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Alignment of District Assessments with the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL)

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Introduction

Parents, teachers, and school administrators all have one common goal – student success. Teachers have been trusted to impart knowledge to students, while hopefully fostering a love of learning, then assessing how much the students know. Assessment in the classroom, whether informal, formative, or summative, has been the major source of identifying student strengths and weaknesses. Today, there is increased pressure on teachers to ensure they are accountable for what they do in the classroom. Within the educational system, students' success has been measured inconsistently from state-to-state, district-to-district, and even classroom-to-classroom. In this age of accountability, national and state standards have been developed, and through state-wide assessments, students are tested on what they have learned. Each state is accountable to the United States Department of Education, administrators are accountable to their school district and state, and teachers are accountable to their administrators. Today, all American students are expected to meet very specific standards. Teachers must assess their students' knowledge and abilities through testing in the classroom.

Brief History of Standards-Based Education

Educational reform can be traced back to the 19th century, with the testing movement blossoming after World War II. During the 1960s, there was a great deal of focus on compensatory education because of the perceived disparities in educational opportunities as well as student performance. During this time, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), supported by the federal government, expanded testing because Congress needed to evaluate how funds were being distributed (Linn & Gronlund, 2000).

Standardized tests have been the "focus of controversy" because it has been said that, "they drive instruction in undesirable ways by overemphasizing factual knowledge and low-level

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skills" (Linn & Gronlund, 2000, p. 2). Despite this controversy, *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983) examined school-level accountability. Studies indicated that tests could be used to identify weaknesses of students, and because of this, they could be used to facilitate change. During this time, every state attempted to reform on some level, with many states using external assessments. Everyone, from administrators to teachers to students, felt the pressure of accountability. The research during this era reported that teachers were only teaching test-taking skills and the content covered on the assessments. Educators also used the external assessments to drive the format for their classroom tests (Linn & Gronlund, 2000).

Today, standards drive accountability through high-stakes testing to ensure that content is adequately covered by teachers. "Standards are statements that specify what should be taught and what students should learn" (Linn & Gronlund, 2000, p. 6). The most recent reform efforts fall under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), a reauthorization of the ESEA. The four main components of NCLB are accountability, decision making based on scientific research, increased local control, and more options for parents. Reading during the elementary grades is emphasized under the premise that early intervention will prevent reading problems for children in later years (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

In addition to improving reading skills, children must be tested in reading and math every year from grades 3 until 8. They also must be assessed a minimum of one time in English during high school. NCLB requires alignment between state tests and the state standards. Schools are expected to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) on these state tests. Those that fail to make AYP are subject to a series of improvement measures in order to meet the state requirements. If a school does not make AYP, parents have the option of transferring their children to another school or receiving extra instruction. Teachers and teacher aides are assessed as well. Every

professional and paraprofessional must meet the criterion of "highly qualified". District and school-level "report cards," including information on teacher qualifications, are available to the public. Fortunately, federal expenditures for schools have greatly increased to ensure that districts, schools, teachers and students meet the goals of NCLB (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

Alignment

What, exactly, is alignment? In reference to education, a single definition does not exist. However, Impara (2001) gives three possible definitions. A basic definition, which he quoted from LaMarca, Redfield, Winter, Bailey, and Despriet (as cited in Impara, 2001), is the "match between two or more things" (p. 3). Another definition is "the extent to which the items (or tasks/prompts) on a test match relevant content standards (or test specifications)" (p. 3). The final definition Impara provided is one developed by Webb (as cited in Impara, 2001) which states that alignment is "the degree to which expectations and assessments are in agreement and serve in conjunction with one another to guide the system toward students learning what they are expected to know and do" (p. 4).

