


2011-2012 SCHOOL YEAR

irginia'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. 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. In addition, high schools, beginning with accreditation ratings for the 2011-2012 school year, must meet a minimum benchmark for graduation and completion. Schools in which students meet or exceed all achievement objectives established by the Virginia Board of Education are rated as "fully accredited."
- A school's federal "**Adequate Yearly Progress**" (AYP) rating indicates the progress being made toward the goals of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This federal law requires states to set annual achievement benchmarks in reading and mathematics leading to 100 percent proficiency by 2014. The law also requires testing in science at least once in elementary, middle and high school. Schools and school divisions that meet or exceed all annual benchmarks are rated as having made AYP. States also receive AYP ratings.

While state 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, primarily in reading and mathematics.

Revised July 1, 2011

Accreditation: High Standards for Learning & Achievement

School accreditation ratings reflect student achievement on SOL tests and other approved assessments in English, history/social science, mathematics and science. Ratings are based on the achievement of students on tests taken during the previous academic year or may reflect a three-year average of achievement. Schools receive one of the following ratings:

Fully Accredited

Elementary schools are "fully accredited" if students achieve all of the following pass rates:

- English — 75 percent or higher, grades 3-5
- Mathematics — 70 percent or higher, grades 3-5
- Science — 70 percent or higher in grade 5 and 50 percent or higher in grade 3
- History — 70 percent or higher in Virginia Studies (grade 4 or 5) and 50 percent or higher in grade 3

Middle schools are fully accredited if students achieve pass rates of 70 percent or higher in all four content areas.

High schools are fully accredited if students achieve pass rates of 70 percent or more in all four content areas and attain a point value of 85 or greater based on the **Graduation and Completion Index** (GCI). (*see page 2*)

Flexibility for High-Performing Schools

Virginia's accountability system allows schools that maintain pass rates of 95 percent or greater in all four core academic areas for two consecutive years to apply for a waiver from annual accreditation. Schools awarded waivers are rated as fully accredited for a three-year period.

Provisionally Accredited-Graduation Rate

A high school or combined school with a graduating class receives a "provisionally accredited-graduation rate" rating if students achieve adjusted pass rates of 70 percent or more in all four content areas and a GCI of 80-84 points. Elementary and middle schools are not eligible for provisional accreditation.

Accredited with Warning

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

Graduation & Completion Index — New Accreditation Factor for High Schools

Accreditation ratings for 2011-2012 are the first to include a **Graduation and Completion Index (GCI)** for high schools. This new accountability measure was approved by the Board of Education in 2009. The GCI calculation awards full credit for students who earn a Board of Education-approved diploma and partial credit for other outcomes, as displayed in the table below. The GCI calculation comprises students in the cohort of expected on-time graduates (students who were first-time ninth graders four years ago, plus transfers in and minus transfers out) and “carryover” students from previous cohorts. A student earning a diploma who entered ninth grade for the first time five years ago is an example of a carryover student. Carryover students are included in annual GCI calculations until they graduate or otherwise leave school. Students with disabilities and limited-English proficient students are included in the GCI calculation when they earn a diploma, GED or certificate of completion; drop out or otherwise exit high school; or are no longer eligible for free public education services.

OUTCOME	POINT VALUE
Board-Recognized Diploma	100
GED	75
Still in School	70
Certificate of Program Completion	25
Dropout	0

The weighted index points are totaled and then divided by the total number of cohort students and carryover students who earned a credential or stayed in school, plus all cohort and carryover students who dropped out or left school without earning a credential. In the following example, the 80 students in a school earn a total of 7,155 points and achieve a GCI of 89.

OUTCOME	CALCULATION		RESULTS
	# of students	Point value	# of students x Point Value
Diplomas	66	100	6,600
GEDs	3	75	225
Certificates of Completions	2	25	50
Students still in school	4	70	280
Dropouts	5	0	0
TOTALS	80		7,155
GCI: $7,155 \div 80 = 89$			

A GCI of 85 is required for full accreditation. High schools with a GCI of 80-84 are eligible for a rating of provisionally accredited-graduation rate until 2015-2016, as shown in the following table.

