

## 2014-2015 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.

A school's state accreditation rating reflects overall achievement in the four core academic areas of English, history/social science, mathematics and science. High schools must meet an additional 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.

Achievement during 2013-2014 on the grade-3 history/social science test, the grade-3 science test, grade-5 writing test, and the United States History I and the United States History II content-specific tests will be factored into accreditation ratings for 2014-2015. These tests will not be administered during 2014-2015 and subsequent years as a result of legislation approved by the 2014 General Assembly. School divisions are required to certify annually that content previously assessed with the discontinued tests is being taught, and that a locally approved test consistent with Board of Education guidelines is used to measure student progress.

The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states to establish Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for raising overall reading and mathematics achievement and the achievement of student subgroups.

Virginia, under flexibility granted by the US Department of Education, has established AMOs designed to reduce proficiency gaps between students in high-performing and low-performing schools within six years.

Schools must develop and implement improvement plans to raise the achievement of student subgroups not meeting annual objectives. Low-performing Title I schools identified as Priority and Focus schools are subject to specific interventions.

*Revised August 2014*

# 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 on a three-year average of achievement. Schools receive one of the following ratings:

## Fully Accredited

Elementary and middle schools are Fully Accredited if students achieve all of the following pass rates:

- English — 75 percent or higher
- Mathematics — 70 percent or higher
- Science — 70 percent or higher
- History — 70 percent or higher

High schools are Fully Accredited if:

- Students achieve pass rates of 75 percent or higher in English and 70 percent or higher in mathematics, science and history; and
- Attain a point value of 85 or greater based on the Graduation and Completion Index (GCI).

### *Flexibility for High-Performing Schools*

*Virginia's accountability system allows schools that maintain pass rates of 95 percent or higher 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 is Provisionally Accredited-Graduation Rate if students achieve adjusted pass rates of 75 percent or more in English and 70 percent or more in mathematics, science and history, and a GCI of 83 to 84 points. Schools with a rating of Provisionally Accredited-Graduation Rate are subject to academic reviews. 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

## Graduation & Completion Index

The GCI calculation comprises students in the cohort of expected on-time graduates (students who were first-time ninth graders four years earlier, plus transfers in and minus transfers out) and students carried over 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.

<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>POINT VALUE</b>
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 sum 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.

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

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

<b>PROVISIONAL ACCREDITATION BENCHMARKS</b>		
<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Accreditation Year</b>	<b>Point Value</b>
2013-2014	2014-2015	83
2014-2015	2015-2016	84

A school earning a rating of Provisionally Accredited-Graduation Rate must undergo an academic review. After 2015-2016, high schools earning a GCI less than the provisional benchmark for the year are rated as Accredited with Warning.

Beginning in accreditation year 2016-2017, high schools with a GCI of less than 85 will be Accredited with Warning.

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.

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; 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 a 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.

Also, 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 Passing Rates)

Subject	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
English	75	75	75
Mathematics	70	70	70
Science	70	70	70
History	70	70	70

*Note: Ratings for the 2014-2015 school year are based on achievement during 2013-2014 or on average achievement during the three most recent school years.*

## 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, a private school, or 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.

# Virginia & ESEA

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) — known since 2001 as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) — requires states to set annual objectives for increasing student achievement in reading and mathematics and closing achievement gaps among student subgroups.

Under the flexibility waiver granted by the US Department of Education, accountability is focused on improving outcomes for students in Virginia's lowest-performing schools, which must meet annual measurable objectives (AMOs) for raising reading and mathematics achievement. These annual objectives in reading and mathematics replaced the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets that schools were required to meet from 2002 until 2011.

The AMOs represent the percentage of students within each subgroup that must pass SOL tests in reading and mathematics in order to substantially reduce the gap between students in high-performing and low-performing schools. While the AMOs are intended as yearly goals for low-performing schools, all schools are expected to meet or exceed the objectives.

Separate AMOs have been set for student subgroups, including Proficiency Gap Groups comprising students who historically have had difficulty meeting the commonwealth's achievement standards:

- **Proficiency Gap Group 1** — Students with disabilities, limited-English proficient students and economically disadvantaged students, regardless of race and ethnicity (unduplicated)
- **Proficiency Gap Group 2** — African-American students, not of Hispanic origin, including those also counted in Proficiency Gap Group 1
- **Proficiency Gap Group 3** — Hispanic students, of one or more races, including those also counted in Proficiency Gap Group 1

The benchmarks are set with the goal of reducing by half the proficiency gaps in reading and mathematics between students in the lowest-performing and highest-performing schools within six years.

## Reporting and Accountability

School and division report cards will indicate whether subgroups and proficiency gap groups met AMOs in reading and mathematics. In addition, report cards for divisions and high schools will show whether the annual ESEA objective for graduation — known as the Federal Graduation Indicator (FGI) — was met. The graduation indicator is met if 80 percent or more students graduate in four, five or six years with a Standard Diploma or Advanced Studies Diploma.

All public schools — including schools that do not receive Title I funds under ESEA — must develop and implement improvement plans to raise the achievement of student subgroups not meeting the annual benchmarks.

## Annual Measurable Objectives

Virginia's AMOs begin (Year 1) with benchmarks representative of subgroup performance on SOL tests in low-performing schools during 2011-2012.

