

**SUBMIT A PROPOSAL**

Proposals for presentations are now being accepted for the Innovative Teaching Strategies Conference.

Please **submit the proposal form online**, or fax to 888-372-6061 or email your completed proposal form to **keli@accutrain.com**. The deadline for program proposals is March 31st, 2015.

Presenters are required to register for the conference - discounts apply for on-time registrations. Additional information is available on the proposal form or you may call us at 800-251-6805.



**Miller, Megan**

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**From:** Smith, Maurice W.  
**Sent:** Monday, March 16, 2015 9:35 AM  
**To:** HS All Teachers  
**Cc:** HS Administrative Team; Gilliam, Julie; Jones, Tora; Carter, Jennifer; Parker, Kasey; Davis, Bruce; Goode, Shon; Goode, Richard L.; Lewis, Angelique; Crabtree, Jason  
**Subject:** Reminder: Writing SOL - March 17 & 18th (Where students go)  
**Attachments:** writingsol2015wheredostudentsgo.docx; SOLMChoiceWriting 2015.xlsx; SOL Writing 2015.xlsx

**Importance:** High

All,

Attached please find the writing schedule for March 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> and where students go for testing on those days.

Thanks,

Dr. M W Smith  
STC

Multiple Choice- Tuesday, March 17  
Multiple Choice-Writing SOL Test

**TODAY'S SCHEDULE**

Homeroom/Period 1	8:00 - 8:10
Period 1 (Non-Testing Students) *Students will stay in 1st period	8:00 - 10:49
Testing Site (SOL Students Only)	8:15 - 10:49
Period 4 (All Lunches)	10:54-12:19
Period 5	12:24-1:16
Period 6	1:21-2:13
Period 7	2:18 - Dismissal

Placement	Group	Examiner	Proctor
Math/Science Lab	Accommodations List	Stokes	Bartee
Writing Lab	Jenkins's 6th PD	Adams	Nance
Social Studies Lab	Overstreet's 4th Pd	Collins	Pruitt
CTC 149	Overstreet's 5th Pd	Zava	Copeland
CTC 150	Overstreet's 7th Pd	Williams	
CTC 145	Overstreet's 6th Pd	Socha	Scott
CTC 151	Jenkins's 7th Pd	Fulcher	Scott
Overstreet's Classroom	Overstreet's 2nd Pd	Miller	Womack
Library	Adams's 7th Pd (#11) + New Horizon's Academy (#2) + Governor's school (#7)	Ramsey	Clark

**Class Coverages:**



**Miller, Megan**

---

**From:** Smith, Maurice W.  
**Sent:** Monday, April 20, 2015 8:16 AM  
**To:** HS All Teachers  
**Cc:** Smith, Maurice W.; HS Administrative Team  
**Subject:** Monday, -4/20 & Tues. 4/21 - 2nd attempt Writing test - term grads

All,

These students will be taking their 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt of the SOL Writing test on Monday, 4/20 & 4/21. Please be advised. They are the following: [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] & [REDACTED]

Thanks,

Dr. M W Smith  
STC

**Miller, Megan**

---

**From:** Kerestely, Zoltan  
**Sent:** Friday, March 27, 2015 3:58 PM  
**To:** All HS  
**Subject:** FW: VDOE Mathematics Standards and Curriculum Framework Review

## Virginia Department of Education Announces Review of Mathematics Standards of Learning and Curriculum Framework

---

At the March 26, 2015 Board of Education meeting, the Virginia Department of Education was authorized to proceed with the review and revision process of the *Mathematics Standards of Learning* and *Mathematics Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework* consistent with the schedule adopted by the Board in September 2000.

An important part of the review process for the *Mathematics Standards of Learning* and *Mathematics Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework* is the solicitation of comments from teachers, administrators, curriculum supervisors, mathematics educators, mathematics education organizations, and other members of the public. Comments should focus on recommended additions, deletions, or the movement of content within the current standards and curriculum framework. Public comment will be received from March 27, 2015 to April 27, 2015 at [mathematics@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:mathematics@doe.virginia.gov).

The VDOE is also seeking individuals who are qualified and available to serve on a committee to review both the *Mathematics Standards of Learning* and *Mathematics Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework* June 22-26, 2015 in Richmond. A Steering Committee, selected from the full review committee, will convene on June 1-3, 2015 in Richmond. Applicants must be teachers, principals, administrators, content specialists, or others who have expertise with the content areas and the standards.

Individuals who wish to serve on a committee to review the *Mathematics Standards of Learning* and *Mathematics Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework* must submit an application through the Web-based process, *Instruction Committee Application Processing System (ICAPS)*. The application will require a professional reference and division approval. Completed applications are due to the VDOE through ICAPS by April 27, 2015. Committee members selected on the basis of expertise, experience, and regional representation will be notified by May 6, 2015.

Summary information on the mathematics SOL review process has been announced in [Superintendent's Memo #070-15](#).