Considering the three definitions, alignment can encompass content match, format match, and cognitive level match. The state of Virginia has developed Standards of Learning (SOL) as a curriculum framework in the four core areas of English, mathematics, history/social science, and science. Teachers are expected to align classroom instruction with the SOL so students possess specific knowledge and skills in these four areas. As teachers construct classroom assessments, there is an implication that they will align tests with the SOL (Virginia Department of Education, 2004). When aligning the content of their tests, teachers must take into account whether each test item coincides with the standards the students are expected to know. In terms of format, the way

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the question is asked should be appropriate for the content of the standard (Linn & Gronlund, 2000). The cognitive level should reflect the complexity of the content. There are differing methods of analyzing the hierarchical nature of cognitive levels, beginning with the seminal work of Bloom.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom (Distance Learning Resource Network, 2003) categorized learning into three domains: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The cognitive domain is of interest for the purpose of the present study. Within this domain, Bloom delineates six levels which when arranged from lowest to the highest include: (a) knowledge, (b) comprehension, (c) application, (d) analysis, (e) synthesis, and (f) evaluation.

The first level, knowledge, simply refers to facts or content students can learn through rote memorization. In the second level, comprehension, students are asked to describe or identify an aspect of what they are learning. The third level, application, expects students to apply concepts they have learned. For example, they might be asked to solve a problem using a new skill. At the analysis level, students might criticize an article or compare and contrast two concepts. In the fifth level of the cognitive domain, synthesis, students design, construct, or develop responses. For the last level, evaluation, students must support opinions or rate information (Distance Learning Resource Network, 2003).

Revision of Bloom

Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) believed that Bloom's Taxonomy was dated, and decided to take on the task of revising it. The researchers made revisions with the intent of using the new taxonomy for aligning all aspects of instruction. In Bloom's original taxonomy, the six major categories were emphasized, even though he had developed sub-categories. The revised

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taxonomy pulls the sub-categories to the forefront, allowing for ease of use in the classroom. Because of the emphasis on utility of the revisions, the authors framed everything in a "verb-noun relationship" (p. 307).

The knowledge category became its own dimension within the revised taxonomy which included four categories: factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive. The new cognitive domain included six categories, with several sub-categories: (a) "Remember – recognizing, recalling;" (b) "Understand – interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, explaining;" (b) "Apply – executing, implementing;" (c) "Analyze – differentiating, organizing, attributing;" (d) "Evaluate – checking, critiquing;" and (e) "Create – generating, planning, producing" (p. 31). Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) believed that teachers could determine which level they were reaching by identifying the nouns and verbs in their objectives. The noun described the category of knowledge being assessed, and the verb defined the category and sub-category of the cognitive domain the objective had reached. Anderson and Krathwohl noted that teachers can create assessments by examining the categories covered in classroom instructional objectives.

Alignment Research

Even before NCLB and the requirement that teachers use instructional approaches based on scientific research, several studies were conducted concerning alignment with standards. Many of these studies focused on aligning the standards with state assessments, but some examined the relationship between the curriculum and the standards. Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning [McREL] (2000) gathered qualitative data from teachers for their study. The sample included beginning teachers as well as veterans who were involved in the reform efforts. Teachers indicated that they were given a list of standards, with no help or explanation

on how to use them. How then, were these teachers supposed to know the importance of aligning their instruction with the standards?

After being involved in the reform, the teachers realized how crucial it was to integrate all aspects of their instruction with the standards. The teachers also realized that standards needed to be written in understandable and measurable ways. This research suggested that once teachers had clear standards, they needed to use a variety of assessment types because "standards require that students have deeper levels of knowledge about content matter and are able to apply that knowledge" (McREL, 2000, p. 21). Typical assessment methods, such as true-false items and multiple-choice questions, were "not adequate for assessing this type of knowledge and its application" (McREL, 2000, p. 21). Teachers needed to understand the type of knowledge they were assessing to choose an appropriate corresponding assessment. For example, facts may call for a matching exercise or multiple choice items, while a question about generalizations may warrant a writing sample.

McREL (2000) also cited a study conducted in Philadelphia by Simon et al. in 1998. When stating objectives in their classrooms, the teachers in this study referred more to the standardized state tests than the actual standards themselves. In this era of accountability, the one aspect that teachers are most concerned about is assessment. In their study, McREL found that the teachers emphasized the importance of being able to work collaboratively with their peers on assessment issues. The teachers in this study hoped that administrators would allow time for this, as well as afford them opportunities to observe other teachers who were known to improve their instruction through the lens of state standards.

