

2008-2009 SCHOOL YEAR



Virginia's accountability system supports teaching and learning by setting rigorous academic standards, known as the Standards of Learning (SOL), and through annual assessments of student achievement. The accountability system is part of a statewide program of support for the commonwealth's public schools and school divisions.

Schools receive two annual accountability ratings based on the performance of students on SOL tests and other statewide assessments.

A school's state accreditation rating reflects overall achievement in English, history/social science, mathematics and science. Schools in which students meet or exceed achievement benchmarks established by the Virginia Board of Education in these four major content areas are rated as Fully Accredited.

Schools and school divisions are also rated according to the progress they are making toward the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). This federal law requires states to set annual achievement benchmarks in reading and mathematics leading to an objective of 100 percent proficiency by 2014. Schools and school divisions that meet or exceed all annual benchmarks toward this goal are rated as having made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). States also receive AYP ratings.

While accreditation ratings are based on overall student achievement in all major content areas, AYP ratings are based on overall achievement and achievement by student subgroups in reading and mathematics.

ACCREDITATION: HIGH STANDARDS FOR LEARNING & ACHIEVEMENT

School accreditation ratings reflect student achievement on SOL assessments and the other statewide tests in English, history/social science, mathematics and science that constitute the Virginia Assessment Program. Ratings are based on the achievement of students on tests taken during the previous academic year and may also reflect a three-year average of achievement. Adjustments also may be made for students with limited English proficiency and for students who have recently transferred into a Virginia public school. Accreditation ratings also may reflect the success of a school in preparing students for retakes of SOL tests. Schools receive one of the following ratings:

FULLY ACCREDITED

High schools and middle schools are **Fully Accredited** if students achieve adjusted pass rates of 70 percent or above in all four content areas. A combined adjusted pass rate of at least 75 percent on English tests in grades 3-5 is required for full accreditation at the elementary school level and for other schools with students in these grades. Elementary schools also must achieve an adjusted pass rate of at least 70 percent in mathematics and in grade 5 science and Virginia Studies (administered in grade 4 or 5), and pass rates of at least 50 percent in grade 3 science and grade 3 history.

ACCREDITED WITH WARNING

A school receives this rating if adjusted pass rates are below the achievement levels required for full accreditation. A school may hold this rating for no more than three consecutive years. Schools that are **Accredited with Warning** undergo academic reviews and are required to adopt and implement school improvement plans. Schools that are warned in English and/or mathematics also are required to adopt instructional programs proven by research to be effective in raising achievement in these subjects.

ACCREDITATION DENIED

A school is denied accreditation if it fails to meet the requirements to be rated Fully Accredited for four consecutive years. Schools that have **Accreditation Denied** are subject to corrective actions prescribed by the Board of Education and agreed to by the local school board through a signed memorandum of understanding.

A school board must submit a corrective action plan to the Board of Education - within 45 days of receiving notice of a school being denied accreditation - describing the steps to be taken to raise achievement to state standards. The Board of Education will consider the plan in developing the memorandum of understanding, which must be in force by November 1 of the year for which the school has been denied accreditation.

In any school division in which one-third or more of the schools have been rated Accreditation Denied, the superintendent shall be evaluated by the local school board, which must submit a copy of the evaluation to the Board of Education by December 1 of the year for which the rating applies. In addition, the Board of Education may take action against the local school board, as permitted by the Standards of Quality, due to the failure of the local board to maintain accredited schools.

Any school denied accreditation must provide the following to parents and other interested parties:

- ◆ Written notice of the school's accreditation rating within 30 calendar days of the announcement of the rating by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE);
- ◆ A copy of the school division's proposed corrective action plan, including a timeline for implementation, to improve the school's accreditation rating; and
- ◆ An opportunity to comment on the division's proposed corrective action plan prior to its adoption and the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the local school board and the Board of Education.