### The VDOE Mathematics Team

- Debra Delozier, [Debra.Delozier@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Debra.Delozier@doe.virginia.gov)
- Christa Southall, [Christa.Southall@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Christa.Southall@doe.virginia.gov)
- Michael Bolling, [Michael.Bolling@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Michael.Bolling@doe.virginia.gov)

**Miller, Megan**

---

**From:** Foster, Dominique  
**Sent:** Monday, March 16, 2015 7:51 AM  
**To:** All HS  
**Cc:** HS Administrative Team  
**Subject:** FW: De Testing

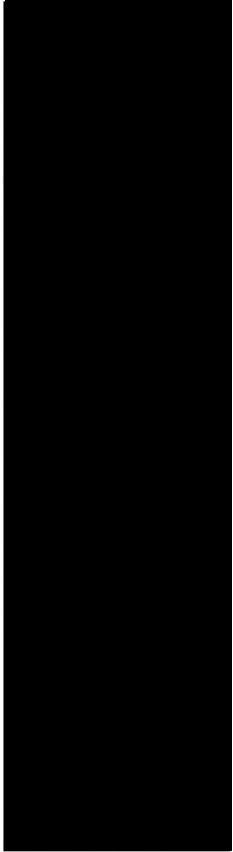
**Importance:** High

DE Testing this morning. See below. Thank you.

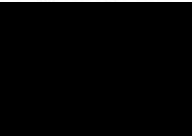
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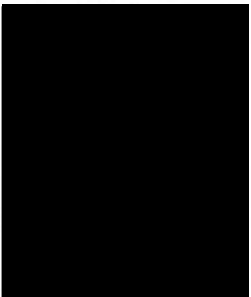
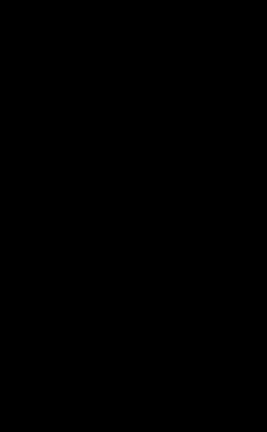
**From:** Foster, Dominique  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 04, 2015 1:26 PM  
**To:** All HS  
**Cc:** HS Guidance; HS Administrative Team  
**Subject:** De Testing  
**Importance:** High

On Monday, March 16th we will continue with DE Testing. The following students will need to be sent down by 8:45am to the library:



On Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup> we will test students again. They are listed below:



On Thursday, March 26<sup>th</sup> we have our final testing session. They are listed below:



**THANK YOU FOR WORKING WITH ME😊. I APPRECIATE IT😊.**




**Dominique C. Foster**  
Guidance Director, Jon-Z  
Prince Edward County High School  
35 Eagle Drive  
Farmville, VA 23901  
Phone: (434) 315-2100 ext. 3333  
Fax: (434) 392-9820

**Miller, Megan**

**From:** Jamie @ Interactive Achievement <jamie.ellis@interactiveachievement.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 13, 2015 8:26 AM  
**To:** Miller, Megan  
**Subject:** onTRAC User Conference Early Bird Pricing + New Content + Data-Rich Whitepaper on SGAs

To view this email as a web page, [click here](#)



Follow us!   



### **It's onTRAC Renewal Time!**

Your Account Manager is ready to begin the conversation regarding renewal of your annual onTRAC software license. Explore your options at the link below. Let's get started.

**[START THE CONVERSATION](#)**



### **2015 onTRAC User Conference Registration Now Open!**

Are you ready to come together with other educators to believe, inspire, create, and engage?! Join us for one of our User Conferences taking place this August. Save your seat now with **early bird pricing!**

**[GET YOUR EARLY BIRD TICKET](#)**



### **Prepare for SOLs with onTRAC SGAs**

The proof is in the pudding. We've compiled solid evidence to show that preparing for the end of year SOLs using onTRAC **Student Growth Assessments** is a highly accurate predictor of success. Explore the data-rich findings [here!](#)

**[READ THE REPORT](#)**



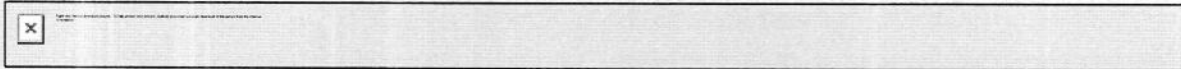
## New Content for VA SOLs

We've **released new content** for VA SOLs! We now have 3rd, 4th, and 5th Grade Reading Test, 8th Grade Writing Test, and EOC Writing Test; which are available in your Exam Tab in the Released SOL Test folder. Look out for the 5th Grade Science Test to be added soon. We are keeping a close eye on more expected releases by state and will let you know as soon as they are available.



## Now Live: Customer Support Extended Hours

We are here for you! We've begun offering our new, extended hours for onTRAC Live. Representatives are now available for real-time assistance **starting at 7am ET**. Many thanks to our fantastic users who brought this request to our team.



Interactive Achievement, P.O. Box 3122, Roanoke, VA 24015  
Contact Us

This email was sent to [megan.miller@pecps.k12.va.us](mailto:megan.miller@pecps.k12.va.us). If you no longer wish to receive these emails you may [unsubscribe](#) at any time.

# Appendix VII

# 5 am. let books

N. Scott Momoday <del>    </del>	Melville	James Johnson
Olaudah Equiano	Hawthorne	Claude McKay
John Smith	Whitman	Countee Cullen
William Bradford <del>    </del>	Pablo Neruda	Jean Toomer
Anne Bradstreet <del>    </del>	Dickinson <del>    </del>	Arna Bontemps
Edward Taylor <del>    </del>	Frederick Douglass	Zora Neale Hurston
Jonathon Edwards <del>    </del>	Harriet Jacobs	<del>Toni Morrison</del>
Aurthur Miller <del>    </del>	Francis Harper	Edwin Robinson
Patrick Henry	Lincoln	Edgar Lee Masters
Thomas Jefferson <del>    </del>	Robert E. Lee	Carl Sandburg <del>    </del>
Thomas Paine <del>    </del>	Sullivan Ballou	Frost <del>    </del>
Phyllis Wheatley	Mary Chestnut	Ezra Pound
Abigail Adams	Sojourner Truth	H. D.
Ben Franklin	Stephen Crane	William Carlos Williams
Washinton Irving	Ambrose Bierce	Ee cummings
William Bryant	Twain	Marianne Moore
Longfellow	Harte	Edna St. Vincent Millay
Holmes	Keillor	T.S. Eliot      <i>dropped 1946 book</i>
Whittier	Cather <del>    </del>	Fitzgerald
Lowell	Jack London	Hemingway
Emerson	Kate Chopin	Breslau
Thoreau	Charlotte Perkins Gilman	Iona Meagher †
Margaret Fuller	Edith Wharton	Steinbeck
Poe <del>    </del>	O. Henry	Katherine Ann Porter
Stephen King	Langston Hughes	Eudora Welty

