

**GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING PHASE 2 ACADEMIC REVIEWS
OF SCHOOLS ACCREDITED WITH WARNING
FOR A SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR**

SECTION I: BACKGROUND

For the school years ending in 2000 through 2003, schools meeting pre-accreditation criteria will be assigned one of the following ratings based upon student performance on Standards of Learning (SOL) tests, on approved substitute tests in the four core academic areas of English, mathematics, science, and history/social sciences, and on the level of performance of students with disabilities on alternate assessments (pertinent section numbers of the accrediting standards are found in parenthesis):

- Fully Accredited
- Provisionally Accredited/Meets State Standards
- Provisionally Accredited/Needs Improvement
- Accredited with Warning (in specified academic area or areas) or
- Conditionally Accredited

A school will be “Accredited with Warning (in specified academic area or areas)” if its pass rate on any SOL test is 20 or more percentage points below the provisional accreditation benchmarks established by the Board (8 VAC 20-131-300.C.4).

The *Standards of Quality* establish the base for providing assistance to schools accredited with warning. Section 22.1-253.13:3 of the Code authorizes the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Education to provide technical assistance to schools, and assigns priority to those schools accredited with warning. Technical assistance is designed to focus on helping schools analyze relevant data and to help schools develop and implement corrective action plans.

The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (SOA), effective as of September 28, 2000 state further:

“Beginning with the 2000-01 school year, schools rated Accredited with Warning must undergo an academic review in accordance with guidelines adopted by the Board ...” (8 VAC 20-131-340.A). It is the responsibility of the Department of Education to develop this academic review process (8 VAC 20-131-310.A).

Schools rated Accredited with Warning must develop and implement a three-year school improvement plan based upon the results of the academic review. The goal of the plan is for the school to attain full accreditation within three years (8 VAC 20-131-310.F). The plan is to be based upon the results of the Phase 1 Academic Review (8 VAC 20-131-310.F) and must include nine specific components (8 VAC 20-131-310.G). The school is required to report annually on its progress in implementing the plan to become fully accredited (8 VAC 20-131-310.H).

Additionally, schools rated Accredited with Warning in English and/or mathematics are expected to adopt an instructional method with a proven track record of success at raising student achievement in those areas (8 VAC 20-131-310.B).

On November 30, 2000, the Board approved guidelines for Phase 1 Academic Reviews. Phase 1 Academic Reviews are conducted in schools rated Accredited with Warning for the first time. The Phase 1 Academic Review process focuses on the following four areas:

- Curriculum alignment with the Standards of Learning
- Use of instructional time and school scheduling practices
- Use of data to make instructional and planning decisions
- Professional development opportunities for staff

Schools use the results of the Academic Review to prepare three-year school improvement plans.

SECTION II: PHASE 2 ACADEMIC REVIEWS

A. Purpose

The purposes of the phase two academic reviews are to assist schools in assessing factors affecting student performance; to provide the school with feedback on how its three-year school improvement plan's implementation affects curriculum alignment, use of time and school scheduling practices, use of data to make decisions, and professional development opportunities; and to provide the school with feedback on the effectiveness of the implementation of an instructional method/model/program in English and/or mathematics, if the school is warned in either or both of those areas.

B. Academic Review Team

Two educators will serve on the Academic Review Team assigned to a school accredited with warning. One of the team members will be from the regional Governor's Best Practice Center or other Department of Education staff. Other team members will be educators meeting criteria established by the Department of Education. All educators serving on Academic Review Teams will have participated in a training program qualifying them to serve on such teams. Schools will be given the opportunity to confirm the members of the team and may, with good cause, request a substitution of a team member.

C. Academic Review Process

The Phase Two Academic Review consists of three parts: review of documents, interviews and classroom observations, and writing of the final report. The Review will focus on the school's three-year school improvement plan, specifically:

- the degree to which it incorporates the findings of the Phase 1 Academic Review conducted the previous year
- the degree to which it addresses the components of 8 VAC 20-131-310G

- the degree to which the plan has been implemented and
- the degree to which data have been collected to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of the plan

For schools warned in English and/or mathematics, the Academic Review Team will investigate and provide the school with feedback regarding:

- the status of adoption of an instructional method/model/program;
- the degree of implementation of the model in classroom instruction; and
- use of data to monitor student achievement throughout the model's implementation.