PROVISIONAL ACCREDITATION BENCHMARKS		
Academic Year	Accreditation Year	Point Value
2010-2011	2011-2012	80
2011-2012	2012-2013	81
2012-2013	2013-2014	82
2013-2014	2014-2015	83
2014-2015	2015-2016	84

Schools earning a rating of provisionally accredited-graduation rate must undergo an academic review. The provisionally accredited-graduation rate will not be awarded after 2015-2016.

High schools earning a GCI less than the provisional benchmark for the year are rated as accredited with warning.

In addition, high schools earning a GCI less than the provisional benchmark for the year are rated as accredited with warning.

Accreditation Denied

A school is rated “accreditation denied” if it fails to meet the requirements for full accreditation for four consecutive years.

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

- 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 describing the steps to be taken to raise achievement to state standards — 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.

The local school board — within 45 days of receiving notice of the status — must submit to the Board of Education the proposed corrective action plan. The Board of Education will consider the proposal and develop a memorandum of understanding with the local school board, which must be implemented by November 1. The local school board must submit status reports detailing the implementation of actions prescribed in the memorandum of understanding; and the principal, division superintendent and local school board chairman may be required to appear before the Board of Education to present status reports.

Additionally, in any school division where one-third or more of the schools have been denied accreditation, the local school board is required to evaluate the division superintendent and submit a copy of the evaluation to the Board of Education by December 1. The Board of Education may take action — as permitted by the Standards of Quality — against the local school board due to the failure of the local board to maintain accredited schools.

Conditionally Accredited

There are two types of “conditionally accredited” schools:

- “Conditionally accredited-new” is awarded for a one-year period to a new school — comprising students who previously attended one or more existing schools — to provide the opportunity to evaluate the performance of students on SOL tests and other statewide assessments.
- “Conditionally accredited-reconstituted” is awarded to a school that fails to meet full accreditation requirements for four consecutive years and receives permission from the Board of Education to reconstitute as an alternative to a memorandum of understanding. A reconstituted school reverts to accreditation-denied status if it fails to meet full accreditation requirements within the agreed-upon term, or if it fails to have its annual application for conditional accreditation renewed.

ACCREDITATION BENCHMARKS

(Adjusted Pass Rates)

Subject	Grade 3	Grade 4-5	Grades 6-12
English	75%	75%	70%
Mathematics	70%	70%	70%
Science	50%	70%	70%
History	50%	70%	70%

NOTE: Ratings for the 2011-2012 school year are based on achievement during 2010-2011 or on average achievement during the three most recent school years. Beginning with tests administered in 2011-2012, the minimum pass rate for English will rise to 75 percent for all grades and the pass rates

ACCREDITATION ADJUSTMENTS

A school's accreditation rating may reflect adjustments to pass rates resulting from successful remediation efforts and for the allowable exclusion of some Limited-English Proficient (LEP) students and transfer students.

Remediation & Retesting

Virginia's accountability system recognizes successful remediation programs that help students achieve minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics in all tested grades. A school is credited for successful remedial instruction when a student — who failed a particular content area assessment during the previous year — subsequently passes the content-area test. If a student fails a test required for graduation and successfully retests during the same school year, the result of the first test is not included in the accreditation calculation.

Limited-English Proficient Students

The scores of LEP students enrolled in Virginia public schools fewer than 11 semesters may be excluded from the accreditation rating calculations. While all LEP students are expected to participate in the state assessment program, a school-based committee determines the level of participation of each LEP student. In kindergarten through grade 8, the school-based committee may grant the student a one-time exemption from testing in writing (in grade 5 or 8), science (in grade 3 only) and history/social science (once during grades 3-8).

