



Virginia Reading Assessment

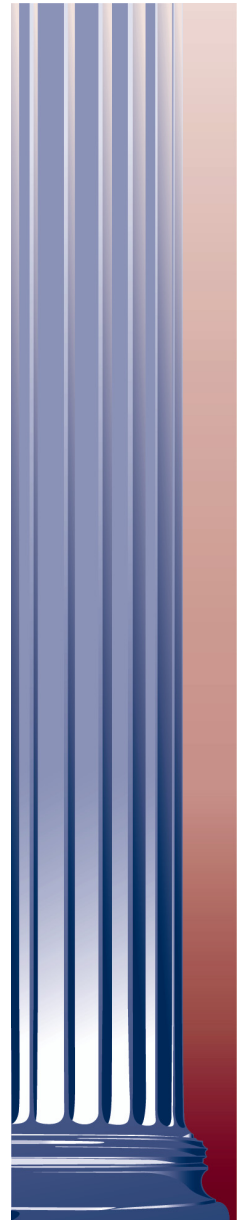
FACULTY RESOURCES

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Overview of the Virginia Reading Assessment

The 2001 session of the Virginia General Assembly, through Virginia House Joint Resolution Number 794 (HJR 794), requested that the Virginia Department of Education, in cooperation with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, study the proficiency of Virginia teachers in teaching systematic, explicit phonics.

On April 29, 2003, the Board of Education adopted the Resolution to Enhance the Teaching of Reading in Virginia. One goal of the plan was to develop a reading assessment aligned with the English Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools and the National Reading Panel's five key components of effective reading instruction: phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. The VRA satisfies for elementary teachers the reading component of the teaching skills requirement mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The test will help identify those teaching candidates who have the knowledge and skills that are important for performing the job of an elementary (preK–3 or preK–6) teacher, a special education teacher, or a reading specialist in Virginia public schools.



Understanding the Test Design and Content

The VRA is designed to measure candidates' knowledge and skills as required by the guidelines for Virginia educator licensure. The test blueprint for each VRA test lists the objectives associated with the major content areas, called domains. See the VRA study guide for more information on how to read the test blueprint. For the approximate number of multiple-choice and constructed-response items appearing on the test, select "Study Guides" from the VRA Web site at www.va.nesinc.com and refer to the applicable table in section 1 of the VRA study guide.



How the Virginia Reading Assessment Is Aligned with Virginia's Curriculum Standards

The VRA development process was designed to meet the specific needs of the state of Virginia. The VRA is responsive to and consistent with the state of Virginia's regulations, public school curriculum blueprints and standards, and educator preparation programs. Virginia regulations, guidelines, textbooks, and other instructional materials were referenced to ensure that the VRA tests align with the English Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools and the reading objectives specified in the *Virginia Licensure Regulations for School Personnel*.

Education and policy materials used in Virginia were consulted in developing the test blueprints for each test field to ensure that the appropriate content was included. Test items corresponding to the approved content for each test were developed to confirm that the VRA is aligned with Virginia education standards.

Committees of Virginia public school educators and educator preparation faculty were extensively involved in the development and validation of the VRA. Responsibilities of these groups included validating the test content presented in the test blueprints, reviewing the corresponding test items for accuracy and potential bias or sensitivity concerns, approving the test items, and recommending the passing score for each VRA test. Final passing scores were determined by the Virginia Board of Education.



How the Virginia Reading Assessment Was Developed

Key steps in the test development process are summarized in the illustration below.

1. Establish Test Development Committees

Content Review Committees were established to recommend to the Virginia Department of Education content, wording, and specifications for the assessment program. A Bias Review Committee was formed to review testing materials for potential bias and to advise the Virginia Department of Education on issues pertaining to their review. The members of these committees were Virginia educators selected through a nominating process that sought from colleagues, supervisors, and professional organizations the names of qualified public school educators and educator preparation faculty. Committees comprised individuals who reflect the racial, gender, ethnic, and regional diversity of Virginia.