In a two-year study by Blank, Porter and Smithson (2001), the researchers examined the "enacted curriculum," which they defined as "the actual subject content and instructional

practices experienced by students in the classrooms" (p. i). Over 600 teachers from schools in 11 states participated in this study. The researchers determined that the K-12 curriculum could be divided into three parts: (a) the intended curriculum, (b) the enacted curriculum, and (c) the learned curriculum (student outcomes). They observed two teachers per grade level and subject area in their classrooms. The educators also completed a 150 item survey which asked about instructional practices, subject content, and teacher characteristics.

Blank, Porter and Smithson (2001) found that classroom instruction did not align with the state assessments (standards were not examined) for the 11 states. On the state tests, only a few sub-topics were covered whereas many more topics were covered during instruction. In addition, while many sub-topics were covered in the classroom, they were covered with no depth. In a general sense, another result of their study was the creation of alignment analyses for future use by teachers and policy makers.

In a third study, conducted by the Regional Educational Laboratory (2000), the researchers examined aspects of effective reform at the state, district and school levels. They found that Massachusetts had frameworks to align instruction and standards and a collaboration system between institutions of higher education and new teachers. Florida had a similar arrangement with local universities so that new teachers developed skills in understanding standards, assessment and curriculum. Kentucky, Oregon and Maryland were also involved in reform. These three states focused on reforming only one or two subjects per year. The Regional Educational Laboratory researchers found that, at the school level, one of the key characteristics of reform was to closely monitor student learning through classroom assessments. The schools involved in the study relied heavily on test data.

Finally, a three-phase qualitative study was conducted by Hammrich (1999) with K-8

science teachers as they participated in a year-long professional development program. In the

third phase of the study, teachers examined different tests to determine a match between the

content and the standards. When the program was completed, the teachers stated that they

recognized the importance of alignment; however, they believed that it was not worth the effort

(Hammrich, 1999).

For all levels of reform (state, district, and school), three commonalities existed which

included "using student learning standards as a foundation for reform work, enhancing teachers'

capacity to provide effective instruction, and providing meaningful assessment of student

achievement" (Regional Educational Laboratory, 2000, p. 18). The researchers believed that

each level greatly influenced the others. To implement effective reform in the educational

system, one key issue was to align all aspects of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Even before NCLB was enacted, many educators had strong opinions concerning

standards and testing. One very important aspect of having set learning standards was to make

sure that they drive instruction. Bruner and Greenlee (2002) stated that, "By providing outlines

for curriculum content and benchmarks that specify levels of performance and expectations,

standards can turn educational goals into concrete and measurable criteria" (p. 23). But how

should teachers use the standards to improve their instruction? Bruner and Greenlee believed that

teachers should be given the opportunity to work with colleagues to discuss their grade-level

standards. Administrators must support this by allowing time for collaboration, as well as giving

teachers permission to change the order of content taught during the year. By having the chance

to work together on aligning curriculum, teachers would be able to convert the standards into

classroom activities. What teachers do in the classroom and how they assess students should make a difference in their standardized test scores.

Squires (1998) took a different approach by examining alignment both across and between grade levels. He suggested using state test results to improve both horizontal and vertical alignment. Squires, like Bruner and Greenlee (2002), emphasized the importance of teacher collaboration. In his alignment work, Squires assessed each unit for both content and format. When classroom assessments were aligned in both aspects, it was anticipated that student scores would improve on the state tests with teachers having to do little, if any, standardized test preparation.

Like Squires, Aviles (2001) discussed vertical and horizontal alignment. However, according to Aviles, vertical alignment pertained to cognitive level while horizontal alignment encompassed content. He concluded that to align a curriculum, all of the materials, including the test, need to be created before planning the unit.

In their article on alignment, La Marca, Redfield, and Winter (2000) focused on state-wide assessments, but suggested that their guidelines could be used for any type of evaluation. They emphasized the importance of matching the assessment to the standards using "General Organizing Principles" consisting of content match, depth match, emphasis, performance match, and accessibility. To make these matches, the test developer must assume several things, including that instruction reflected the standards. Additionally, the developer assumes that the assessments needed to be aligned with the standards so data can be used to make instructional decisions. LaMarca et al. (2000) suggested using a third party to develop an alignment checklist to evaluate the degree of the match between standards and assessments.

