

SCHOOL-LEVEL ACADEMIC REVIEW PROCESS

PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL-LEVEL ACADEMIC REVIEW

The School-Level Academic Review is designed to help schools identify and analyze instructional and organizational factors affecting student achievement. The focus of the review process is on the **SYSTEMS, PROCESSES, AND PRACTICES** that are being implemented at the school and division levels — the focus is **NOT** on people. Specifically, information is gathered that relates to the following areas of review:

- Alignment of the local curriculum with state learning standards
- Use of time and school scheduling practices
- Use of data to make instructional and planning decisions
- Professional development opportunities provided for staff
- School improvement planning
- Implementation of an instructional method or model/program for schools previously warned in English or mathematics.
- Organizational systems and processes
- School culture

These areas of review provide a framework for the School-Level Academic Review process. Within each of these areas, indicators reflecting effective practices have been identified. These indicators are based on state laws and board regulations, as well as on research-based practices found to be effective in improving student achievement. The review team collects and analyzes data that evidence the school's status in implementing these practices. Based on their findings, the team provides the school and the division with information that can be used to develop, revise, and implement the school's three-year school improvement plan (SIP), as required by the SOA.

The School-level Academic Review process is designed to be “prescriptive” in nature, meaning that the process is tailored to meet the unique needs and circumstances presented by the school. For this reason, the focus of a school's On-Site Review and technical assistance is on those areas identified by the lead reviewers as the primary areas of need for the school.

Board of Education guidelines allow division superintendents to request that they be allowed to conduct their own reviews of their schools, using their own established processes. Such requests are sent to the superintendent of public instruction, and the information sent must show that the process they intend to use encompasses the School-Level Academic Review process used by the Department of Education and approved by the Board of Education.

OVERVIEW OF THE SCHOOL-LEVEL ACADEMIC REVIEW PROCESS

The School-Level Academic Review process consists of four types of visits conducted by a team of educators over the course of a school year. These visits are briefly described in the table below:

Type of Visit	Purpose	Projected Timeframe	Persons Responsible
I. Initial Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine current status of improvement efforts “Prescribe” on-site review 	1 day, fall	Lead Reviewers
II. On-site Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess instructional and organizational practices, through document review, observations and interviews Identify areas of strength and areas for improvement Establish “essential actions” and timelines for continued improvement 	3-5 days, late fall—winter	Academic Review Team
III. Follow-Up Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Technical Assistance</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate incorporation of “essential actions” into school improvement plan Facilitate and support implementation of “essential actions” 	2-8 days total, winter--spring	Coordinated by Lead Reviewer(s); (Technical assistance providers may vary)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Progress Check</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine progress of school in implementing “essential actions” 	Periodic, 1-day, about every 4-6 wks	Lead Reviewer(s)
IV. Final Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify significant changes in practice and recognize accomplishments Assess status of school improvement planning efforts Suggest “next steps” for continued improvement 	1 day, spring	Lead Reviewer(s)

Following the On-Site Review and Final Visits, school and division personnel are asked to complete evaluations of the academic review process. These data are compiled by the office of accreditation and used to monitor and refine the review process to ensure that the needs of schools are being met.

THE ACADEMIC REVIEW TEAM

Team Leaders

Two lead reviewers are assigned to each school rated accredited with warning. Typically, one leader is an independent contractor and the other is a DOE staff member. The lead reviewers work together to coordinate and conduct the review process in the school; however, the independent contractor assigned as the “lead” is primarily responsible for coordinating review schedules and activities with review team members and the school. This person is also responsible for facilitating the data collection and analysis process during on-site visits, entering the team’s findings into the academic review database, and developing and distributing reports.

The office of accreditation provides the school principal and the division superintendent with the names of the team leaders in advance of the review. The superintendent may, with good cause, request the replacement of a team member.

The lead reviewers conduct the Initial Visit together. They also lead the team during the On-Site Review Visit. The lead independent contractor, in consultation with the DOE lead reviewer, is responsible for coordinating and conducting Follow-Up Visits and the Final Visit.

Review Team

For the On-Site Review Visit, the review team is expanded to include additional independent contractors, T/TAC staff and other DOE staff members, based upon the specific needs of each school. Team members are experienced educators selected from a cadre of independent contractors and DOE staff meeting specific criteria established by the department. All team members have participated in a training program and have had experience reviewing curriculum and analyzing data. At least one member of the Academic Review Team will have expertise in one or more of the content areas in which the school is warned.

EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL-LEVEL ACADEMIC REVIEW PROCESS

The principal and all teachers and central office personnel that were involved in the review activities are asked to complete evaluations. The data from the evaluations provide the office of accreditation with critically important information about the effectiveness of the Academic Review process. These data help guide future revisions to data collection forms and the process and timelines for conducting future Academic Reviews.

MODIFICATIONS TO THE SCHOOL-LEVEL ACADEMIC REVIEW PROCESS, BEGINNING WITH THE 2004-2005 SCHOOL YEAR

The modifications of the academic review process maintain the purpose and prescriptive nature of the current School-level Academic Review process. The modifications include a tiered approach to the academic review process that differentiates the type of review a warned school receives based upon the school's accreditation history, federal adequate yearly progress rating, content areas warned, Title I status, and special needs and circumstances of the school. Educators trained in the process will conduct the reviews, collecting data and analyzing it according to established guidelines. Reports of Findings will continue to document areas of strength, areas for improvement, and essential actions that schools must implement. Schools will develop, implement, and monitor the implementation of school improvement plans.

A three-tiered approach to implementing the school-level academic review process will make a modified process available to schools accredited with warning that meet the following characteristics:

- The school has NOT been accredited with warning in the same content area in either of the past two years; and
- The school is NOT warned in three or more content areas; and
- The school is NOT a Title I school warned in English or mathematics that did not meet AYP requirements in the content area(s).

The modifications allow school division personnel trained in the School-level Academic Review process to conduct the academic reviews with oversight by a Department of Education staff member or a contracted educational consultant experienced in the School-level Academic Review process. Modifications also allow for school division oversight of school improvement plan development and implementation.

Modifications may also apply to schools receiving technical assistance and ongoing support through other Department of Education initiatives. The extent to which the Academic Review process will be modified for these schools will take into account the type of assistance being provided these schools through such initiatives. The Superintendent of Public Instruction may approve other academic review tiers or other department initiatives as alternatives to approved review processes dependent upon the special needs and circumstances of the warned school.

These modifications will be reviewed annually. The Department of Education will continue to report annually to the Board on the findings of the School-level Academic Reviews and on the effectiveness of the Academic Review processes being used. Implementation of the School-level Academic Review process will be monitored and evaluated throughout the school year.

The three tiers of implementing the School-level Academic review process are described in Table 1.

Table 1: Description of School-Level Academic Review Tiers Beginning with the 2004-2005 School Year

Tier	Characteristics of Schools Warned in the Current Year (beginning 2004-2005)*	Academic Review Team Members provided by DOE	Academic Review Team Members provided by Division (certified in the process)	Three year School Improvement Plans and annual status report	Instructional Model Program in English and/or Mathematics
<p>Tier I: State Directed (current model)</p>	<p>Any school warned in the same content area in either of the past two years OR Any school warned in 3 or more content areas OR Title I school warned in English and/or mathematics that DID NOT meet requirements in the content area(s) to make AYP under NCLB</p>	<p>Follows current process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Leader • Content –area specialist(s) (DOE or vendor) • Special education team member (T/TAC) • Team members 	<p>None</p>	<p>Follows requirements of 8 VAC 20-131-310 F.</p>	<p>Follows requirements of 8 VAC 20-131-310 B.C.D.E.</p>
<p>Tier II: Local Assistance</p>	<p>Title I school warned in English and/or mathematics that DID meet requirements in the content area(s) to make AYP under NCLB OR Non-Title I school warned in English and/or mathematics that DID NOT meet requirements in the content area(s) to make AYP under NCLB OR Any school warned in science and/or history social sciences with a pass rate more than 14 points lower than that required for full accreditation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Leader • Content Specialist(s) (DOE or independent contractor) • Special education team member (T/TAC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team members 	<p>Division superintendent certifies that SIP meets requirements of 8 VAC 20-131-310 G. AND Division staff monitors plan development, implementation, and results.</p>	<p>Division superintendent may request a waiver under 8 VAC 20-131-330</p>
<p>Tier III: Locally Directed</p>	<p>Non-Title I school warned in English and/or mathematics that DID meet requirements in the content area(s) to make AYP under NCLB OR Any school warned in science and/or history social sciences with pass rate within 14 points of that required for full accreditation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content specialist(s) • Team members 	<p>Division superintendent certifies that SIP meets requirements of 8 VAC 20-131-310 G. AND Division staff monitors plan development, implementation, and results.</p>	<p>Division superintendent may request a waiver under 8 VAC 20-131-330</p>

*The Superintendent of Public Instruction may approve other School-level Academic Review tiers or other department initiatives as alternatives to approved review processes dependent upon the special needs and circumstances of the warned school.