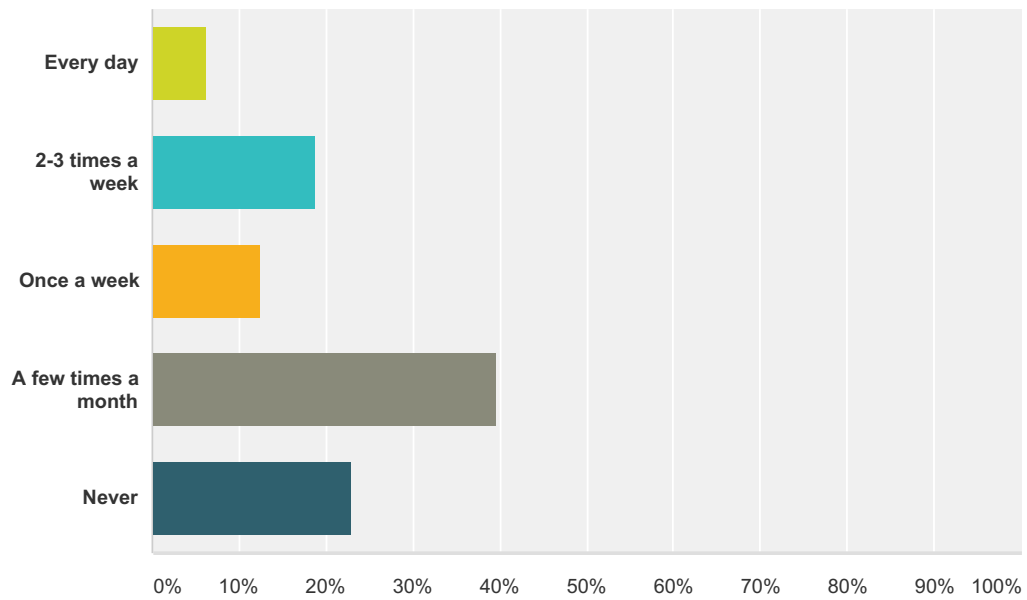


William Faulkner		Randall Jarrell		James Baldwin	
Flannery O' Connor		Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.		Amy Tan	
Dorothy Parker		Primo Levi		Alice Walker	
E.B. White		Tim O'Brien		Sandra Cisneros	
Joyce Carol Oates		MLK, Jr.		Gwendolyn Brooks	
Mary A. Fischer		Duley Randall		Rita Dove	
Thornton Wilder		Malcolm X		Billy Collins	
Tennessee Williams		Cesar Chavez		James Thurber	
Lorraine Hansberry		Anne Moody			
<del>John Steinbeck</del>		Nikki Giovanni			

# Appendix VIII

### Q1 How often do you use a traditional textbook in your classroom activities?

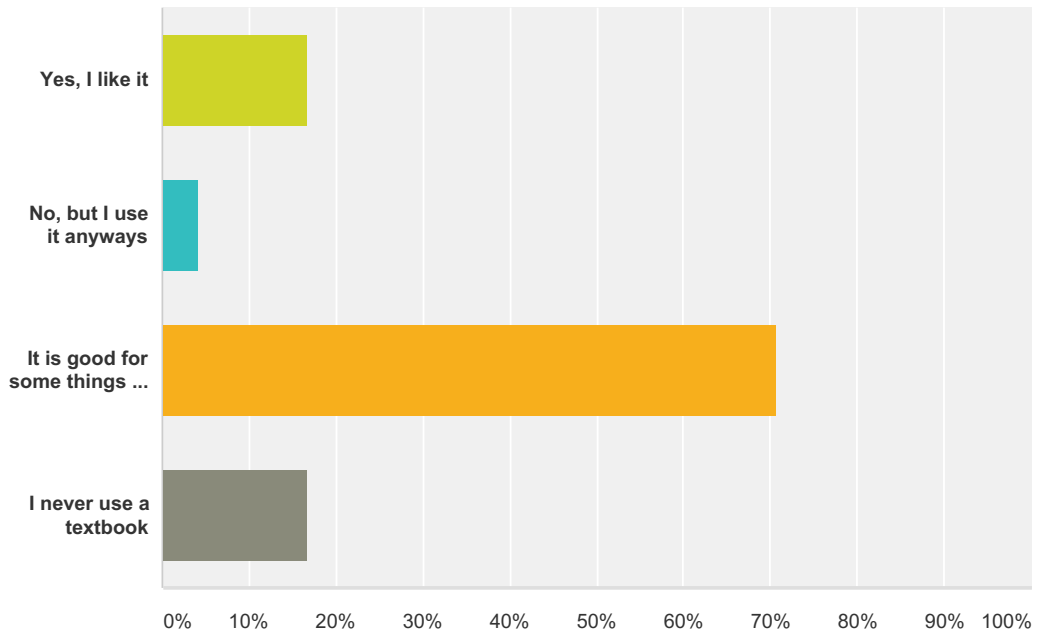
Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Every day	6.25% 3
2-3 times a week	18.75% 9
Once a week	12.50% 6
A few times a month	39.58% 19
Never	22.92% 11
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>