Tienken and Wilson (2001) discussed a program in New Jersey that helped teachers improve their instructional practices through their understanding of the standards through delineation (i.e., where teachers recognize all aspects of content, including state standards), alignment and calibration. During the alignment phase, teachers created classroom tests and determined whether they examined the correct skills, matched the cognitive level of the standard, and, less importantly, duplicated the format. In the alignment phase, Tienken and Wilson (2001) stated that 100% alignment should not be the goal.

Alignment Models

Impara (2001) outlined three types of alignment models, ranging from low complexity to high complexity. He suggested that when teachers use appropriate classroom tests, they should not be surprised when they receive their students' scores on state assessments. By examining classroom assessment results, teachers should be able to gauge how well their students will perform on state tests. Aligning teachers' tests with the state's standards was essential. Impara gave three levels for aligning assessments, Low Complexity, Moderate Complexity, and High Complexity, and provided examples for each level. For the lowest level, content specialists were asked to look at an assessment and give a score for each item on content and cognitive level ranging from "no match" to "exact match." The next two alignment levels were based on the low complexity model. The moderate level focused on content match, depth match, emphasis, performance match, and accessibility. The highly complex model focused on content, articulation across grades, equity and fairness, pedagogical implications, and system applicability. Impara stated that the most complex model could be applied to any testing situation.

Impara (2001) cited Webb's alignment research as a good example of a highly complex model. Webb (as cited in Impara, 2001) believed that examining the "depth of knowledge" was the first step to determining content alignment (p. 5). Using a hierarchy similar to Bloom's Taxonomy, which divided the cognitive level into four categories, Webb asked content specialists to use actual assessments to determine where each standard belonged. The content experts rated each assessment item using the same cognitive demand scale as the standard to determine whether they matched. Webb decided that at least one half of the test items had to be at the same or higher cognitive level for the test to measure at the same cognitive level as the standard. "If, for example, there were six items related to a standard and the passing level was four items answered correctly, then at least three of the items had to match the level of cognitive complexity for the indicators to have an acceptable depth of knowledge rating" (as cited in Impara, 2001, p. 5).

The last three steps for determining a match were not as stringent as the first. The second step in Webb's research was to assess what he called categorical congruence. For example, if a standard called for correct spelling, then the teacher (or scoring rubric on the state assessment) must consider a spelling score as part of the student's test score. The third step was to examine the "range of knowledge" (Webb as cited in Impara, 2001, p. 5). One standard might have several related dimensions or objectives. For instance, students may be expected to utilize writing concepts, which would also include spelling, grammar, and other dimensions. Therefore, assessments should look at all aspects of writing to glean an alignment match. In the last step, the raters considered the objectives related to the standards and gave a score that represented whether or not the objectives had been equally weighted on the test.

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Impara (2001) noted that there were inherent problems with each of the alignment models he outlined. Impara believed that the terms, such as standard or objective, were too broad and may have multiple dimensions. In determining alignment, one dimension may be met leading the rater to state the item was aligned, when in reality only one aspect of the standard or objective was aligned. Another problem in alignment was that standards differ from state to state. Even if a standard looked very similar from one state to another, the curriculum requirements may not be the same. Thus, alignment in one state did not guarantee alignment in another state. The final problem that Impara considered with the alignment models was that states required students be classified into competency levels. Impara suggested that to determine competency accurately it would take more than one test, resulting in a very expensive and time-consuming process.

Guidelines and Standards

Linn and Gronlund (2000) developed guidelines for creating assessments, without addressing alignment. They indicated that several questions should be answered when developing tests, including "Is the format appropriate for the question?" and "Does the knowledge, understanding or thinking skill called forth by the item or task match the specific learning outcome and subject-matter content being measured?" (p. 346-347). The researchers also developed "Standards for Teacher Competence in Educational Assessment of Students" of which three apply to the present study. They include: (a) "Teachers should be skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions" (p. 538); (b) "The teacher should be skilled in administering, scoring and interpreting the results of both externally produced and teacher-produced assessment methods" (p. 539); and (c) "Teachers should be skilled in using assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement" (p. 541).

