

# **Using Research to Develop Virginia's On-Time Graduation Tool: The Pilot**

**Franklin City, Lee County, Richmond City,  
and Pulaski County Public Schools**

**April 29, 2009**

**Virginia Department of Education**

# Purpose of Graduation Pilot

- **Work with a small number of school divisions to assess the value of a tool that enables schools to identify and monitor students who are at-risk of dropping out.**
- **Develop protocols for academic review as they relate to schools' failure to be fully accredited based on graduation rates.**
- **Identify and document best practices to increase graduation rates.**

# Research “Why?”



Early warning systems use **routinely available data** housed at the school that are good predictors of whether a student is likely to drop out of high school.

Divisions and schools can use this information to target interventions that support off-track students while they are still in school, before they drop out.

Divisions and schools can use the information to look for patterns and identify school climate issues that may contribute to disproportionate dropout rates at a subset of high schools or within subpopulations of students.

([http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/IssueBrief\\_EarlyWarningSystemsGuide\\_081408.pdf](http://www.betterhighschools.org/docs/IssueBrief_EarlyWarningSystemsGuide_081408.pdf))

# Concept Development



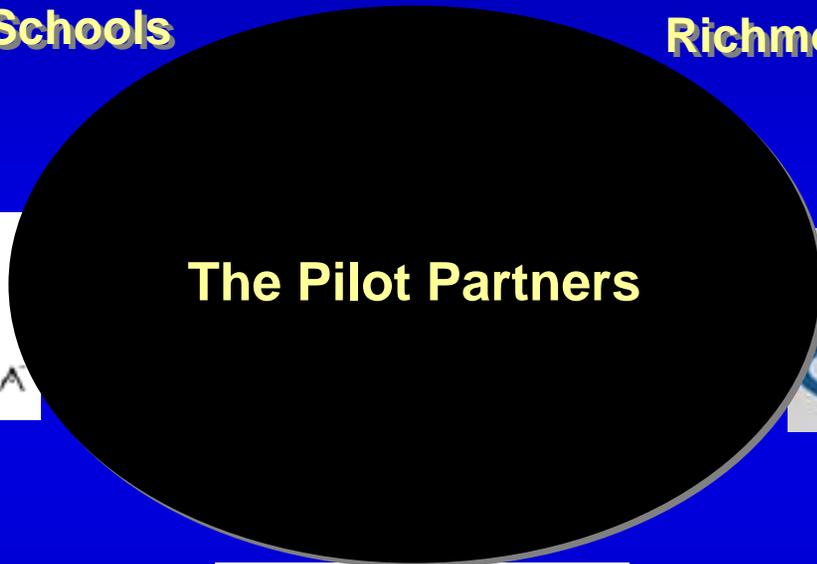
**Boston City Public Schools  
Composite Learning Index**

**[http://www.bpe.org/school\\_dev/cli](http://www.bpe.org/school_dev/cli)**



**Franklin City Public Schools**

**Richmond City Public Schools**



**The Pilot Partners**



**Lee County Public Schools**

**Pulaski County Public Schools**



# **Graduation Pilot Decision 1: What are the Indicators for Incoming 9<sup>th</sup> Graders?**

- ✓ **SOL grade 8 reading scaled score**
- ✓ **Proficiency level (state-approved alternative/alternate reading assessments only)**
- ✓ **Failed state reading assessment for the last two years of data**
- ✓ **English Language Arts - Final Grade 2007-2008**
- ✓ **F or D in reading for the last two years**
- ✓ **SOL grade 8 mathematics scaled score**

- ✓ **Proficiency level (state-approved alternative/alternate mathematics assessments only)**
- ✓ **Failed state mathematics assessment for the last two years of data**
- ✓ **Mathematics - Final Grade 2007-2008**
- ✓ **F or D in mathematics for the last two years**
- ✓ **Overage (as of 9/1/08)**
- ✓ **Ninth-grade repeater**
- ✓ **Number of days absent 2007-2008**
- ✓ **Number of in- and out-of-school suspensions 2007-2008**

# Graduation Pilot Decision 2: Weighting of Indicators and Points

Indicator	Points					
	5	4	3	2	1	0
SOL reading scaled score			< 300	300-349	350-374	> 374
Proficiency level (state-approved alternative/alternate reading assessments only)			Fail			Pass
Failed state reading assessment for the last two years of data					Yes	
ELA - Final Grade 2007-2008				F or NC	D	A, B, C
F or D in reading for the last two years					Yes	
SOL mathematics scaled score			< 300	300-349	350-374	> 374