## Q2 Do you like your textbook?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



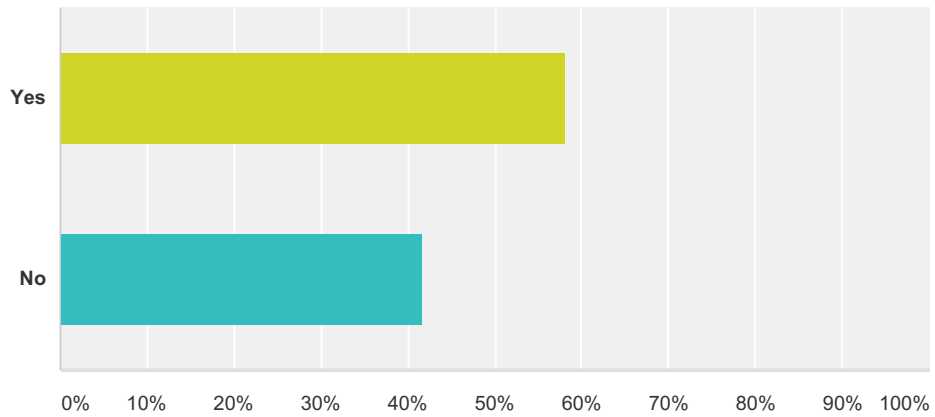
Answer Choices	Responses
Yes, I like it	16.67% 8
No, but I use it anyways	4.17% 2
It is good for some things but I have to add additional resources	70.83% 34
I never use a textbook	16.67% 8
<b>Total Respondents: 48</b>	

#	If no, please share why not:	Date
1	The tests I taught do not align to any of my materials.	7/15/2015 11:42 AM
2	I teach a primary grade. The textbooks are things the students cannot read and they have not been updated in several year.	6/12/2015 12:41 PM
3	The literature textbook has some good stories, but I rarely use the questions and activities included. The grammar textbook is a little more helpful.	6/11/2015 1:19 PM
4	My district chose to go with new consumable interactive workbooks written by the developers of the SOL's (Pearson). Unfortunately, the traditional textbooks were collected, so we don't have them any more. I kept my teacher copy, which is an EXCELLENT resource and it also has a lot of information that doesn't exist in the Interactive workbooks. I do see a problem not reading regularly from the traditional textbooks. Because I do not teach vocabulary in isolation, students need more exposure to the newly vast vocabulary in middle school sciences (ej. heterotrophs, homozygous, phenotypes, etc...) that they will be tested on in the SOL's.	6/11/2015 12:17 PM
5	They aren't engaging. I only use the Virginia Studies ones to aide in my lessons and practice close reading.	6/11/2015 8:27 AM
6	I encourage close reading strategies that require students to write on the text itself. Many of the reading selections are not engaging, and many of the activities in the book do not get past knowledge and comprehension. Questions that claim to be application only ask about "real world" connections, which get tired quickly.	6/11/2015 6:00 AM

7	I'm yet to find a textbook that fits the nature of our curriculum.	6/11/2015 12:02 AM
8	I am a Language Arts teacher, so I use "real" books by great authors to teach LA instead of textbooks. I also use "mentor texts" (awesome children's books) to teach writing.	6/10/2015 10:23 PM
9	Teaching art, it lacks the variety I need. Also contemporary artists are not in there.	6/10/2015 3:19 PM
10	The text book has significantly "dumbed down" material from previous texts. The language and complexity of the text was at a lower reading level and did not challenge students. More recent texts books did include more recent information, wider variety of authors & literature (more women); more focus on non-fiction in keeping with the current English Language Arts SOLs	6/9/2015 9:04 PM
11	I like the book, but do not enjoy simply teaching from it.	6/9/2015 3:45 PM
12	It is a photography book from 1991	6/9/2015 1:04 PM

### Q3 Do you teach an SOL-tested class?

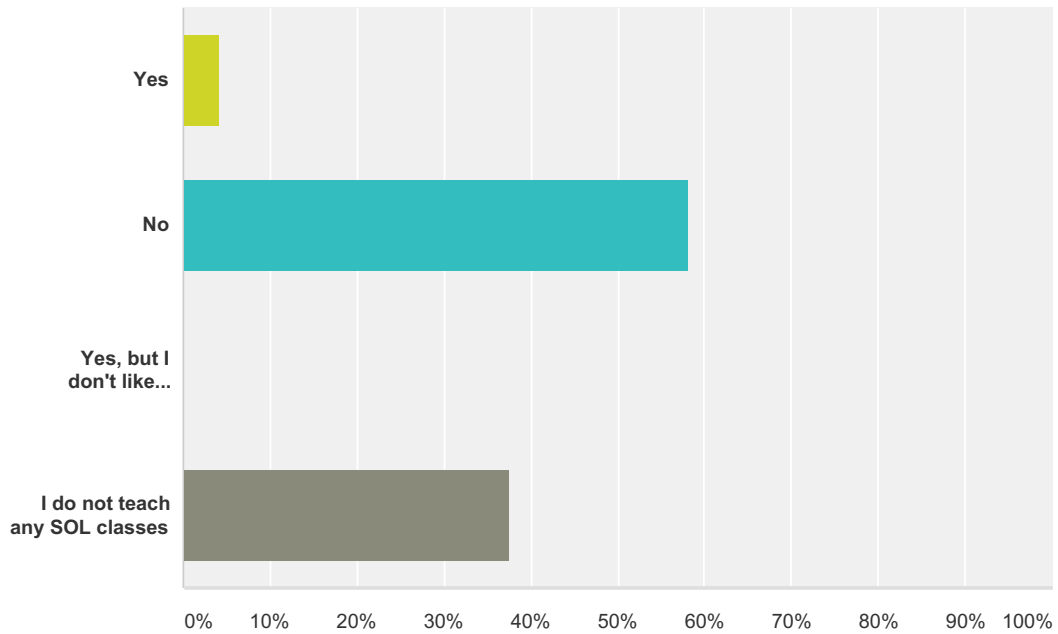
Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	58.33%	28
No	41.67%	20
<b>Total</b>		<b>48</b>

