

Local Alternative Assessments: Civics in Action

Academic Matters - June 2026

Fairfax County PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ENGAGE • INSPIRE • THRIVE

VDOE School Division of Innovation (SDI)

- FCPS is in the fifth year of the School Division of Innovation Award from the Virginia Board of Education, which recognizes FCPS' work to lead transformative innovation in the Commonwealth.
- FCPS is among Virginia school divisions that are recognized for designing and implementing alternatives to traditional assessment practices to improve student learning and promote college and career readiness and good citizenship.

SDI Goals - Assessment Innovation

1. **Flexibilities for local alternative assessments** in lieu of SOL tests in Grade 4 Virginia Studies and Grade 8 Civics/Economics, as allowed by the state
2. **Performance assessments** in high school to satisfy state Social Studies and Writing verified credit requirements
3. **Presentations of Learning (POG POL)** as a guarantor of equitable access, opportunity, and outcomes

Alternative Assessments for Depth and Rigor

Local Alternative Assessments (LAA):

- **Ongoing Measurement:** Measures all standards and skills throughout the year, unlike end-of-year SOL tests.
- **Dual Focus:** Evaluates both student knowledge and its practical application.
- **Real-World Relevance:** Emphasizes authentic, real-world problem solving.
- **Alignment:** Aligns with VDOE skills and FCPS' Portrait of a Graduate.
- **Balanced Approach:** Mixes traditional and performance-based assessments (PBA).

Benefits of LAAs:

check_circle **Continuous Growth:** Demonstrate understanding consistently throughout the academic year.

trending_up **Realistic Progress:** Captures a more accurate picture of student progress and long-term growth.

psychology **Future-Ready Skills:** Dedicated time to sharpen critical and creative thinking essential for success.

Alternative Assessments

Elementary and Middle School

psychology FCPS' School Division of Innovation designation provides a state waiver for Local Alternative Assessments (LAAs) to be used in place of SOLs for Grade 4 Virginia Studies and Grade 8 Civics/Economics.

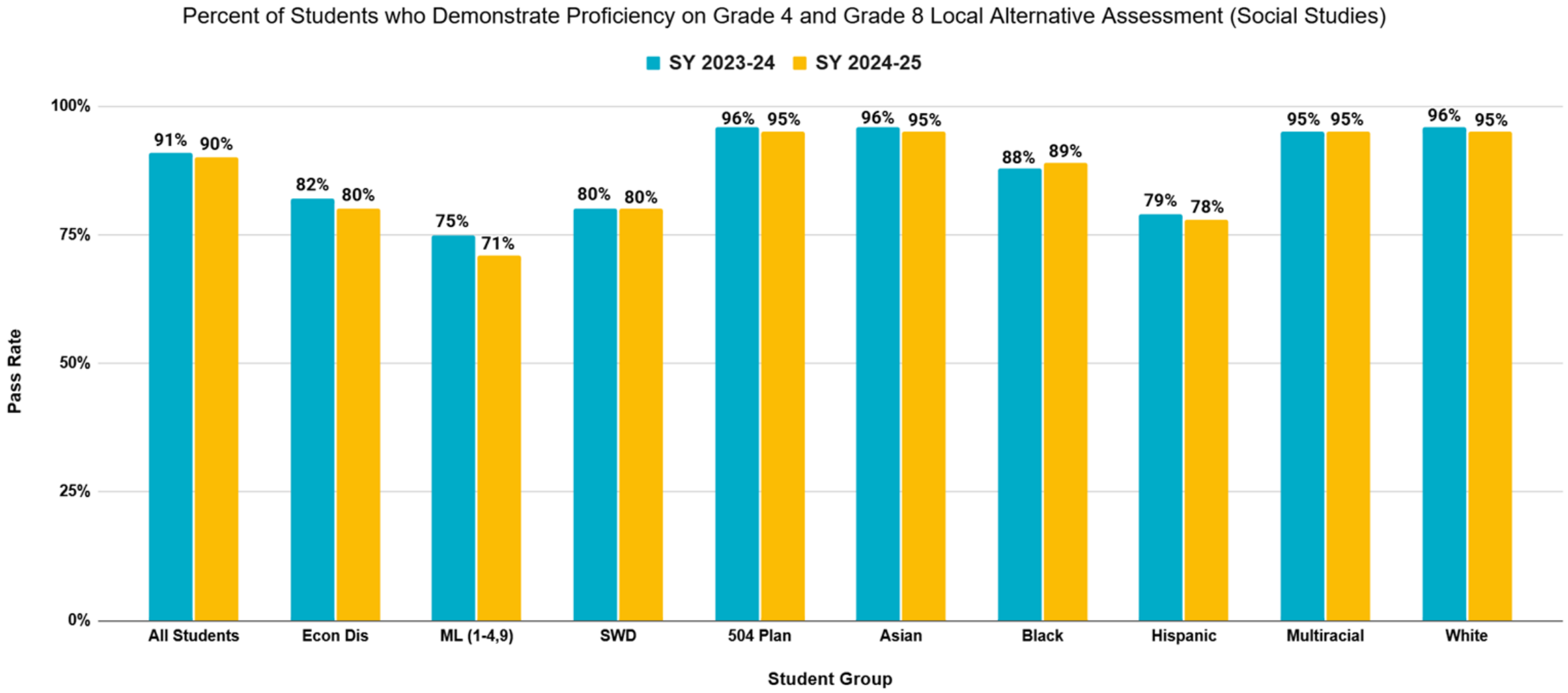
- Division-published performance-based assessment (PBA) aligned to the Virginia Quality Criteria Tool
- Scoring calibration across teachers using a state-developed rubric
- All essential standards are taught and assessed throughout the year
- Principals certify that teams with removed SOL tests fulfilled the LAA requirements