Based on this review of literature, several guidelines for alignment emerge. These guidelines include: (a) teachers should be knowledgeable about the standards with which they are aligning; (b) teachers should work collaboratively in developing units, including classroom tests; (c) classroom tests should address the content as well as the cognitive level, possibly using Bloom's Taxonomy, for each standard; (d) teachers should have a variety of types of assessments including, but not limited to, multiple-choice; (e) teachers must create their assessments before teaching the units; and (f) teachers should think of teaching and testing together, not separately.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the implementation of NCLB, the stakes of state assessment results have increased for teachers in Virginia. There is a greater need to align all aspects of instruction with the SOL and the state tests. Taking into account the research that has been reviewed regarding alignment, the following research questions guided this study. To what extent do district English/Language Arts assessments at grades 3, 5, 8, and 10/11: (a) align content with the Virginia English SOL and SOL released test items at their grade level, (b) align format with the English SOL released test items at their grade level, and (c) align cognitive level with the English SOL released test items at their grade level?

Methodology

Participants

The current study was solicited by the Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium (MERC) to determine the extent to which district-wide English assessments at grades 3, 5, 8, and 10/11 aligned with the Virginia English SOL and the English SOL released items. The seven districts that comprise MERC were asked to provide their end-of-the-quarter district-wide

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English assessments at grades 3, 5, 8, and 10/11. Three districts submitted their assessments for review. All three districts are located in the Metropolitan Richmond, Virginia area.

General Procedures

The study team collected the English assessments from the three MERC districts and downloaded the 2005 English SOL released items for grades 3, 5, 8, and End-of-Course (which corresponds to grades 10 or 11) from the Virginia Department of Education website (Commonwealth of Virginia, 2006). The researchers decided to compare the district-wide assessments to the 2005 English SOL released items since districts provided assessments from that year. The study team (a) compared the English Standards of Learning (Board of Education, November 2002) targeted on the district-wide assessments and the 2005 English SOL released items to determine level of content match; (b) compared the format used on the district-wide assessments and the 2005 English SOL released items to determine level of format match; and (c) compared the cognitive level of the questions on the district-wide assessments to the questions on the 2005 English SOL released items to determine cognitive level match.

Instruments

Content match. The Virginia English Standards of Learning (Board of Education, November 2002) are organized by grade level around skills that need to be developed in the following areas: Oral Language, Reading, and Writing. The test items from both the district-wide assessments and the 2005 SOL released items (Commonwealth of Virginia, 2006) targeted the skills for Reading and Writing. To determine level of content match, the study team decided that the test items either targeted an SOL or they did not.

Format match. There were two types of questions on both the English district-wide assessments and the English SOL released items. Multiple choice items require the test-taker to

choose the correct answer from four choices. Open-ended items require the test-taker to respond to a question or prompt without any guidance. A comparison was completed to determine if the district-wide assessments matched the English SOL released items on format.

Cognitive level. The cognitive levels that were used to determine a match were based on the work of Webb (as cited in Impara, 2001). Questions at Level 1 required the test-taker to write, receive, or recite simple facts. Questions at Level 2 required the test-taker to go beyond reproducing or recalling a response so that some mental processing was required. Level 3 questions require deep knowledge so that the test-taker goes beyond the text and uses higher level mental processing. With Level 4 questions, the test-taker needed to synthesize and analyze information from several sources, also using higher level mental processing. See Appendix A for a sample question at each cognitive level. The analysis of cognitive level match involved determining the cognitive level of each item on both the district-wide assessments and the English SOL released items and then comparing the percent of items at each level.

Inter-rater Reliability

To ensure reliability of the results, 25% of the items on both the district-wide assessments and the English SOL released items were scored by a second team member for agreement purposes.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Content Match

When comparing the district-wide assessments and the English SOL released items (Commonwealth of Virginia, 2006), the study team found 100% match between the English Standards of Learning (Board of Education, November 2002) and both sets of assessments.