2. Develop and Review Test Blueprints

Virginia educators and key state and national documents were consulted during development of VRA test blueprints. Committees of Virginia educators reviewed the test blueprints and made revisions, as necessary, to ensure that the test blueprints were accurate, free of bias, job related, representative of the diversity of the state, and consistent with the purposes of the program.



3. Conduct Match Study of Test Blueprints

Virginia educators rated the alignment of each test blueprint with the English Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools and reading objectives contained in the Virginia Licensure Regulations for School Personnel in identified areas. Based on these ratings, the Virginia Department of Education and Evaluation Systems determined the content of the test blueprints and conducted a content validation survey of each test blueprint.



4. Validate Test Content

The content validation survey was conducted using randomly sampled practicing Virginia public school educators and teacher preparation program faculty to ensure that the test blueprints reflect the knowledge and skills considered to be important for performing the job of an educator in Virginia.



5. Develop and Field-Test Draft Test Items

Test items were developed to assess the content defined by the test blueprints. Committees of Virginia educators were convened to review and approve the test items. Several hundred students preparing to teach at different licensure levels participated in field tests of the test items at field test sites throughout Virginia.



6. Conduct Match Study of Test Items

A second match study was conducted with Virginia educators to determine the alignment of individual VRA test items with the test blueprints and Virginia requirements.



7. Determine Passing Scores

A committee of Virginia educators was convened after the first test administration sessions to recommend the passing score for each VRA test. The final passing scores were determined by the Virginia Board of Education.



Test Administration, Scoring, and Results

The Virginia Reading Assessment is administered under standardized, consistent procedures at sites across Virginia. Test administrations are designed to provide a professional, equitable, and secure testing environment for examinees, including those who need alternative testing arrangements. Testing sites are screened and selected based on criteria relating to test security, accessibility, and the quality of testing conditions and facilities. Test administrators receive training in the test administration procedures and follow detailed procedural manuals before and during the test administration.

The VRA is scored promptly and accurately. The answers to multiple-choice items are scored electronically, and the process is checked to verify accuracy. For constructed-response items, qualified scorers are selected, trained for the scoring process, and monitored for accuracy and consistency. Scoring of constructed-response items typically involves two or more scorers working independently with standardized procedures and scoring scales that have been approved by the Virginia Department of Education. Refer to section 1 of the VRA study guide for more information on scoring criteria.

Test results are reported to individual examinees, their institutions of higher education, and the Virginia Department of Education. Select "Score Reporting" from the VRA Web site for additional information on reading examinee score reports. See the "[Results Reporting for Institutions](#)" section of this guide for a detailed description of VRA institution reports.

For information about test administration and scoring policies and procedures for the Virginia Reading Assessment program, refer to the current registration bulletin at www.va.nesinc.com.



Guiding Candidate Test Preparation

This section provides test preparation guidelines both for first-time test takers and for those who must retake a test. It also provides information on the preparation materials available for the Virginia Reading Assessment, including study guides and test preparation worksheets provided to VRA examinees free of charge. To access these materials, select "Study Guides" from the VRA Web site at www.va.nesinc.com.



Guiding Preparation for First-Time Test Takers

An academic advisor might suggest the following steps to candidates preparing to take the VRA:

1. Begin by completing the Assessment Preparation Worksheet, where candidates complete a checklist of preparation steps for testing and record their academic background, reason for testing, licensure requirements, and testing history.
2. Complete the worksheet for Mapping the Test Blueprint to Courses Taken. This activity involves having candidates review the test blueprint and their course work to date, and record on a worksheet whether their studies have covered the knowledge and skills described by each test objective.
3. Meet with an academic advisor to review the completed worksheets and test preparation steps taken to date, and for assistance in evaluating their readiness to test.

