



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education**

March 7, 2014

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Electronic Devices and Operating Systems Approved for Online Standards of Learning Test Administration

Virginia school divisions have led the nation since 2001 in the implementation of online testing for students, and our schools currently administer approximately 99 percent of Standards of Learning (SOL) tests online. All Virginia students, except those with a documented need for paper-and-pencil tests, complete their SOL tests on Internet-connected computers using Pearson's online test delivery software, TestNav™. Use of this specific software, TestNav 7, is currently required of school divisions when administering SOL tests online. TestNav 7 delivers multiple-choice and technology-enhanced SOL test items as well as the short-paper component of the online SOL Writing test while ensuring a standardized and secure test environment for all students.

Changes in technology and efforts by school divisions to maximize their investments in educational technology have resulted in new questions regarding the electronic devices and operating systems currently approved for administering online SOL tests. The required software, TestNav 7, is compatible only with certain Microsoft Windows®-based and Mac OS®-based hardware, but school divisions are inquiring about expanding the list of approved devices for SOL testing to include hardware such as Google™ Chromebooks, Apple iPads®, Android™-based devices, or Microsoft Windows®-based devices with touch screen interfaces. Details of a newly released version of Pearson's test delivery software, TestNav 8, that support such additional devices have increased school division questions regarding the technologies that can be used for administering online SOL tests.

Currently, delivering Virginia's SOL test content requires the use of Pearson's TestNav 7 software. The Department of Education recognizes that this requirement limits the hardware and software choices available to school divisions for administering SOL tests and understands the need for greater flexibility. The research and efforts necessary to transition the SOL assessment program to TestNav 8 were initiated by the Department of Education as Pearson started its development of the new software. However, given the existing format and volume of SOL test content, transitioning the Virginia assessment program to TestNav 8 is an unprecedented step and cannot be completed quickly. Significant change is required in how SOL test content is displayed and secured, and while tools are under development to expedite the conversion of SOL test items to a format compatible with TestNav 8, multiple conversion steps and verifications will be required for many of the SOL test items.

A transition timeline to TestNav 8 will be shared with school divisions as this information is finalized. In addition, the Department of Education is actively exploring options for expanding the types of devices approved for administering online SOL tests. If your school division is implementing devices for instructional purposes that currently are not approved for administering online SOL tests and is interested in collaborating with the

Department of Education in its efforts to expand the list of approved devices for online SOL testing, please send an e-mail to student assessment staff at student_assessment@doe.virginia.gov to indicate your interest.

In response to specific questions regarding current, approved SOL testing configurations, TestNav 7 is not compatible with Google Chromebooks, Apple iPads®, or Android™-based devices and therefore, these devices cannot be used to administer online SOL tests at the present time. Also, due to significant vulnerabilities in test security, the use of remote access and virtualization technologies to run TestNav 7 on unsupported devices is not approved for administering online SOL tests. Finally, while certain Windows-based operating systems that support the use of touch screen devices (e.g., Windows 8) may be used with TestNav 7, it is important to note that currently all students must have a pointer-based interface (e.g., mouse, stylus, touch pad) and a physical keyboard available when completing online SOL tests. Research is being conducted regarding any potential impact of touch screen devices on student test performance, including how students respond to SOL technology-enhanced item types (e.g., drag and drop items, hot spot items) or use online tools (e.g., compass, ruler, protractor).

Details of the current TestNav7 hardware and software requirements for administering online SOL tests are available in PearsonAccess™ on the *Support* page under the *Tech* tab, as well as at the following Web address: <http://www.pearsononlinetesting.com/TestNav/7>. If you have questions, please contact the student assessment staff by e-mail at student_assessment@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 225-2102.

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