Format Match

There was a 100% match between the district-wide assessments and the English SOL

released items on both multiple choice test items and open-ended test items.

Cognitive Level Match

Cognitive level match was analyzed by grade level. For the 3rd grade assessments, 71% of

the district-wide assessments and 68% of the English SOL released items were found to be at

Level 1 and 29% of the district-wide assessments and 32% of the English SOL released items

were found to be at Level 2. No items for either assessment were found to be at Level 3 or 4. See

Table 1.

Table 1

Cognitive Level Percentages for 3rd Grade Assessments

Cognitive Level	District-Wide Assessments	2005 SOL Released Items
Level 1	71%	68%
Level 2	29%	32%
Level 3	N/A	N/A
Level 4	N/A	N/A

For the 5th grade assessments, 53% of the district-wide assessments and 53% of the

English SOL released items were found to be at Level 1, 45% of the district-wide assessments

and 44% of the English SOL released items were found to be at Level 2, and 2% of the district-

wide assessments and 3% of the English SOL released items were at Level 3. No items were

found to be at Level 4. See Table 2.

Table 2

Cognitive Level Percentages for 5th Grade Assessments

Cognitive Level	District-Wide Assessments	2005 SOL Released Items
Level 1	53%	53%
Level 2	45%	44%
Level 3	2%	3%
Level 4	N/A	N/A

For the 8th grade assessments, 66% of the district-wide assessments and 73% of the

English SOL released items were at Level 1, 31% of the district-wide assessments and 18% of

the English SOL assessments were at Level 2, and 3% of the district-wide assessments and 9%

of the English SOL assessments were at Level 3. No items were found to be at Level 4. See

Table 3.

Table 3

Cognitive Level Percentages for 8th Grade Assessments

Cognitive Level	District-Wide Assessments	2005 SOL Released Items
Level 1	66%	73%
Level 2	31%	18%
Level 3	3%	9%
Level 4	N/A	N/A

For 11th grade/End-of-Course assessments, 58% of the district-wide assessments and 69%

of the English SOL released items, 41% of the district-wide assessments and 25% of the English

SOL released items, and 1% of the district-wide assessments and 6% of the English SOL

released items were at Level 3. No items were found to be at Level 4. See Table 4.

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Table 4

Cognitive Level Percentages for 11th Grade/End-of-Course Grade Assessments

Cognitive Level	District-Wide Assessments	2005 SOL Released Items
Level 1	58%	69%
Level 2	41%	25%
Level 3	1%	6%
Level 4	N/A	N/A

Inter-rater Reliability

For the 25% of test items that were scored a second time by another member of the study team, there was 83% agreement on content, 100% agreement on format, and 80% agreement on cognitive level. For most items in which the study team members did not agree, they were close in their decisions. For example, if one member of the study team scored an item at cognitive level 1, the other team member scored it at level 2.

Discussion

There was strong alignment between the district-wide assessments and the English SOL released items (Commonwealth of Virginia, 2006) on content and format. In terms of cognitive level alignment, there was close alignment between the district-wide assessments and the English SOL released items at 3rd and 5th grade. The alignment was not as close between the district-wide assessments and the English SOL released items at 8th and 11th (End-of-Course) grade. At all grade levels for both assessments, the majority of items were at Level 1. There were significantly more Level 2 items than Level 3. Very few items were at Level 3 and these items were open-ended writing prompts. At 8th and 11th grade, the district-wide assessments had more Level 2 items than the English SOL released items. It is important to note that the analysis for 3rd and 5th grade district-wide assessments and English SOL released items included both Reading and

Writing subtests, but for 8th and 11th (End-of-Course), the district-wide assessments included both Reading and Writing subtests while the English SOL released items only included the Writing subtest. That may account for the difference in cognitive level at those grade levels.

