

What if **90% of our graduating class suddenly became ineligible to graduate**, and **60% of all Staunton students were suddenly failing**? That's the impact new, proposed Virginia cut scores could have beginning this spring.

What's Happening

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is proposing to raise the minimum pass rates, or cut scores, for grades 3-12 SOL tests. These new, higher thresholds **could be approved as early as the September 24-25 Board of Education (BOE) meeting**.

- **Cut scores are the minimum scores required for students to pass SOL tests.**
- The VDOE has shared **no statewide impact data** with school divisions on how these changes would affect students.
- The higher cut scores **could take effect this school year** if approved, with no transition period. This is a highly unusual and disruptive approach. In the past, changes to cut scores have included a review period and phased-in implementation.

What it Means for Staunton Students

Based on our own data and an internal review of the potential impact, we believe:

- Many students who previously met state expectations may suddenly be considered failing.
- **More than 90% of the Class of 2025 would not have graduated on time** based on the proposed SOL cut scores, despite achieving above the current state average.
- **Only 40% of all SCS students would be considered proficient in Math and Reading**, a highly misleading and inaccurate picture of our students' abilities.
- A student with a disability who has made steady progress over the years, moving from below basic to passing, would suddenly be labeled as failing, despite showing real growth.
- Teachers would spend more time retesting students than teaching, further straining morale and retention during an ongoing national teacher shortage.



[View a comparison of current cut scores to proposed new scores.](#)

A Record of Success

SCS has made the highest improvement in student achievement in Virginia since 2018, climbing 70 places in seven years in state SOL rankings.

- We're **ranked 35th of 131 divisions** statewide, in the top third of divisions in Virginia.
- Growth fueled by **high expectations**, peer collaboration, professional learning, and prioritization of student and staff well-being.
- We believe in setting the bar high, and our students consistently rise to meet it.
- The proposed new scores conflict with the rigorous accountability system adopted by the state just last year. **High-performing school divisions (like Staunton) could be unfairly labeled as "off track" or "needs intensive support," eroding public trust in the state system.**

Our Position

SCS supports holding students to high expectations, and urges the BOE to:

- **Delay implementation until a full analysis is completed on the accountability system.** As written, these new cut scores would further complicate the system the state uses to gauge student performance.
- **Require statewide impact data before making any decision.** Our own data already shows these changes would cause widespread harm.
- **Put students first.** Raising cut scores without proper analysis adds unnecessary strain and risks demoralizing students who are already performing well and showing growth.
- **Prioritize growth measures and advanced performance over drastic changes.** Achievement will improve when schools focus on growth and proven instructional strategies.
- **Give families a voice in decisions that directly affect graduation.** Parents deserve a clear understanding of the implications of this decision for their children and a chance to weigh in.

Raise Your Voice

Your voice matters! Please speak up **before September 24** to protect Virginia's students and ensure accountability decisions are fair and evidence-based.

Please contact the following using our **email template**:

- **Virginia Board of Education: BOE@doe.virginia.gov**
- **Delegate Ellen Campbell: delecampbell@house.virginia.gov**
- **Senator Christopher Head: senatorhead@senate.virginia.gov**