### Q4 If you teach an SQL class, do you feel compelled to use the textbook for test prep?

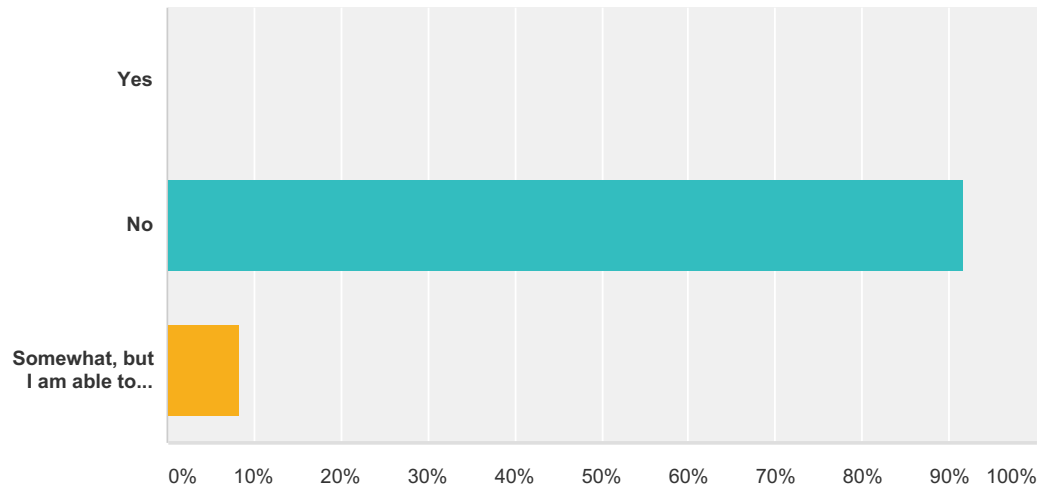
Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	4.17% 2
No	58.33% 28
Yes, but I don't like doing it	0.00% 0
I do not teach any SQL classes	37.50% 18
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>

### Q5 Do you feel like your textbook prevents you from using other materials to teach your class?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0

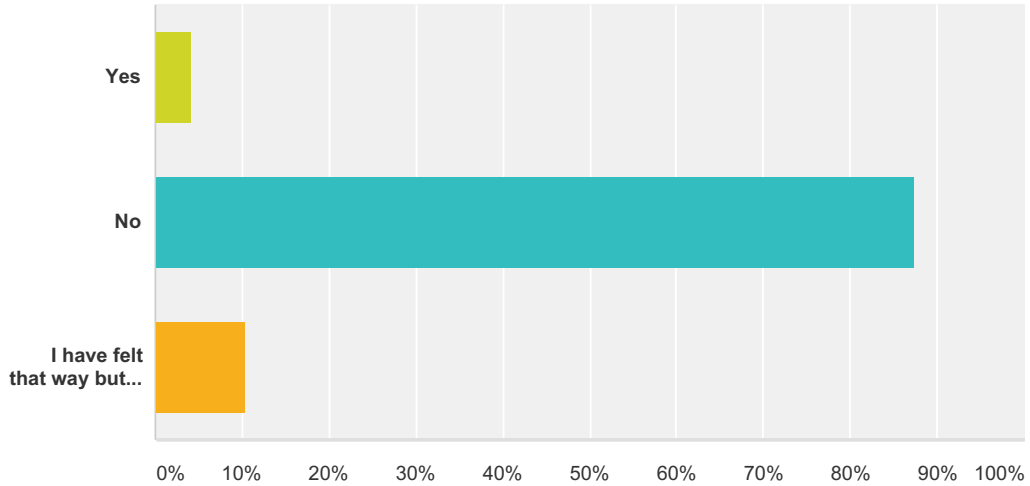


Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	0.00% 0
No	91.67% 44
Somewhat, but I am able to integrate some additional materials	8.33% 4
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>



### Q6 Have you wanted to use other materials to teach but have been unable to because of a required textbook?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0