When meeting with a candidate to review the completed materials listed above, an academic advisor may wish to take the following steps:

- Review pages 1–2 of the completed Assessment Preparation Worksheet to learn the candidate's academic background, licensure requirements, and testing history.
- Review the completed worksheet for mapping the test blueprint to the courses the candidate has taken to determine if he or she has completed sufficient course work to take the assessment.
- Review pages 2–3 of the completed Assessment Preparation Worksheet to guide the candidate in gathering and using VRA test preparation materials and, if needed, learning or reviewing test content and test-taking strategies.









Guiding Preparation for Candidates Retaking a Test

An academic advisor might suggest the following steps to candidates preparing to retake the VRA:

1. Gather a copy of his or her last score report for the assessment. Complete or update the Assessment Preparation Worksheet as well as the worksheet for mapping the test blueprint to courses taken.
2. Complete the worksheet for analyzing test results for candidates retaking a test. This worksheet may help candidates identify areas of weakness in their past performance to better focus their studies in preparation for retaking the test.
3. Meet with an academic advisor to review the completed worksheets and test preparation steps taken to date and for help in developing a study plan before retaking the test.

When meeting with a candidate preparing to retake the VRA, an academic advisor may wish to take the following steps:

-  Review the completed Assessment Preparation Worksheet to learn the candidate's academic background, licensure requirements, and testing history. If the candidate has answered "no" to any of the test preparation questions, the advisor may wish to suggest that the candidate follow the test preparation steps on page 2 of the worksheet.
-  Review the completed worksheet for mapping the test blueprint to the courses the candidate has taken to become familiar with the course work that he or she has completed to date.
-  Review the completed worksheet for analyzing test results to understand the candidate's past performance on the assessment and identify areas of weakness.
-  Review testing performance by content area for multiple-choice items and constructed-response items. If the candidate performed less than adequately in some content areas, the advisor may wish to direct the candidate to study particular test content and can assist the candidate by
 - ◆ identifying one or more additional courses for learning the required material;
 - ◆ guiding the candidate in gathering the appropriate test preparation materials, such as textbooks and other references, and the test blueprint and study guide for the VRA;
 - ◆ helping the candidate develop a study plan for reviewing test content, textbooks, and notes from courses already taken; and
 - ◆ offering special workshops for candidates or tutoring the candidate in specific content areas.

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 If the candidate did not perform well on a particular type of item, suggest that he or she review the sample items in the study guide for the assessment. For example, if the candidate received fewer than 3 pluses (+++) for either the multiple-choice or the constructed-response items, the advisor might suggest that he or she complete the sample items in the study guide and review the sample very good response, his or her own response, and the scoring criteria for each sample item. In addition, the advisor might offer to review the responses to provide direct feedback on the candidate's performance.
- 
 Assist the candidate in completing page 3 of the Assessment Preparation Worksheet by listing additional test preparation activities.



Virginia Reading Assessment Preparation Materials

Reviewing the test blueprint, which contains the entire set of test objectives for each domain, is an important step in preparing to take the VRA. Test blueprints for all fields can be viewed or downloaded free of charge by selecting "Test Blueprints" from the VRA Web site at www.va.nesinc.com.

More information about the VRA can be obtained from the study guide available for the VRA program, which can be viewed or downloaded free of charge from the "Study Guides" page of the VRA Web site. The study guide contains the test objectives, sample multiple-choice items, sample constructed-response items (if the applicable field includes these items), sample responses, and suggestions for preparing for the test.

The VRA program also offers the following resources to assist candidates in evaluating their preparedness to test:

- ◆ **Assessment Preparation Worksheet**—assists candidates in reviewing their licensure requirements, tracking their test preparation, and evaluating their preparedness to test
- ◆ **Mapping the Test Blueprint to Courses Taken**—enables candidates to assess whether they have had instruction in the knowledge and skill areas tested by the VRA in their college course work
- ◆ **Analyzing Test Results for Candidates Retaking a Test**—helps candidates analyze their test results to identify areas of weakness in their performance to better focus their studies when preparing to retake a VRA test



Results Reporting for Institutions

Test results for each Virginia Reading Assessment test administration are provided to Virginia institutions of higher education with educator preparation programs approved by the Virginia Department of Education. Select "Institution Codes" on the VRA Web site for a list of the institutions approved to receive individual examinee test scores.