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, from a private school or students who have been home schooled are expected to take the assessments for the content areas in which they received instruction. Under limited circumstances as described in Board of Education regulations, the failing scores of some transfer students may be excluded from the accreditation calculation.

Adequate Yearly Progress: Virginia & the Elementary & Secondary Education Act

The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states to set annual objectives for increasing student achievement to ensure that all children have an opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. Schools, school divisions and states that meet these objectives make what federal law refers to as "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP).

ESEA in Brief

- ESEA requires annual testing in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school to measure student progress in reading and mathematics. The law also requires states to test all students in science at least once in elementary school, once in middle school and once in high school.
- ESEA requires schools, school divisions and states to meet annual AYP objectives for student performance on statewide tests in reading and mathematics.
- ESEA requires the identification of states, schools and school divisions making and not making AYP.
- ESEA requires all students to be proficient in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014.

For a school, a school division or the commonwealth to make AYP, it must meet or exceed 29 benchmarks for student achievement and participation in statewide testing. Missing a single benchmark may result in a school, a school division or the state not making AYP.

AYP — Annual Measurable Objectives

The reading and mathematics achievement benchmarks, established by the Board of Education as part of Virginia's implementation of ESEA, are known as Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO).

For a school, school division or the state to have made AYP, at least 86 percent of students overall and students in all AYP subgroups — white, black, Hispanic, limited English proficient (LEP), students with disabilities and economically disadvantaged — must have demonstrated proficiency on SOL and other assessments in reading, and 85 percent must have passed state tests in mathematics. AYP ratings for the 2011-2012 school year are based on achievement on tests administered during 2010-2011 or on average achievement during the three most recent school years.

Safe Harbor

Another way for a school, a 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.

Other Academic Indicators Required Under ESEA

In addition to the annual benchmarks in reading and mathematics, elementary and middle schools, school divisions and the state must meet annual objectives for attendance, science, writing and history/social science.

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
60.7	61.0	61.0	65.0	69.0	73.0	77.0	81.0	81.0	86	91	96	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
58.4	59.0	59.0	63.0	67.0	71.0	75.0	79.0	79.0	85	90	95	100

NOTE: AYP ratings for the 2011-2012 school year are based on student performance on tests administered during 2010-2011 or on average achievement during the three most recent school years. Achievement must equal or exceed the Annual Measurable Objective shaded above.

Prior to the start of the school year, elementary schools, middle schools and school divisions select one of the following as an “other academic indicator:”

- Attendance — the objective for attendance is 94 percent.
- Science — the objective for science achievement is 70 percent.
- Writing — the objective for writing achievement is 70 percent.
- History/Social Science — the objective for history/social science achievement is 70 percent.

The state must meet annual benchmarks for all of the academic indicators: attendance, science, writing and history/social science.

Federal Graduation Indicator

High schools, school divisions and the state also must meet annual objectives for the percentage of students who graduate with a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma. This AYP objective is known as the Federal Graduation Indicator to distinguish it from the Graduation and Completion Index (GCI), which includes all Board of Education-approved diplomas. The Federal Graduation Indicator excludes Modified Standard, Special and General Achievement diplomas because USED only recognizes Standard and Advanced Studies diplomas for accountability purposes.

A high school, school division and/or the state meets the federal graduation benchmark for AYP if one of the following is met:

- At least 80 percent of students graduate with Standard or Advanced Studies diplomas within four years, five years or six years of entering ninth grade for the first time; or
- The percentage of students not graduating within four years of entering the ninth grade is reduced by at least 10 percent.

To minimize annual variations in data impacting AYP determinations, Virginia will average graduation data over three years as permitted by ESEA. When more than one year of graduation data is available, averaging will be applied to the four-year, five-year and six-year Federal Graduation Indicator rates.

AYP — Participation in State Assessments

ESEA requires a minimum of 95 percent participation of all students and of students in all AYP subgroups in the statewide assessment program at the school, division and state levels. AYP applies to all students and to these subgroups:

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

NOTE: Asian students will be added as a subgroup for 2012-2013 AYP ratings (based on achievement during 2011-2012).