ACCREDITATION BENCHMARKS (ADJUSTED PASS RATES)

| <i>Subject</i> | <i>Grade 3</i> | <i>Grade 4-5</i> | <i>Grades 6-12</i> |
|----------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|
| English | 75% | 75% | 70% |
| Mathematics | 70% | 70% | 70% |
| Science | 50% | 70% | 70% |
| History | 50% | 70% | 70% |

ACCREDITATION ADJUSTMENTS

REMEDICATION & RETESTING

Virginia's accountability system recognizes successful remediation programs that help students achieve minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics in all tested grades. Schools are credited for successful remedial instruction when students pass tests in content areas in which they failed assessments during the previous year. If a student fails a test required for graduation and successfully retests during the same school year, the first test does not count for accreditation.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

In kindergarten through grade 8, Limited English Proficient (LEP) students may be granted a one-time exemption from testing in history/social science, science and writing based on the judgment of a school-based committee. The scores of LEP students enrolled in Virginia public schools for fewer than 11 semesters may be excluded from the calculation of accreditation ratings.

TRANSFER STUDENTS

The scores of students transferring within a Virginia school division are included in the calculation of accreditation ratings. Students transferring into a school from another Virginia school division, another state or from a private or home school are expected to take the assessments for the content areas in which they received instruction. If a transfer occurs after the 20th day or the 20th hour of instruction in a course for which there is an end-of-course test, the achievement of the student may be excluded from the calculation of accreditation.

The local school board must submit status reports detailing the implementation of actions prescribed in the memorandum of understanding. The school principal, division superintendent and the chairman of the local school board may be required to appear before the Board of Education to present status reports.

As an alternative to the memorandum of understanding, a local school board may choose to reconstitute a school rated Accreditation Denied and apply to the Board of Education for a rating of Conditionally Accredited.

CONDITIONALLY ACCREDITED

New schools comprising of students who previously attended one or more existing schools are awarded this status for one year pending an evaluation of the performance of students on SOL tests and other statewide assessments. This rating may also be awarded to a school that is being reconstituted. A school rated as **Conditionally Accredited** following reconstitution will revert to a status of Accreditation Denied if it fails to meet the requirements for full accreditation by the end of the agreed-upon term, or if it fails to have its annual application for such rating renewed.

ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS: VIRGINIA & NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

NCLB IN BRIEF

- ◆ NCLB requires annual testing in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school to measure student progress in reading and mathematics.
- ◆ NCLB requires all students to be proficient in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014.
- ◆ NCLB requires schools, school divisions and states to meet annual objectives for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for student performance on statewide tests in reading and mathematics.
- ◆ NCLB requires the identification of states, schools and school divisions making and not making AYP.

Key Point: For a school, school division or the commonwealth to make AYP, it must meet or exceed 29 benchmarks for participation in statewide testing, achievement in reading and mathematics, and attendance, science, writing and history/social science for elementary and middle schools or graduation for high schools. Missing a single benchmark may result in a school or school division not making AYP.

ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

The yearly achievement benchmarks in reading and mathematics established by the Board of Education as part of Virginia's implementation of NCLB are known as Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs).

The tables on the following page show Virginia's AMOs for reading and mathematics. For a school or school division to have made AYP (based on achievement during 2007-2008) at least 77 percent of students overall and students in each subgroup must have demonstrated proficiency in reading and at least 75 percent of students overall and students in each subgroup must have demonstrated proficiency in mathematics.

KEEP IN MIND

- ◆ A school that does not achieve AYP is not necessarily a "failing" school. A more balanced and accurate assessment of a school's overall performance can be determined by comparing the number of AMOs that a school met with the total number of AMOs.
- ◆ Virginia is a national leader in implementing high academic standards and measures to hold schools accountable for achievement through objective testing.

AYP: ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES FOR READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS

| 2001-2002 | 2002-2003 | 2003-2004 | 2004-2005 | 2005-2006 | 2006-2007 | 2007-2008 | 2008-2009 | 2009-2010 | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| STARTING POINT 60.7 | 61.0 | 61.0 | 65.0 | 69.0 | 73.0 | 77.0 | 81.0 | 85.0 | 89.0 | 93.0 | 97.0 | GOAL 100% |

AYP: ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES FOR MATHEMATICS

| 2001-2002 | 2002-2003 | 2003-2004 | 2004-2005 | 2005-2006 | 2006-2007 | 2007-2008 | 2008-2009 | 2009-2010 | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 | 2012-2013 | 2013-2014 |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| STARTING POINT 58.4 | 59.0 | 59.0 | 63.0 | 67.0 | 71.0 | 75.0 | 79.0 | 83.0 | 87.0 | 91.0 | 95.0 | GOAL 100% |

NOTE: AYP ratings for the 2008-2009 school year are based on achievement on tests administered during 2007-2008 or on average achievement during the three most recent school years. Achievement must equal or exceed the Annual Measurable Objective shaded above.