Test results are made available to institutions on the Evaluation Systems Institution Score Reporting Web site, a secure and password-protected Web-based data transmission system that allows Virginia institutions and faculty to receive score report information quickly and efficiently after the scoring for an administration is complete. The dean of education at each institution designates a contact person to receive test results. Institution contacts are notified by e-mail when reports and data files are available after each test administration.

The Institution Score Reporting Web site enables institution contacts to download reports and data files to be saved on the institution's computer system or network. The files are available in two formats:

- ◆ **PDF documents** are versions of the reports that can be viewed or printed.
- ◆ **ASCII files** are data files containing the test results. These files can be downloaded and imported into software databases or applications that are unique to each institution. The ASCII file format allows institutions to format assessment results to meet their individual needs.

Because test results are confidential and need to be protected in a secure manner, the contact person at each institution restricts access to both electronic and hard-copy files.



Reporting Test Results

Following each VRA test administration, examinees and their affiliated institution and the Virginia Department of Education will receive the Institution Roster Report by Test. This report provides a summary of examinee test results for an institution along with a statewide summary of test results by test for the administration.

Information regarding examinee institution affiliation is obtained from examinees as self-reported information during the test registration process. Examinees who request that their score not be released to their institution are not included in reports to institutions. To protect examinees' privacy, only the last five digits of their social security numbers are displayed on the PDF reports.

Individual examinee test scores are confidential and are for the purpose of Virginia educator licensure only. They are not intended to be used for employment decisions, college admission screening, or any other purpose.



Reading the Institution Roster Report by Test

The Institution Roster Report by Test provides a summary of institution results compared to statewide results for each test, as well as rosters of examinees' individual test results organized by test. This report is organized by test field and by domain within each test. For each test, the following information is provided:

- ◆ The composition of the test, including the number of items in each domain assessed
- ◆ The number of examinees from the institution and statewide who tested, the number and percentage of examinees with scores at or above standard, the mean scaled score, and the average performance index by test section and domain for multiple-choice and constructed-response items
- ◆ The names and social security numbers (last five digits only) of examinees, their passing status, their total test scaled score, and their performance indices by domain for both multiple-choice and constructed-response items

Reporting Elements

Test results for the VRA are calculated on a scale of 100 to 300, with the passing score equal to a scaled score of 235 for the VRA for Elementary and Special Education Teachers and a scaled score of 245 for the VRA for Reading Specialists. The multiple-choice section of each test is organized into up to six content domains. In addition, each test contains up to four constructed-response items. The key to the test domains or sections is presented at the top of the report for each test.

The performance indices on the report indicate examinee performance as follows:

For multiple-choice items, the examinee answered	For constructed-response items, the examinee's response reflected
1 = few or none of the items correctly	1 = little or no understanding
2 = some of the items correctly	2 = limited understanding
3 = many of the items correctly	3 = general understanding
4 = most or all of the items correctly	4 = thorough understanding
	0 = an unscorable or blank response

Sample Report

Following is a sample Institution Roster Report by Test. Refer to the table on the following page for a description of the data contained in this report.