The Academic Review Team will collect and analyze data using forms provided by the Department of Education.

Part 1: Review of Documents

Upon receiving their school review assignments, Academic Review Team members will use the Internet to download pertinent information about the school, and include, at a minimum, the SOL test results and School Performance Report Card. When on-site, the team will review documents which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Final Report from the Phase 1 Academic Review
- Three-year School Improvement Plan
- Curriculum materials
- Data collection and analysis instruments
- Master schedules and bell schedule
- Staff development descriptions and schedules
- Minutes from faculty, departmental, grade level, school improvement team meetings
- Information regarding the instructional method/model/program adopted by the school (for schools warned in English and/or mathematics)

Part 2: Interviews and Classroom Observations

Initial interviews are conducted with the principal and the superintendent/designee and with teachers. These interviews are well structured and are designed to give the Academic Review Team insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the school improvement plan and its implementation. Team members may conduct additional less structured interviews throughout the visit to help clarify information made available to them. To the extent possible, sources of information obtained during these interviews are kept confidential.

Team members will observe classrooms of those core areas in which the school is accredited with warning. The purpose of these observations is NOT to evaluate the teacher as instructor, but rather to gain more in-depth information about the degree to which the taught curriculum aligns with the written curriculum, and how instructional time is managed. Data collection forms provided by the Department of Education specify the classroom observation data to be recorded and analyzed.

Team members will compile the results of the data gathering process. They will confer on their findings and prepare the preliminary report for the principal and superintendent. Team members then will conduct an exit interview with the principal, superintendent/designee, and others at the discretion of the principal. The purpose of this exit interview is to discuss with those present the preliminary findings of the Academic Review Team.

Prior to departing, the Academic Review Team will provide the school principal with a set of evaluation forms. These evaluations will provide feedback on the Phase 2 Academic Review process and will be completed by those participating in interviews and classroom observations. Results of these evaluations will be analyzed and reported on by accreditation staff.

Part 3: Preparation of the Final Report

The final report will consist of three sections: areas of strength, areas for improvement, and recommendations for improvement planning. Academic Review Team members must agree on the content of the final report. The team leader will be responsible for typing a draft of the final report in the format provided by the Department of Education. This draft will be presented to and discussed with the school principal and superintendent during the exit interview. The principal will be given two business days to respond to the draft of the final report, and the Academic Review Team members may make changes to the draft based upon the principal's response.

The team leader will be responsible for completing the final report within five business days of the exit interview. Copies of the final report will be returned to the school, to the superintendent, to the regional Governor's Best Practice Center, and to the Office of Accreditation at the Department of Education.

The final report will become the basis of the school's revisions to its three-year school improvement plan. The goal of the plan will continue to be to have the school reach full accreditation status.

SECTION III – LOCALLY-DEVELOPED ACADEMIC REVIEWS

The Board of Education will not waive the requirement of an academic review for schools accredited with warning. The Board may approve the use of locally-developed academic reviews upon the request of local school boards provided the locally-developed reviews meet or exceed the requirements for reviews conducted by the Department of Education as outlined in these guidelines. Individuals who conduct locally-developed reviews may not be employees of the Department of Education and their qualifications must meet or exceed those of individuals who serve as independent contractors for the Department for the purpose of conducting academic reviews.

Requests for approval of locally developed reviews submitted to the Board must include, at a minimum, the following documentation:

- A listing of individuals who will conduct the review
- The scope of the review
- Dates of the review
- Certification from the division superintendent that the review will meet or exceed the requirements for academic reviews adopted by the Board

Requests for approval of locally developed reviews must be submitted to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, who, by authority of the Board of Education, shall review and approve or disapprove those requests.

Upon completion of the locally-developed review, the division superintendent shall submit a copy of the final report provided by the reviewer to the Office of Accreditation, Department of Education, and comply with the remaining provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-310 of the accrediting standards.