The annual objectives for reading in Year 2 and subsequent years reflect the impact on achievement of new, more rigorous reading SOL tests introduced in 2012-2013. The reading AMOs culminate in Year 6 with student subgroups in all schools expected to achieve pass rates of 78 percent or higher.

Virginia's annual objectives for mathematics culminate in Year 6 with student subgroups in all schools expected to achieve pass rates of 73 percent or higher.

AMOs may be met by a subgroup's achievement during the most recent academic year or by a three-year average of achievement in the content area. In addition, NCLB's "safe harbor" provision — recognizing a ten-percent reduction in a subgroup's failure rate as acceptable progress — remains in effect.

Higher-performing subgroups and schools are considered meeting higher expectations if:

- A subgroup's pass rate during the previous year exceeds the current year's AMO and the subgroup meets the current year target and is within five percent of performance during the previous year.
- A subgroup is already exceeding Year-6 AMOs for reading and/or mathematics and shows continuous improvement.
- A subgroup's pass rate is 90 percent or greater.

<b>READING ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES (Percent Passing)</b>							
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	
Accountability Year	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	
Assessment Year	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	
All Students	85	66	69	72	75	78	
Proficiency Gap Group 1	76	52	59	65	72		
Proficiency Gap Group 2 (Black Students)	76	49	57	64	71		
Proficiency Gap Group 3 (Hispanic Students)	80	53	60	66	72		
Students with Disabilities	59	30	42	54	66		
LEP students	76	44	52	61	69		
Economically Disadvantaged Students	76	52	59	65	72		
White Students	90	74	75	76	77		
Asian Students	92	80	Continuous improvement				
<b>NOTE: AMOs for Years 2-6 are based on achievement on revised reading tests administered during 2012-2013</b>							

<b>MATHEMATICS ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES (Percent Passing)</b>							
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	
Accountability Year	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	
Assessment Year	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	
All Students	61	64	66	68	70	73	
Proficiency Gap Group 1	47	52	57	63	68		
Proficiency Gap Group 2 (Black Students)	45	51	56	62	67		
Proficiency Gap Group 3 (Hispanic Students)	52	56	60	65	69		
Students with Disabilities	33	41	49	57	65		
LEP students	39	46	53	59	66		
Economically Disadvantaged Students	47	52	57	63	68		
White Students	68	69	70	71	72		
Asian Students	82	Continuous improvement					

The following must use a web-based, school-improvement tool approved by VDOE for assessing, planning, implementing and monitoring progress:

- Title I schools (not identified as focus or priority schools) not meeting one or more AMO targets or participation rates
- All schools (including non-Title I schools) not earning full state accreditation

Title I high schools not meeting the FGI rate must use the Virginia Early Warning System (VEWS) to identify students at risk of dropping out or not graduating on time with a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma and to develop and implement a plan for improvement.

## Priority, Focus & Reward Schools

Five percent of Virginia's Title I schools (36) are identified as priority schools based on overall reading and mathematics achievement and graduation rates in the case of high schools. Schools meeting one or more of the following criteria are identified as priority schools:

- Title I schools and other schools receiving federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds and identified as a Tier I or Tier II school
- Title I high schools with a federal graduation indicator of 60 percent or less for two or more of the most recent consecutive years
- Title I schools that fail to test 95 percent of students overall and in all subgroups in reading and mathematics for three consecutive years
- Title I schools in which overall achievement in reading and/or mathematics does not meet annual benchmarks — as needed to identify a number of schools equivalent to five percent of the state's Title I schools.

Priority schools must engage a state-approved turnaround partner to help implement a school-improvement model meeting state and federal requirements.

Ten percent of Virginia's Title I schools (73) are identified as focus schools based on reading and mathematics achievement of students in the three proficiency gap groups.

Focus schools must employ a state-approved coach to help the division develop, implement and monitor intervention strategies to improve the performance of students at risk of not meeting achievement standards or dropping out of school.

Many of the commonwealth's underperforming schools are already subject to these and similar interventions as a consequence of state accountability provisions and state-established requirements for schools receiving federal SIG funds.

Title I schools that are high achieving or demonstrate significant improvement are recognized as reward schools if they earn recognition through one of the following state or federal programs:

- Virginia Index of Performance
- National Blue Ribbon School
- Title I Distinguished School

## Participation in State Assessments

ESEA requires that 95 percent of students overall and in each subgroup participate in state reading and mathematics testing at the school, division and state levels.

The 95-percent participation requirement also applies to the three proficiency gap groups established under Virginia's approved flexibility plan.

If less than 95 percent of students in a subgroup or proficiency gap group are tested in a subject, then the subgroup or proficiency gap group is not considered to have achieved the AMO — regardless of the students' pass rate in the subject.

## Subgroup Size & Accountability

A subgroup or proficiency gap group in a school or a division must include at least 30 students for the corresponding annual measurable objective to factor in accountability decisions, including the identification of focus schools.

## 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 and a two-percent cap on the number of test-takers who may be counted as proficient based on the results of modified achievement standards tests.

## LEP Students

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 an LEP student in his or her first year of enrollment is tested, the student is counted as participating in the state assessment program. However, failing mathematics scores of tested LEP students in the first year of enrollment do not count against a school or division.

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 determining whether AMOs are met. If a student fails a test required for graduation and successfully retests during the same school year, the first test does not count for accountability purposes.