Recommendations

Several recommendations become evident based on the findings of this study. First, revision of assessments to reflect higher cognitive levels at both the state and district level may help students develop higher level thinking skills. Teachers may also want to consider revising their test questions so that a variety of formats are utilized to reflect higher cognitive levels. The state should also analyze SOL test items to ensure that the cognitive levels of state assessments are comparable to the Standards of Learning.

In this era of extraordinary accountability, it is essential that districts closely align their district-wide assessments with the state standardized tests. Research documents the pressure that teachers feel to prepare their students for state-wide high stakes testing (Pedulla, Abrams, Madaus, Russell, Ramos, & Miao, March 2003). The current study reflects the effort that districts are making to prepare their students to be successful in taking the Virginia SOL tests by matching their district-wide assessments with the Virginia SOL and SOL tests.

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Appendix A

Examples of Questions at Each Cognitive Level

Level 1:
From a 5th grade assessment:
In which word does <u>er</u> mean the same as in walk<u>er</u>?
A   diff<u>er</u>ence
B   somewh<u>er</u>e
C   ev<u>er</u>
D   teach<u>er</u>

Level 2:
From an 8th grade assessment:

(1)Early education is the key to a successful academic career. (2) Most children in day care are provided with a snack every day. (3) A good preschool program can offer students an opportunity to learn basic skills in preparation for kindergarten. (4) Children will learn the letters of the alphabet and the numbers one through 20. (5) Research has proven that the earlier children begin their formal education, the better readers they will become.

Which of the sentences from the passage is irrelevant, or unnecessary?
   (A) 1
   (B) 2
   (C) 3
   (D) 4

Level 3:
From a 5th grade assessment:

Write about a time when you saw something really beautiful OR something really interesting. Describe what you saw so that someone else would be able to understand why it was beautiful or interesting. Be sure to use specific details.

Level 4:
There were no examples of questions at Level 4 from the assessments that were analyzed, but a possible example could be:

Read Draft #1 and #2 of Emily's persuasive essay on why people should recycle. Decide if her arguments are stronger in Draft #2 and explain why or why not.

10/31/07

Dear Elder Friends Volunteer:

This following letter was sent out to your elders today. The letter describes a pilot program benefiting ElderFriends elder participants through our partnership with Henrico Area Mental Health & Mental Retardation Day Services Program and Ukrop's Super Markets. This may be something they want to participate in and your elder may ask you to help with this process. I am also attaching the grocery instructions.

Thank you for your time!

Dear ElderFriends Participant,

After conducting a needs assessment among ElderFriends elder participants that indicated a real need for grocery assistance, we are pleased to announce a pilot program benefiting ElderFriends elder participants through our partnership with Henrico Area Mental Health & Mental Retardation Day Services Program and Ukrop's Super Markets.

Here is how it works:
Ukrop's will:
  • Assist you with the purchasing of gift cards and funds exchange. Neither ElderFriends nor Henrico Mental Health Day Services are able to administer funds transactions for you. Only gift cards can be used for grocery runs. Ukrop's will work with you to obtain these cards.
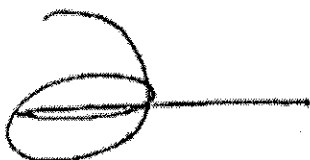
Henrico Area Mental Health Mental Retardation Day Services Program will:
  • Provide their volunteers to pick up your grocery list and gift card from your home
  • Drive to the nearest Ukrop's and shop for you
  • Return to your home, delivering your groceries and gift card and your receipt indicating purchase amount and remaining gift card balance

The following pages will give you specific contact information and step-by-step instruction on how to participate in this wonderful opportunity. We are copying all of

your visiting volunteers- so they are aware of this new service.   Please know that this is a pilot project – and our approach is to "try this out". Hopefully it will be beneficial to all involved.

Kindest regards,

Kiersten Ware, MS
ElderFriends, Founding Director
Department of Gerontology, VCU

ElderFriends grocery instructions (2).doc

SHOPPING FOR SENIORS- STEP –BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS

ElderFriends and Henrico Area Mental Health and Mental Retardation Day Services Program is partnering to provide grocery shopping and delivery a much-needed service to the homebound elderly in our community. Please follow these step-by-step instructions to participate in this project.