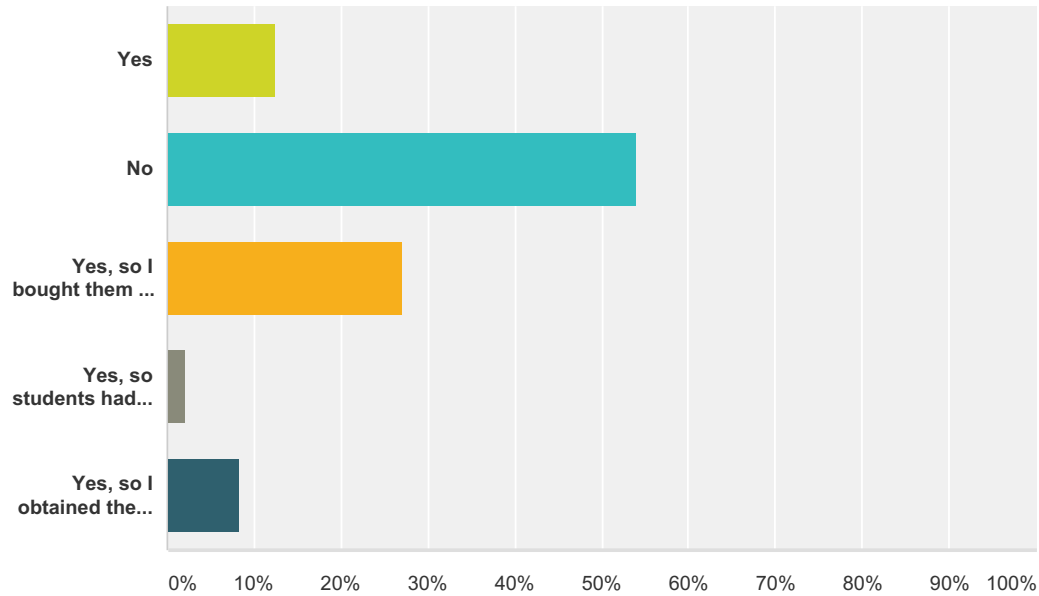


Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	4.17% 2
No	87.50% 42
I have felt that way but used the other materials regardless	10.42% 5
<b>Total Respondents: 48</b>	

#	If yes, please share your experience	Date
1	In the past we were required to only use textbook materials to teach reading, but now we only use trade books with no textbooks or basel readers.	6/12/2015 12:41 PM
2	Thankfully, we have academic skills and objectives that must be covered at prescribed times of the year, but how we teach those objectives are left to the teacher's judgement and professionalism, as long as he/she maintains good results on the tests.	6/10/2015 10:23 PM
3	I would like some other resources, like the scholastic scope magazine, but cannot use them because the money is dedicated to the textbook and consumable resources.	6/9/2015 3:45 PM

### Q7 Have you wanted to order additional books or materials for your class, but been unable to because money spent on textbooks took up funding?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



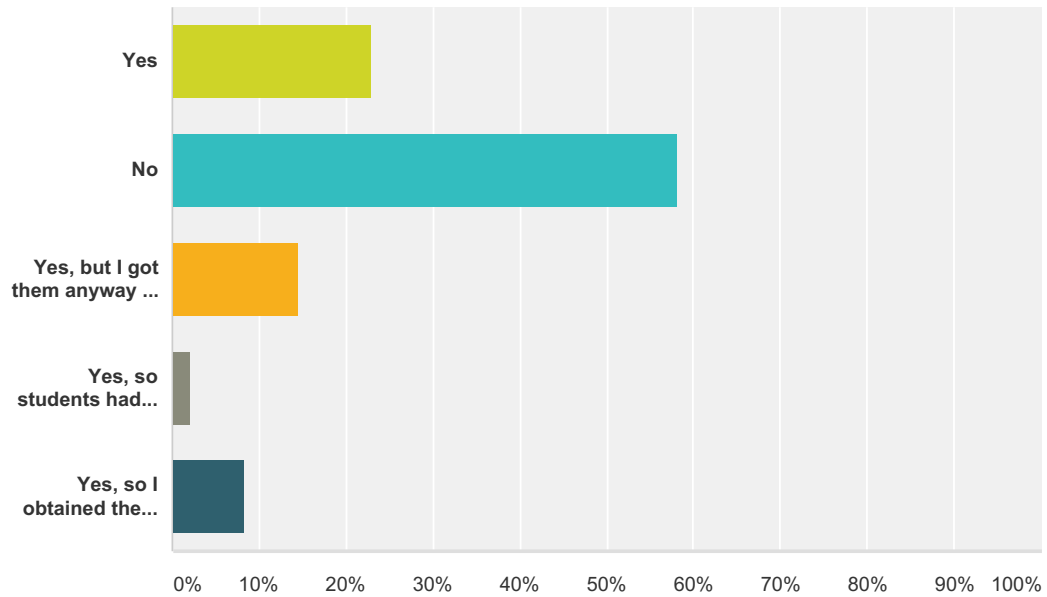
Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	12.50% 6
No	54.17% 26
Yes, so I bought them on my own or sought other funding	27.08% 13
Yes, so students had to pay for them	2.08% 1
Yes, so I obtained them unethically (printed from the internet, pirated, photocopied against copyright, etc.)	8.33% 4
<b>Total Respondents: 48</b>	

#	If yes, please share your experience	Date
1	Everybody does.	7/15/2015 11:42 AM
2	When so much money is dedicated to the suite of resources provided by the textbook company, it makes it almost more of a political issue to use other resources. Even if other money is available, the question that is often asked when requesting other funding is "have you used all of the resources at your disposal already?" This is a fair question, but it can sometimes be used as a convenient way to end the discussion and put off the conversation for another day.	6/14/2015 5:53 PM
3	However, at this time we are not allowed to buy or ask for any supplies in our classroom regardless of textbooks.	6/12/2015 12:41 PM
4	If there additional texts that I would like to use I try to: find in a library, borrow from other teacher or buy it myself	6/11/2015 10:17 PM