Indicator	Points					
	5	4	3	2	1	0
Proficiency level (state-approved alternative/alternate mathematics assessments only)			Fail			Pass
Failed state mathematics assessment for the last two years of data					Yes	
Mathematics - Final Grade 2007-2008				F or NC	D	A, B, C
F or D in mathematics for the last two years					Yes	
Overage (as of 9/1/08)		$\geq 18$	17	16	15	$< 15$
Ninth-grade repeater				Yes		No
Number of days absent 2007-2008	$\geq 21$		16-20	11-15	6-10	0-5
Number of in- and out-of-school suspensions 2007-2008		$\geq 4$		2-3	1	0

# Graduation Pilot Decision 3: Off-Track Benchmarks

Students were identified as “Off-Track” for graduation based on two types of criteria:

- *Benchmarks consistent with research focusing on pre-9th-grade indicators (Neild & Balfanz, 2006).*
  - *Grade 8 attendance < 80%; OR*
  - *Failed mathematics class in 8th grade; OR*
  - *Failed English class in 8th grade; OR*
  - *Were 16 or older.*
- *Index score > 5 based on factors discussed at previous meeting.*

Students whose index score = 4 were identified as “Borderline.”

# What Did the Tool Look Like?



# How to Extract the Data? The Help Tool



# Graduation Pilot Decision 4:

The data tool identifies students that need an intervention. There must be a process in place that helps schools and divisions analyze the data to determine effective K-12 intervention strategies.

In addition, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) recognized that there needed to be a process in place to validate the data set collected by the pilots before a “scale-up” could take place. This would require some changes in the tool.

The Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center at Edvantia, Inc. (ARCC) and the National High School Center (NHSC) are developing a process and guidance document for making data-driven decisions using the graduation pilot tool.

Questions regarding data were developed by the VDOE, ARCC and NHSC to guide changes to the tool, the validation process, and the development of the guidance document.

# Guiding Questions

As a part of this project, pilot divisions shared their responses to the following questions with each other and with the partners:

- ✓ *What did you find most useful about the data tool?*
- ✓ *Describe the process you used to analyze the data.*
- ✓ *What did you do first, second, third?*
- ✓ *Who did you initially bring to the table to discuss the data?*
- ✓ *Who was missing and did you invite them later or have plans to invite them later?*

- ✓ *As you discussed the data, did you find anything missing?*
- ✓ *Do you think that the tool identified the right students?*
- ✓ *Did you agree with the tool?*
- ✓ *What did you find once you began looking at the data?  
For example: What trends did you find?*
- ✓ *What conclusions did you come to? Any big “ah-hahs”?*
- ✓ *What elements of the data analysis process or the tool have helped you discuss possible strategies to improve?*
- ✓ *What are your next steps?*
- ✓ *How will the identification of these students 1)change your thinking? 2)change your practices?*
- ✓ *What challenges do you face?*
- ✓ *If you could change anything about the data collected, what would it be?*

# Next Steps

Continue to revise the tool and validate the data. The tool will be available on the Single Sign-on for Web Systems (SSWS) to all school divisions.

Continue to work with our partners to develop the resource guidance document that will accompany the tool.



Present conference with planning time—“From Vision to Practice Fifth Annual Institute: Seven Million Minutes from Pre-Kindergarten to Graduation,” July 14-17, 2009. This conference will focus on research-based K-12 strategies to increase the graduation rate.

Develop a school improvement planning tool and division improvement planning tool with the Center for Innovation and Improvement that focuses on indicators for increasing the graduation rate.

Develop a video using the partner divisions that will describe how to use the tool, how to analyze the data, and identify interventions that increase the graduation rate.

# Who will help us with the work?



**Dr. John Ross**  
**Director of Technology**

**Dr. Susan Therriault**  
**Research Analyst**  
**American Institutes for Research**



**Dr. Keith Smith**  
**Virginia State Liaison**

# Many Thanks for the Continued Support from the Pilot Divisions

## Franklin City Public Schools



## Richmond City Public Schools



## Lee County Public Schools



## Pulaski County Public Schools