AYP PARTICIPATION

NCLB requires a minimum of 95 percent participation of all students and all subgroups of students in the statewide assessment program at the school, division and state levels. If participation overall or in one or more subgroups is below 95 percent, a school or school division is not considered to have made AYP regardless of the percentage of students who demonstrate proficiency. Virginia uses up to three years of achievement data in calculating AYP to compensate for expected year-to-year fluctuations in achievement. Students with disabilities assessed through the Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP), or with non-standard accommodations, are not counted in calculating participation percentages for AYP.

AYP & STUDENT SUBGROUPS

AYP applies to all students and to these subgroups:

- ◆ Students with disabilities
- ◆ LEP students
- ◆ Economically disadvantaged students
- ◆ White students
- ◆ Black students
- ◆ Hispanic students

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

NCLB includes a one percent cap on the percentage of test takers in the state who may be counted as proficient based on alternate assessments for students with disabilities.

Virginia also is allowed to use a proxy percentage to represent the number of students with disabilities who would have demonstrated proficiency on modified reading and mathematics assessments during 2007-2008 had such assessments been available. The proxy percentage (14 percent for reading and 16 percent for mathematics) is added to the pass rates of students with disabilities for schools and divisions that otherwise would not make AYP solely because of the achievement of disabled students. The proxy also is applied at the state level.

LEP STUDENTS

LEP students in their first year of enrollment in a public school who do not pass their reading or math tests are counted as participating in Virginia's assessment system but their scores are not used in calculating AYP. LEP students at the lowest levels of English proficiency may be assessed with the Virginia Grade Level Alternative for reading.

OTHER ACADEMIC INDICATORS REQUIRED UNDER NCLB

In addition to the annual benchmarks in reading and mathematics, Virginia schools and school divisions must also meet annual objectives for progress on other indicators of academic achievement. These “Other Academic Indicators” include attendance, science, writing, history/social science and graduation.

Elementary and middle schools select prior to the start of the school year one of the following for the other academic indicator:

- ◆ Attendance
- ◆ Science
- ◆ Writing
- ◆ History/Social Science

High schools and other schools with a graduating class use the following as the other academic indicator:

- ◆ Graduation

School divisions must meet objectives for progress for graduation **AND for one of the following** other academic indicators, selected before the beginning of the school year:

- ◆ Attendance
- ◆ Science
- ◆ Writing
- ◆ History/Social Science

Virginia’s interim objective for high school graduation is 61 percent. Now that longitudinal, student-level data are available, the Board of Education will establish benchmark graduation rates for 2008-2009 and beyond. The 2007-2008 benchmark for attendance is 94 percent and the 2007-2008 benchmark for science, writing and history achievement is 70 percent.

RETAKE OF END-OF-COURSE TESTS

The achievement of students on all retakes of end-of-course assessments in reading and mathematics will be included in the calculation of AYP ratings. If a student fails a test required for graduation and successfully retests during the same school year, the first test does not count in calculating AYP.

SAFE HARBOR

Another way for a school, school division or the state to make AYP is through “safe harbor.” Safe harbor recognizes improvements in teaching and learning that reduce the failure rate of students in a subgroup by at least 10 percent - even if the AMO was not met. However, subgroups making AYP through safe harbor must also meet the objective or show improvement on the school or division’s other academic indicator(s).

TITLE I SCHOOLS

A Title I school is a school that receives federal funds to help children in high-poverty areas who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. Title I funding is based on the number of low-income children in a school, generally those eligible for free lunch or reduced-fee lunch programs. Some Title I schools have federally funded programs for a select group of qualifying students. These schools are known as targeted-assistance schools. Title I schools in which 40 percent or more students qualify for services are referred to as having schoolwide programs. The following accountability ratings and actions apply to Title I schools in improvement:

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE: YEAR ONE

Title I Schools that do not make AYP for two consecutive years in the same subject area are identified for improvement and must notify parents of their status prior to the beginning of the school year. These schools must offer students the opportunity to transfer to a school within the division that is not identified for improvement. Lowest-achieving students receive priority in the awarding of transfers. Schools in year one of improvement also must develop and implement a two-year school improvement plan.