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 demonstrating proficiency.

Students with Disabilities

Virginia’s special education regulations require students with disabilities to participate in all state assessments.

Students with disabilities may take SOL tests (with or without special accommodations), or may be assessed through alternative grade-level tests.

Students with significant cognitive disabilities are assessed through an alternate test. ESEA, however, places a one-percent cap on the percentage of test takers in the state who may be counted as proficient based on the results of alternate assessments.

LEP Students

School-based LEP committees determine how LEP students participate in the state assessment program. ESEA allows a one-time exemption from testing in reading in grades 3-8 for LEP students who have attended school in the United States for less than 12 months. All LEP students must participate in mathematics assessments regardless of when they arrived in the country.

If a LEP student in his or her first year of enrollment is tested, the student is counted as participating in the state assessment program for AYP purposes. However, failing scores of tested LEP students in the first year of enrollment are not included in AYP calculations.

LEP students at the lowest levels of English proficiency may take an alternative grade-level assessment for reading and a plain-English version of the mathematics SOL test for up to three years.

Retakes of End-of-Course Tests

The achievement of students on all retakes of end-of-course assessments in reading and mathematics is 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.

Title I Schools

Title I schools receive federal funds under Title I of ESEA 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 or reduced-fee lunch programs. Some Title I schools provide supplemental federally funded instructional programs for qualifying students. These schools are known as targeted-assistance schools. Title I schools in which 40 percent or more students qualify for free or reduced-fee lunch may provide schoolwide programs. The following actions apply to Title I schools that do not make AYP for two or more consecutive years in the same subject area(s):

Public School Choice

A Title I school that does not make AYP for two consecutive years in the same subject area is identified for improvement and must notify parents of its status prior to the beginning of the school year. The school must offer all 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. The school must also develop and implement a school improvement plan.

Supplemental Educational Services & Public School Choice

A Title I school identified for improvement that does not make AYP the next year in the same subject area must notify parents of its status and continue to offer public school choice. In addition, the school must offer supplemental educational services to low-income students. If funds are insufficient to provide supplemental services to all students whose parents request tutoring, school divisions must give priority to the lowest-achieving eligible students.

NOTE: If granted a waiver by VDOE, a school may offer supplemental educational services during the first year of improvement instead of — or in addition to — public school choice.

Corrective Action

A school division must take corrective action to raise achievement in Title I schools in the third year of school improvement status. The school must continue to offer public school choice and supplemental services, and the school division 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

Restructuring (Planning)

A school division must develop a restructuring/ alternative governance plan for a Title I school that enters year four of school improvement status. A school in year four 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 in the event that the school does not make AYP the following year

Restructuring (Implementation)

A restructuring/alternative governance plan developed during year four is implemented if the school again does not make AYP in the same subject area and moves into year five of improvement status. The implemented plan must include 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 AYP
- 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 technical assistance from the school division and state.

Non-Title I Schools

Non-Title I schools in Virginia are not subject to school improvement sanctions under ESEA. However, non-Title I schools that do not make AYP for three or more consecutive years must 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. ESEA 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
- Relevant student-learning activities, 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 required by ESEA.

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.

Alternate and alternative assessments - Students with disabilities may be tested through the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) or the Virginia Grade-Level Alternative (VGLA) in grades 3-8 depending on the nature of the disability. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students at the lowest levels of English proficiency may also be tested using the VGLA. The Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP) provides students with disabilities with an alternative means of meeting the commonwealth's testing-related graduation requirements. The VGLA will be replaced by a new online test beginning with mathematics in 2011-2012 and reading in 2012-2013.

AMO - 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 - Data 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.