VIRGINIA READING ASSESSMENT (VRA) INSTITUTION ROSTER REPORT BY TEST											
Institution: 039 Old Dominion University		← Institution and reporting period									
Test Date: September 15, 2007											
Summary for Test 001: Virginia Reading Assessment for Elementary and Special Education Teachers This test contains 80 scorable multiple-choice items and 4 constructed-response items. The items are distributed across domains as follows. ← Composition of test											
Domain	Domain Name	Number of Multiple-Choice Items				Number of Constructed-Response Items					
1	Assessment and Diagnostic Teaching	11-20				1					
2	Oral Language and Oral Communication	11-20				1					
3	Reading Development	31-40				1					
4	Writing and Research	11-20				1					
← Institution performance versus statewide results											
	Number Tested	Number (%) of Examinees with scaled scores at or above Standard (235)	Mean Scaled Score	Average Performance Index by Test Section and Domain				Constructed Response			
				1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Institution	47	36 (77%)	246	3.2	2.9	3.1	3.3	2.4	1.6	2.0	2.5
Statewide	334	235 (70%)	243	3.0	2.8	3.1	3.1	2.6	1.6	2.1	2.6
← Results by testing candidate											
Roster for Test 001: Virginia Reading Assessment for Elementary and Special Education Teachers											
Examinee Name	SSN	Status	--Total Test-- Scaled Score	Examinee Performance Indices by Domain							
				Multiple Choice				Constructed Response			
				1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
EXAMINEE 1	1-1111	Pass	252	4	3	4	3	2	3	2	2
EXAMINEE 2	2-2222	Not Pass	227	4	1	2	4	1	1	2	2
EXAMINEE 3	3-3333	Pass	249	4	4	3	3	3	1	1	3
EXAMINEE 4	4-4444	Not Pass	234	3	3	3	4	2	1	1	1
EXAMINEE 5	5-5555	Not Pass	226	3	3	3	3	1	1	2	1

Area of Report	Report Field	Field Description
Institution and reporting period	Institution Test Date	Lists the institution name and the test administration date for which results are reported.
Composition of the test	Domain Domain Name Number of Items	Lists the domains of the assessment and the number of associated multiple-choice and constructed-response items.
Institution performance versus statewide results	Number Tested Number (and percentage) of Examinees with Scaled Scores at or above Standard Mean Scaled Score Average Performance Index by Test Section and Domain for Multiple-Choice and Constructed-Response Items	<p>Provides a comparison of institution results to statewide testing results by summarizing the performance of the institution's examinees on the test and the performance of all examinees for the test date. For each group, the report lists the number of examinees who tested, the number and percentage of examinees with scaled scores at or above standard, the mean scaled score, and the average performance index by test section and domain for multiple-choice and constructed-response items.</p> <p>The performance indices provide a summary of results by domain and type of test item. The performance index is displayed on a scale of 1 to 4 (4 being the highest score—see "Reporting Elements"). An institution's average performance index is calculated as the mean of its examinees' performance indices for that domain and item type.</p>
Results by testing candidate	Examinee Name SSN (last 5 digits only) Total Test Status Total Test Scaled Score Examinee Performance Indices by Domain for Multiple-Choice and Constructed-Response Items	<p>Provides individual examinee results for the test indicated, including the examinee name, last five digits of the social security number, passing status, total test status, and total test scaled score.</p> <p>The performance indices show the examinee's performance by domain for both multiple-choice and constructed-response items. The performance index is displayed on a scale of 1 to 4 (4 being the highest score—see "Reporting Elements").</p>



Using the Test Results Data Files

In addition to receiving test results in a format that can be viewed or printed, institutions receive test results data as ASCII files. The ASCII file layout, which defines each field within a record, is provided on the Institution Score Reporting Web site.

ASCII file records include the following information:

- ◆ Test administration date
- ◆ Examinee name
- ◆ Social security number (last five digits only)
- ◆ Test taken
- ◆ Passing status (for examinees who have taken both subtests)
- ◆ Total test scaled score (for examinees who did not pass)
- ◆ Multiple-choice and constructed-response domain scaled scores

ASCII files can be downloaded and the data exported into databases or other applications such as spreadsheets to accumulate test results for more than one test administration. Once centralized, that data can be sorted or filtered to gain unique and meaningful results for the institution. For example, test results can be sorted by examinee to view the cumulative test results for a testing candidate over a given period. Or, test results can be filtered to display the names of examinees who have not yet passed an assessment.

Test results files can also be used to analyze areas of strength and weakness for all of an institution's candidates and to enable the institution to determine whether any changes in the curriculum are needed to better prepare students for the Virginia Reading Assessment.

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