A Title I school in its first year of improvement that makes AYP is held in first-year improvement status. A school identified for improvement exits improvement status by making AYP for two consecutive years.

Note: Title I schools approved by the U.S. Department of Education to participate in a pilot program may offer supplemental educational services instead of public school choice during the first year of school improvement.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES & PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE: YEAR TWO

A Title I school identified for improvement that does not make AYP for a third consecutive year in the same subject area enters the second year of improvement. A school in its second year of improvement must notify parents of its status and continue to offer public school choice. In addition, a school in its second year of improvement must offer supplemental educational services to low-achieving students. Low-income students receive priority for supplemental educational services.

A Title I school in its second year of improvement that makes AYP remains in second-year improvement status.

CORRECTIVE ACTION: YEAR THREE

School divisions must take corrective action to raise achievement in Title I schools in the third year of school improvement status. These schools must continue to offer public school choice and supplemental services and school divisions must take at least one of the following corrective actions:

- ◆ Replace school staff deemed relevant to the failure to make AYP
- ◆ Implement a new curriculum shown by research as effective in raising achievement
- ◆ Decrease the authority of school-level management
- ◆ Appoint an outside expert to advise the school on the implementation plan developed during the first year of school improvement
- ◆ Extend the school year or school day
- ◆ Restructure the internal organization of the school

A Title I school in its third year of improvement that makes AYP remains in third-year improvement status.

RESTRUCTURING (PLANNING): YEAR FOUR

School divisions must develop restructuring/alternative governance plans for Title I schools that move into year four of school improvement status. Schools in year four of Title I school improvement must also:

- ◆ Continue to provide public school choice
- ◆ Continue to offer supplemental educational services
- ◆ Continue to take the corrective action selected in year three
- ◆ Prepare a plan and make necessary arrangements for restructuring/alternative governance of the school

Restructuring/alternative governance would be implemented if the school again does not make AYP in the same subject area based on tests taken by students during 2007-2008 and moves into year five of improvement status.

A Title I school in its fourth year of improvement that makes AYP remains in fourth-year improvement status.

RESTRUCTURING (IMPLEMENTATION): YEAR FIVE

Title I schools in year five of improvement and identified for restructuring/alternative governance must take one of the following actions:

- ◆ Reopen the school as a charter school
- ◆ Replace all or most of the school staff relevant to the school's failure to make adequate yearly progress
- ◆ Turn the management of the school over to a private educational management company or other entity with a demonstrated record of effectiveness
- ◆ Any other major restructuring of school governance

Note: If a Title I school in restructuring fails to make AYP, the school continues to implement its restructuring/alternative governance plan while receiving continued technical assistance from the school division and state.

NON-TITLE I SCHOOLS

Non-Title I schools are not subject to school-improvement sanctions under NCLB. Non-Title I schools in Virginia that do not make AYP for three or more consecutive years must continue to analyze data and implement corrective actions as specified by the school division.

SCHOOL DIVISIONS IN IMPROVEMENT

School divisions that do not make AYP in the same subject area across all grade spans for two consecutive years must develop and implement improvement plans within three months of identification. NCLB requires that school division improvement plans include:

- ◆ Scientifically based strategies and best practices for raising student achievement
- ◆ Professional development for faculty and instructional staff
- ◆ Specific achievement goals for subgroups not making AYP
- ◆ Identification of impediments to higher achievement by low-performing students
- ◆ Strategies to promote parental involvement
- ◆ Student learning activities, as appropriate, before school, after school or during the summer
- ◆ Fiscal responsibilities of the school division and the technical assistance needed

ACCOUNTABILITY TERMINOLOGY

Academic review - A process for helping schools and school divisions identify and analyze instructional and organizational factors affecting student achievement

Academic review team - A team that conducts an academic review

Accreditation Denied - Accreditation rating given to a school when students achieve adjusted pass rates below those required to earn the Fully Accredited rating for the current year as well as the preceding three consecutive years

Accredited with Warning - Accreditation rating given to a school when students achieve adjusted pass rates below those required to meet the Fully Accredited rating. The rating includes the subject area(s) in which the school is deficient (for example, Accredited with Warning in English.) A school can receive the Accredited with Warning classification no more than three consecutive years.