ESEA - Elementary and Secondary Education Act is the primary federal law affecting K-12 education. The most recent reauthorization of the law is also known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Expedited retake - An end-of-course 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 - Virginia calculates three graduation "rates" for accountability purposes:

- The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate is the percentage of students who graduate with a Board of Education-approved diploma within four years of entering high school.
- The Federal Graduation Indicator is the percentage of students who graduate with a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma. It is used in calculating AYP ratings of high schools, school divisions and the commonwealth.
- The Graduation and Completion Index will be used — beginning in 2011-2012 (based on 2010-2011 results) — to determine the accreditation ratings of high schools.

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 consecutive years, the school or division is considered to be "in improvement" and is required under ESEA to take certain actions to raise achievement.

Instruction - The methods used to teach students, including lecture, discussion, hands-on activity, exercise, experiment, role-playing, small group work and writing.

LEA - Local Education Agency is the term used in 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 - See "ESEA"

Other academic indicator - For AYP calculations, in addition to meeting reading and mathematics objectives, elementary and middle schools must also meet benchmarks for attendance, science, writing or history, and high schools, school divisions and the state must also meet an objective for graduation. These

additional objectives are known as other academic indicators. Prior to the beginning of the school year, school divisions must declare whether they will use attendance, science, writing or history as the other academic indicator for elementary and middle schools.

Parental involvement - The participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving student learning and school activities. Parental involvement is a component of ESEA.

Provisionally Accredited-Graduation Rate - A high school or combined school with a graduating class receives a “provisionally accredited-graduation rate” rating if students achieve adjusted pass rates of 70 percent or more in all four content areas and a Graduation and Completion Index of 80-84 points.

Public school choice - See “Transfer Option”

Reconstitution - A process 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, planning begins for the possibility – the following year – of 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 for making AYP 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.

School Improvement Plan - 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 SOL tests. All Board of Education-approved substitute tests measure content that incorporates or exceeds the related SOL 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 educational services - Students in a Title I school in year two of improvement are eligible to receive tutoring or supplemental educational services. 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 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.” 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 - The Virginia Alternate Assessment Program is designed to evaluate the performance of students with significant cognitive disabilities. The VAAP is available to students in grades 3-8 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 - The 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. The VGLA will be replaced by a new online test beginning with mathematics in 2011-2012 and reading in 2012-2013.

VSEP - The Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program provides students with disabilities who are unable to participate in the regular SOL assessments with an alternative means of meeting the commonwealth’s testing-related graduation requirements. 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 2011-2012 is based on the results of tests given during the 2010-2011 school year.

Schools receive the rating of accreditation denied when students fail to achieve adjusted pass rates to meet the fully accredited rating for the current year as well as the preceding three consecutive years.

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

Accreditation ratings reflect overall achievement within a school, not the performance or learning of individual students. In assessing the quality of the education provided by a school, parents should also consider individual achievement on SOL tests, classroom grades and other measures of learning and performance.

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

Because the state constitution gives local school boards the responsibility of the day-to-day operations of schools within a division, neither the Virginia Department of Education nor the Board of Education can “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 the following:

- 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 prior to its adoption

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 by 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 principal, division superintendent and local school board chairman — to the Board of Education.

A school division with any schools denied accreditation must submit a report to the Board of Education by October 1 describing each school’s progress toward meeting the requirements for full accreditation. The Board of Education will include the information in its annual report to the governor and General Assembly.

If a school division has one-third or more of its schools denied accreditation, 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 the school. Reconstitution may include, but is not limited to, restructuring a school’s governance, instructional program, staff or student population.

If a school is reconstituted, the local school board may apply to the Board of Education for conditional accreditation. The application must outline specific responses to all areas of deficiency.

A reconstituted, conditionally accredited school will be denied accreditation if it fails to meet the requirements for full accreditation 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?

Schools receive two annual accountability ratings; a state accreditation rating and an adequate yearly progress rating under ESEA. Your child may be eligible for a transfer if his or her school is under ESEA school improvement sanctions in addition to being denied state accreditation. ESEA requires schools to notify parents if their children are eligible to transfer to a higher-performing school.

What can I 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 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.