5	As a new 8th grade (SOL test is cumulative 5,6,7,&8 th grade science tested only in 8th grade) science teacher I attended the Jefferson Lab teacher program, which introduces educators to hands-on/ minds-on, and Inquiry based activities and labs. This annual grant program meets bimonthly from 5-7PM and also supplies us with some of the equipment necessary to complete the activities and labs in our classrooms. If I decide to have more sets of equipment, I will go out and purchase things out of pocket. Personally, I purchase ASCD membership to receive current education data, and I purchase non-fiction books (ej." The Outlier") for personal professional development. Six science teachers share a budget of \$400-500 annually, so many other things I want to expose students to, I purchase on my own and claim on taxes annually.	6/11/2015 12:17 PM
6	I believe it I important to show students multiple ways to get information and understand information given to them. Therefore, I spend my own money to get resources for my classroom.	6/11/2015 5:54 AM
7	I've written grants in the past for classroom materials, but mostly I end up buying them myself.	6/10/2015 10:23 PM
8	Knowing materials wouldn't be ordered, it was much easier to find resources online and either run classroom copies or direct students to online texts.	6/9/2015 9:04 PM
9	I would like some other resources, like the scholastic scope magazine, but cannot use them because the money is dedicated to the textbook and consumable resources.	6/9/2015 3:45 PM
10	Supplemental materials for AP require coordination among all AP teachers and year-in-advance planning--no "aha" moment after reading a very appropriate work. Fortunately, I was able to order most "additional" texts through other means and the students (and their families) have been more than happy to reimburse me. If not, I simply absorb the costs.	6/9/2015 1:34 PM

**Q8 Have you wanted to order additional materials for supplementing or replacing a textbook, but the ordering process prevented you (either because you needed them sooner, it was too much of a hassle, or the request was denied)?**

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



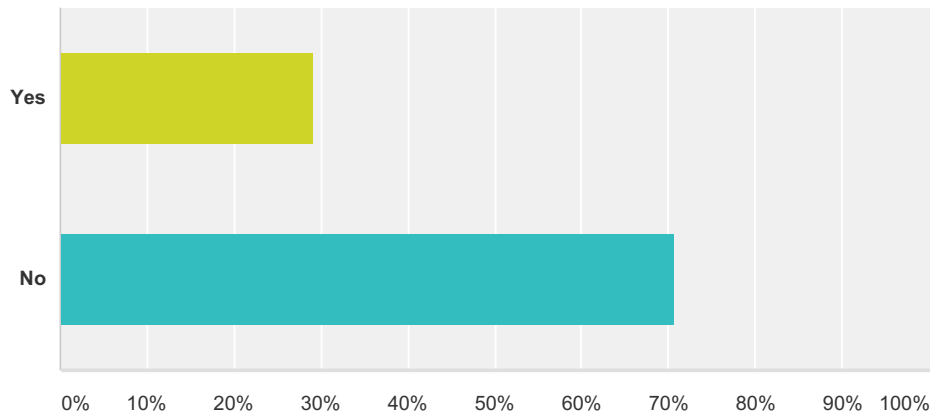
Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	22.92% 11
No	58.33% 28
Yes, but I got them anyway by buying them myself	14.58% 7
Yes, so students had to buy them	2.08% 1
Yes, so I obtained them unethically (printed from the internet, pirated, photocopied against copyright, etc.)	8.33% 4
<b>Total Respondents: 48</b>	

#	If yes, please share your experience	Date
1	No budget. Budget is 1/10th of Math/English.	7/15/2015 11:42 AM
2	I have SPARK (hand held computer device) tracks, but the cars that run on the tracks are missing. Two years ago I was assigned to one 8th grade physical science class, and we have not had the funds to purchase more cars for the motion unit and tracks. It seems the order has to come through the school system in order to get a discount and tax free. Again, ordering is a problem because our science supervisor resigned and a new one came into office recently. Everything is on hold, and now the year is over.	6/11/2015 12:17 PM
3	The largest issue would be having to buy so many different materials from so many different sources that we could not afford the diversity.	6/11/2015 12:02 AM

4	I had to do personal fundraising in school to raise funds for what I wanted to buy or I applied for a PTA grant and they bought what I needed.	6/10/2015 9:53 PM
5	Same as #7.	6/9/2015 1:34 PM
6	Teachers are always purchasing extra materials that supplement or add creativity to the curriculum.	6/9/2015 1:29 PM

### Q9 Do you feel like textbooks puts emphasis on the SOL test through its format, materials, or questions?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0

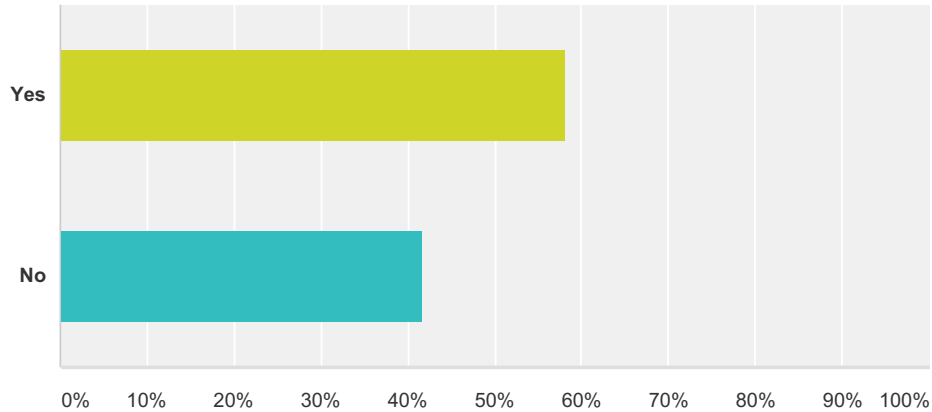


Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	29.17% 14
No	70.83% 34
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>