Achievement gap - Differences in academic performance among student groups

Adjusted pass rate - In calculating accreditation ratings, allowances are made for certain transfer students, students who speak little or no English and students who pass retakes of tests after receiving remedial instruction. These allowances result in adjusted pass rates which are used to determine accreditation ratings.

AYP - Adequate Yearly Progress represents the minimum level of improvement that schools and school divisions must achieve each year as determined by NCLB.

Alignment - The correlation between Virginia's SOL, what is taught in the classroom and what appears on the SOL tests. Curriculum alignment ensures that students are taught the material subject to testing.

Alternative assessments - Students enrolled in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs may substitute assessments associated with these courses for SOL tests. Students with disabilities may

be tested through the Virginia Alternative Assessment Program (VAAP) or the Virginia Grade-Level Alternative (VGLA) depending on the nature of the disability. Limited English Proficiency students at the lowest levels of English proficiency may also be tested using the VGLA.

AMOs - Annual Measurable Objectives are the minimum required percentages of students determined to be proficient in each content area

Assessment - A test or other method for measuring achievement

Conditionally Accredited - Accreditation rating given to a new school for one year in order to allow for tests to be given. This rating may also be given to a school that is being reconstituted.

Corrective action plan - A plan outlining methods to improve teaching, administration or curriculum that a school or school division classified as "in improvement" undertakes to improve student achievement

Disaggregated data - Test results sorted by groups of students. Groups include students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic groups, have special education needs, or have limited English proficiency. Disaggregated data allow parents and educators to see more than just the average score for a student's school - it also shows how each student group is performing.

ESEA - Elementary and Secondary Education Act is the primary federal law affecting K-12 education. Congress reauthorizes it every six years. The most recent authorization is also referred to as the NCLB Act, approved by Congress in 2001 and signed into law by President George W. Bush in January 2002.

Expedited retake - A SOL test taken during the same academic year, and before the next scheduled test administration, by a student who, on his first attempt, scored within 25 points of passing or has exceptional or mitigating circumstances

Fully Accredited - The accreditation rating earned by a school when students achieve an adjusted pass rate of 75 percent in third-grade and fifth-grade English, 70 percent in mathematics and 50 percent in third-grade science and history/social science. Otherwise, the student results must meet the adjusted pass rate of 70 percent in each of the four core academic areas - English, mathematics, history/social science.

Graduation rate - Graduation rates for high schools and school divisions reported on the Virginia School Report Card include all recipients of any type of certificate or diploma (as well as students who have dropped out of or transferred into a high school) in the denominator and only those students receiving a Standard Diploma or Advanced Studies Diploma (excluding students receiving a Special Diploma, Modified Standard Diploma, Certificate of Attendance or GED certificate) in the standard number of years in the numerator.

Inclusion - The practice of placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms

In improvement - If a Title I school or a school division does not make AYP in the same subject area for two years in a row, the school or division is considered to be “in improvement” and is required under NCLB to take certain actions to raise achievement.

Instruction - The methods teachers use to teach students. These methods include lecture, discussion, hands-on activity, exercise, experiment, role-playing, small group work and writing assessment.

LEA - Local Education Agency is the term used by the federal education law to describe a local school division.

LEP - Limited English Proficient refers to students for whom English is a second language and who are not reading or writing English at their grade level.

NCLB - No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was signed into law by President Bush in 2002

Other academic indicator - For AYP calculations, in addition to meeting AMOs in reading and mathematics, elementary and middle schools must also meet AMOs for attendance, science, writing or history, and high schools must also meet AMOs for

graduation, or show improvement. School divisions must decide prior to the beginning of the school year whether to use attendance, science, writing or history as the AMO for elementary and middle schools.

Parental involvement - The participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving students’ academic learning and other school activities. The involvement includes ensuring that parents play an integral role in their child’s learning; that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school; that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees. Parental involvement is one of the components of NCLB.