STEP #1:
OBTAIN GIFT CARDS FROM UKROP'S

Contact: Mary Beth Coleman, Gift Card Coordinator
Phone: 804-340-4078

Purchasing Gift Card with Cash:
Go to any Ukrop's and purchase your Gift Card in person with cash, check or credit.

Purchasing Gift Card with Credit card:
Purchase or add funds to a gift card over the telephone with your credit card by calling Mary Beth Coleman at 340-4078. She will need your credit card number, type of credit card, expiration date? billing address and gift card number (if you are adding funds to your existing gift card).

Purchasing Gift Card with a Personal Check:
Ukrop's will accept a check for gift cards orders. You will need to mail a check, along with a quick note as to the address it should be mailed back to, to the following address:
Ukrop's Super Markets, Inc
2001 Maywill Street, Suite 100
Richmond, VA 23230
Attn. Mary Beth Coleman

Important Timing Information:
It typically takes two days for Ukrop's to process gift card orders and get them back in the mail, so participants should allow 5-7 mail days to receive their gift card from the time you mail your check to Ukrop's.

STEP #2:
CREATE YOUR SHOPPING LIST

Shopping List Specifications:
You must create your own shopping list. Include the following information on all orders:
- Brand name (Helmans)
- Product (Mayonnaise)
- Size (Small, 8oz)
- Description (Squeeze bottle)
- Alternate (give name of other brand in the case where your brand is not available)
- Quantity

STEP #3:
REQUEST A GROCERY RUN WITH HENRICO MENTAL HEALTH

Contact: Connie Harbert, Henrico Area Mental Health Mental Retardation Day Services,
             Shopping for Seniors Liaison

Phone: 262-6665 ext.8838

Request a Grocery Run:
Once you are in possession of your gift card and you have created a shopping list that is estimated less than the value of your card, you may request a grocery store run. Contact Henrico Mental Health's Day Services Liaison, Connie Harbert at the number above. They will coordinate your date and time for shopping list and gift card pick up.

On the Date of Grocery Run:
Henrico Mental Health's Day Services Program volunteers will go to the grocery store, select the items on the list, purchase the items using the gift card, deliver to seniors home's, and put the groceries away. Gift cards and store receipts will be returned to the elder at this time along with a short questionnaire. The volunteer will be asking the elder to sign an additional receipt for Henrico County records when they pick up your list and gift card.

After Grocery Run:
- Elders must determine if they need to re-load funds to their gift card for future trips. The remaining gift card balance will be located near the bottom of the customer receipt.
- A questionnaire on your experience will be helpful feedback to us. Please return it to the ElderFriends office with the self-addressed stamped envelope provided for you at the end of your grocery run.
- Be sure to communicate openly and frequently with the volunteers assisting you in your grocery shopping.

6/3/07

<<Elder Name>>
<<Street>>
<<City>>, <<State>> <<Zip>>

Dear <<Elder Name>>,

After conducting a needs assessment among ElderFriends elder participants that indicated a real need for grocery assistance, we are pleased to announce a <u>pilot program</u> benefiting ElderFriends elder participants through our partnership with Henrico Area Mental Health & Mental Retardation Day Services Program and Ukrop's Super Markets.

Here is how it works:
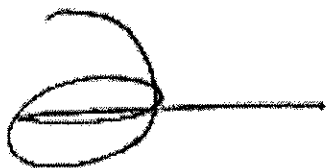**Ukrop's** will:
    Assist you with the purchasing of gift cards and funds exchange. Neither ElderFriends nor Henrico Mental Health Day Services are able to administer funds transactions for you. Only gift cards can be used for grocery runs. Ukrop's will work with you to obtain these cards.

Henrico Area Mental Health Mental Retardation Day Services Program will:
    Set up a day and time of the week to have grocery shopping done
    Call on the prearranged date to confirm shopping day and time
    Provide their volunteers to pick up your grocery list and gift card from your home
    Drive to the nearest Ukrop's and shop for you
    Return to your home, delivering your groceries and gift card and your receipt indicating purchase amount and remaining gift card balance

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