High School

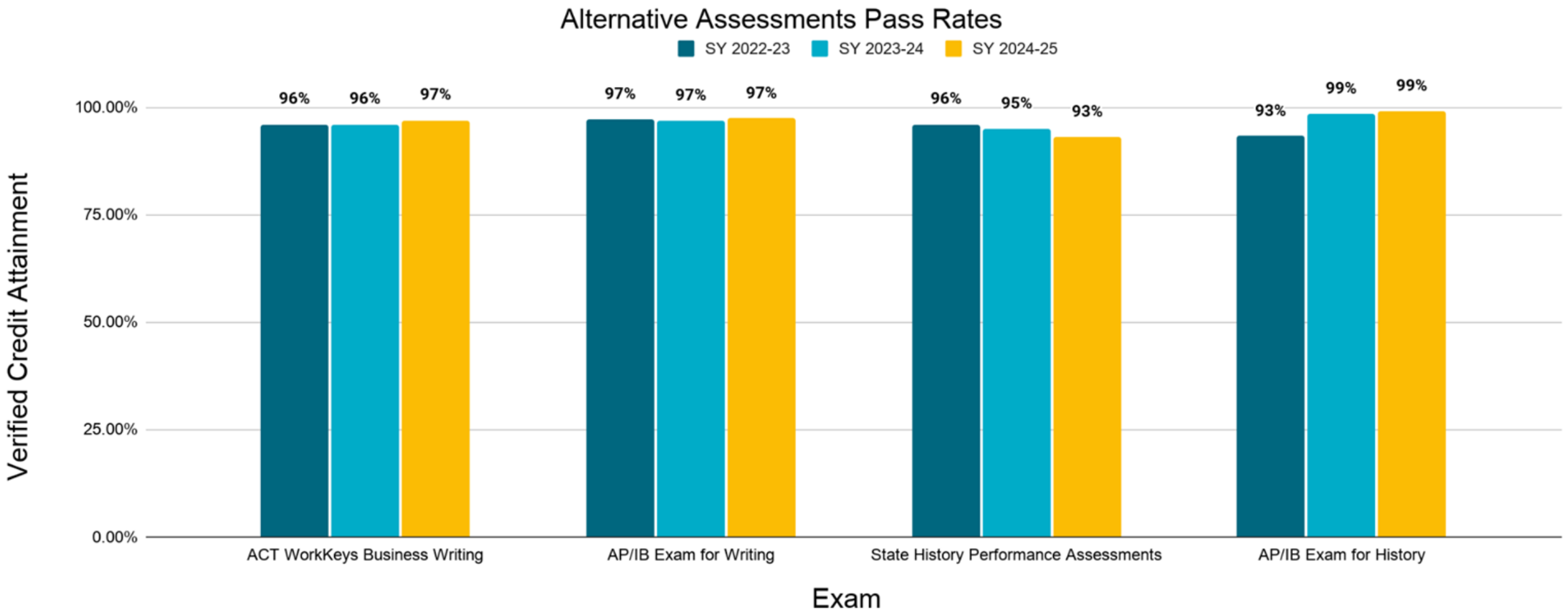
school VDOE allows students to use a variety of ways to show mastery of state standards in writing and history/social sciences.

- Flexibility for rigorous and relevant assessments
- Supports access to advanced coursework
- Provides equitable opportunities for students to receive locally awarded verified credit (LAVC)
- Due to use of rigorous alternative options, low participation numbers on SOL writing and history/social sciences tests do not reflect FCPS student performance

Grade 4 and Grade 8 LAA Proficiency



High School Alternative Assessment Proficiency



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SOL v. Alternative Assessment Participation

- Few FCPS students participate in the End of Course Writing and History SOLs
- Most FCPS students satisfy the SOL requirements for graduation in Writing and History via alternative assessments (e.g., AP, IB tests)
- Reasoning for Students Taking SOLs over Alternative Assessments:
  - Student may not have not produced sufficient evidence of learning on the required alternative assessments
  - May have transferred into FCPS with a need to complete the SOL exam
  - Testing accommodations not approved by AP or IB exams