Public school choice - See “Transfer Option”

Reconstitution - A process that may be used to initiate a range of accountability actions to improve pupil performance, curriculum and instruction to address deficiencies that caused a school to be rated Accreditation Denied which may include, but is not limited to, restructuring a school’s governance, instructional program, staff or student population

Restructuring/Alternative governance - For Title I schools that move into year four of school improvement, this may include reopening the school as a charter school, replacing staff relevant to the school’s failure to make progress, or turning the management of the school over to a private educational management company with a demonstrated record of effectiveness

Safe harbor - A provision of NCLB intended for schools and school divisions that are making progress in raising student achievement but not yet meeting target goals for AYP

SEA - State Education Agency refers to the Virginia Board of Education, which is responsible for the general supervision of a state’s public elementary and secondary schools.

SIP - School Improvement Plan outlines the improvement strategies and steps that a school will utilize to raise student achievement. A plan may involve new programs, more assistance for students, new curricula, and/or teacher training.

Scientifically based research - Research that involves the application of rigorous, systemic and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge regarding the effectiveness of educational activities and programs

Substitute Tests - Virginia allows high school students to use nationally recognized assessments such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and SAT II subject tests as substitutes for the related Standards of Learning tests. All Board of Education-approved substitute tests measure content that incorporates or exceeds the related Standards of Learning content.

- ◆ For AYP purposes, AP and IB tests are counted in the same way as all other state assessments.
- ◆ For accreditation, all board-approved substitute assessments are included.

Supplemental services - Students in a Title I school identified as needing improvement for two consecutive years are eligible to receive outside tutoring. Parents can choose the appropriate services for their child from a list of state-approved providers. The school division must pay for the services.

SOL - Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools describe the commonwealth's expectations for student learning and achievement in grades K-12 in English, mathematics, science, history/social science, technology, the fine arts, foreign language, health and physical education and driver education.

Title I - Federal-funding program designed to help low-income children who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. Title I funding is based on the number of low-income children in a school, generally those eligible for free lunch or reduced-fee lunch programs.

Transfer option - Also referred to as "Public School Choice." Students in Title I schools identified as needing improvement have to provide the option for students to transfer within the division to a school that has made AYP. The school division is required to provide transportation to those students.

VAAP - Virginia Alternate Assessment Program is designed to evaluate the performance of students with significant cognitive disabilities. The VAAP is available to students in grades 3 through 8 and students in grade 11 who are working on academic standards that have been reduced in complexity and depth. Students participating in the VAAP must compile a collection of work samples to demonstrate performance on the SOL content for which they have received instruction.

VGLA - Virginia Grade Level Alternative is available for some students with disabilities and LEP students in grades 3-8 as an alternative assessment for SOL testing. Students who qualify to participate in the VGLA are required to demonstrate grade-level achievement through a collection of student work in the content area. Eligible LEP students are those at level 1 or level 2 of English language proficiency.

VSEP - Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program is an alternative method of assessing students who by the nature of their disability are unable to participate in the regular SOL assessments even with testing accommodations. Students participating in the VSEP are expected to provide evidence of achievement through a compilation of coursework.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING SCHOOLS RECEIVING “ACCREDITATION DENIED” STATUS

What does it mean if my child’s school receives an Accreditation Denied rating?

Public schools in Virginia receive an accreditation rating each year based on results of tests given during the previous school year. For example, the accreditation rating for school year 2008-2009 is based on the results of tests given during the 2007-2008 school year.

Schools receive the rating of Accreditation Denied when students fail to achieve adjusted pass rates to meet the full accreditation rating for the current year as well as the preceding three consecutive years. The Fully Accredited rating means that students in the school achieved an adjusted pass rate of 75 percent in third-grade through fifth-grade English, 70 percent in mathematics and 50 percent in third-grade science and history/social science. Otherwise, the student results must meet the pass rate of 70 percent in each of the four core academic areas - English, mathematics, history/social science and science.

If my child’s school is denied accreditation, does that mean my child is not getting a good education?

Accreditation ratings reflect overall achievement, not the performance or learning of individual students. As a parent, you also should consider your child’s individual achievement on SOL tests, classroom grades and other measures of learning and performance in assessing the quality of the education your children are receiving.