#	If yes, please share your experience	Date
1	Most textbooks come with integrated assessment practice within each unit. These can be helpful as they provide a quick activity that can be used in conjunction with other means of assessment. However, the additional resources (workbooks, practice tests, etc.) that are often included with textbook sets are billed as being specifically tailored for test preparation while they are anything but.	6/14/2015 5:53 PM
2	Upon examining the SOL test, its format, materials and released tested items over the last few years, the verbiage of the test is aligned to the old textbooks. The original workbooks that accompanied the old textbooks also introduced students to TEI's and multiple answers to a question several years before they were added to the new SOL's.	6/11/2015 12:17 PM
3	To a certain degree - samples were structured to mimic the format students would expect to see on the state assessment.	6/11/2015 8:40 AM
4	I really have no way of judging this, not having prepared my students for any such tests.	6/10/2015 11:39 PM
5	Textbook writers and testing companies are all about making money and will do just about anything necessary to keep their "business" up and running. They go with every current national trend and test, whether good for kids or not, to keep the money rolling in.	6/10/2015 10:23 PM
6	section divisions and phrasing reflect SOL strands and language	6/9/2015 9:04 PM
7	No information on this, as I did not teach an SOL level class.	6/9/2015 1:34 PM

### Q10 Do you feel it's problematic that Pearson (who is a major textbook publisher) also writes the SOL tests?

Answered: 48 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	58.33% 28
No	41.67% 20
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>

#	If yes, please explain why	Date
1	They don't even align the test material to the textbooks, other than a typically tiny section.	7/15/2015 11:42 AM
2	The teachers should be aksed to write the questions.	6/12/2015 12:41 PM
3	Pearson also writes the College SAT's. My dilemma is that students of low socio-economic income families usually have a difficult time scoring high on the SAT's, their SOL's are giving parallele data. I liked things better when we used Pearson's textbooks because it helped my students increase their vocabulary, reading in context, and comprehension skills which are tested in English and well as all SOL's that require reading for understanding. The Interactive workbooks do not have the "Bang for my Buck," that I thought they would have. Some of today's students are not avid readers and have not taken the personal responsibility to read non-fiction on their own.	6/11/2015 12:17 PM
4	This is a major conflict of interest, IMHO. Pearson is the 800 pound gorilla in the education room, and swallows massive amounts of education dollars that could be better spent in the schools. My favorite Pearson story happened several years ago, when after the first round of 2008 social studies testing, they published an SOL prep book, and charged \$10 a piece...basically selling the answers to the test they wrote and the textbook they published. I refused to allow the books in my classroom, and told administration and the school board exactly why. I teach in a magnet program, and we do not use textbooks associated in anyway with Pearson (and they own more than just the Pearson publishing brand), but most public school teachers do not have that option.	6/11/2015 10:17 AM
5	It would seem to offer an ethical quandary - that or they are geniuses, because they have cornered the market so efficiently.	6/11/2015 8:40 AM
6	YES!!! They write the textbooks to "align" with the state standards to encourage the districts to buy it. They are basically a monopoly in the education world.	6/11/2015 8:27 AM
7	Standardized testing is big business, which therefore has a voice in policy. The company creating materials from which they stand to make money should not also be helping to shape policy in schools. They are out of touch with realistic measures for student achievement.	6/11/2015 6:08 AM
8	It's a money making scheme.	6/11/2015 6:00 AM

9	They have no interest in reform. They create the end product and then they create the tool to reach that product. It allows for no alternative approaches	6/11/2015 12:02 AM
10	Perhaps this is why we don't rely too heavily on textbooks. Part of what I enjoy about teaching in a private school is the freedom to develop my own curriculum. Often I use one textbook for one subject and a different source for another. Mostly, I rely on close reading of primary sources. In every course I teach, the History Department curates a reader of its own that is essentially a potpourri of primary and secondary sources cobbled together over the years to suit our curriculum's narrative. (I will add, totally confidentially, that we don't investigate the copyright implications of this too closely.)	6/10/2015 11:39 PM
11	Any one company controlling both the textbooks and tests is problematic, and like it or not, they become very powerful in deciding what our culture accepts and values and emphasizes. A wide variety of resources, including great literature and historical and scientific primary sources, encourages students to be active thinkers, rather than passively accepting whatever is written in a text book whose writers may have their own agendas.	6/10/2015 10:23 PM
12	It's a business for making money and not educating children.	6/10/2015 9:53 PM
13	They are in control of too many aspects in education--they make the test that prospective teachers must take, SOL tests, etc.	6/10/2015 9:36 PM
14	Means that our history and what we teach is dictated by a publishing company. As long as the information is historically accurate, then I do not have a problem with it. I don't like the limited time frames for some of the major events.	6/9/2015 10:17 PM
15	emphasis on test scores for a test they create creates a demand for their own services (the text books)	6/9/2015 9:04 PM
16	\$\$\$ conflict of interest!	6/9/2015 4:03 PM
17	It is a monopoly. It's frustrating.	6/9/2015 3:45 PM
18	conflict of interest?????!!!!!!?????	6/9/2015 1:34 PM
19	They have a monopoly on the system!	6/9/2015 1:04 PM
20	Even so, I find that most elementary textbooks are aligned with common core; not SOLs	6/9/2015 12:49 PM
21	In a way, Pearson can affect the information presented in their textbooks by catering to only standards of learning objectives, and not necessarily printing objective information. Schools, in turn, may feel the need to promote and push for textbook instruction, rather than letting teachers decide what's best to teach for SOL preparation.	6/9/2015 12:03 PM