If my child’s school is denied accreditation, does that mean the state is going to take over my child’s school?

The Virginia constitution acknowledges the state’s leadership role in establishing overall policy and in providing direction, financial assistance and technical and advisory services related to public schools while preserving local initiative and autonomy. Through the General Assembly, Virginia mandates standards for public schools; through the Virginia Board of Education, it supervises the operation of the public school system. Application

of these state standards and policies, as well as the daily management of public schools, however, remains the responsibility of the localities.

Because the state constitution gives local school boards the responsibility of the day-to-day operations of schools within a division, the Virginia Department of Education or the Board of Education cannot “take over” a public school.

If my child’s school receives an Accreditation Denied rating, what will happen?

The school receiving an Accreditation Denied rating must provide parents of the enrolled students:

- ◆ within 30 days, written notice of the school’s accreditation rating
- ◆ a copy of the school division’s proposed corrective action plan that includes a timeline for implementation
- ◆ an opportunity for public comment on the proposed corrective action plan

After considering public comment, the school division will finalize the school’s corrective action plan. Then the local school board and the Board of Education will sign a memorandum of understanding on or before November 1.

The memorandum of understanding may include, but is not limited to:

- ◆ an educational service delivery and management review approved by the Board of Education
- ◆ employing an approved turnaround specialist to address conditions preventing educational progress, effectiveness and academic success

In addition to the memorandum of understanding, the local school board will submit periodic status reports - signed by the school principal, division superintendent and local school board chair - to the Board of Education.

A school division having one or more schools with an Accreditation Denied rating will be required to submit a report to the Board of Education on or before October 1 that will contain information on each school's progress toward meeting the Fully Accredited requirements. The Board of Education will include the reports in its annual report to the governor and General Assembly on the condition and needs of public education to the governor and the General Assembly on November 15.

If a school division has one-third or more of its schools rated Accreditation Denied, the local school board must evaluate the superintendent and submit a copy of the evaluation to the Board of Education by December 1. In addition, the Board of Education may take action against the local school board, as permitted by the Standards of Quality, for failure to maintain accredited schools.

Are there any other options if my child's school is denied accreditation?

A local school board may choose to close the school, combine the school with a higher performing school in the division or reconstitute a school. Reconstitution is "a process that may be used to initiate a range of accountability actions to improve pupil performance, curriculum and instruction to address deficiencies that caused a school to be rated Accreditation Denied which may include, but not be limited to, restructuring a school's governance, instructional program, staff or student population."

If a local school board chooses to reconstitute a school, the local school board may apply to the Board of Education for a rating of Conditionally Accredited. The application must outline specific responses to all areas of deficiency.

For a reconstituted school, the local school board may apply annually for a Conditionally Accredited rating for no more than three years if the school is making progress toward a rating of Fully Accredited and meeting the terms of the Board of Education's reconstitution application.

However, the school will receive an Accreditation Denied rating if it fails to meet the requirements to be rated Fully Accredited after three years or if it fails to have its annual application renewed.

Is the staff at my child's school going to be replaced because of the Accreditation Denied rating?

There may be some personnel changes in your child's school, but that decision will be made by the local school division. School staffing is the responsibility of the local school board.

What happens if my child's school closes?

Your child will continue to receive a public school education, but at a different school. Your local school division will be able to tell you where your child will be attending school.

Can I request a transfer for my child to a school that is Fully Accredited?

You would need to contact your child's school division and ask about local policies regarding your request to transfer.

What can I, as a parent, do if I receive notification that my child's school is denied accreditation?

Talk with your child's teacher to see what you can do to help increase or maintain your child's academic level. Attend any meetings held by the PTA, local school officials or division officials concerning your child's school. Share your comments and concerns with your school officials and local school board.

If my child's high school is not Fully Accredited, will that impact my child's ability to get into college?

The accreditation status of a high school does not appear on your child's transcripts that are provided to colleges, universities or employers. Your child's diploma is recognized as equal to any other Virginia diploma of the same type, regardless of the school's accreditation status.

Colleges and universities look at a variety of factors such as SAT or ACT results, individual SOL test results, types of courses and rigor of courses taken in high school, grade-point average and class ranking when making acceptance decisions.