

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: _____ C. _____

Date: September 17, 2009

Topic: First Review of Requests from Norfolk City School Board for a Rating of Conditionally Accredited for Lafayette-Winona Middle School and Northside Middle School

Presenter: Dr. Kathleen M. Smith, Director, Office of School Improvement, Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement

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Origin:

_____ Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

Board review required by
_____ State or federal law or regulation
 Board of Education regulation
_____ Other: _____

Action requested at this meeting _____ Action requested at future meeting: _____ (date)

Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action

_____ Previous review/action
date _____
action _____

Background Information:

Once a school has failed to achieve a *Fully Accredited* status for four consecutive years based on its academic performance, as stated in 8 VAC 20-131-300.C, the school shall be rated *Accreditation Denied*. As outlined in 8 VAC 20-131-315, as an alternative to the memorandum of understanding required for schools rated *Accreditation Denied*, a local school board may choose to reconstitute the school and apply to the Board of Education for a rating of *Conditionally Accredited*. The application shall outline specific responses that address all areas of deficiency that resulted in the *Accreditation Denied* status.

As defined by the Standards of Accreditation, “reconstitution” means a process that may be 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*. Actions may include, but not be limited to, restructuring a school’s governance, instructional program, staff, or student population.

Two Norfolk City schools that failed to achieve a status of *Fully Accredited* for the fourth consecutive year are requesting a rating of *Conditional Accreditation*. A history of the schools requesting a rating of *Conditionally Accredited* for the first year follows:

Division	School Name	Subjects Warned in 2006	Subjects Warned in 2007	Subjects Warned in 2008	Subjects Warned in 2009
Norfolk City Public Schools	Lafayette-Winona Middle School	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	History
Norfolk City Public Schools	Northside Middle School	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics	History

Summary of Major Elements

Norfolk City Public Schools is requesting a rating of *Conditionally Accredited* for Lafayette-Winona Middle School and Northside Middle School indicating that reconstitution efforts have changed the governance in the two schools. The chart below indicates the reconstitution processes that will be used by the schools to initiate a range of accountability actions to improve pupil performance.

School Division	School Name	Governance	Staff
Norfolk City Public Schools	Lafayette-Winona Middle School	Primary	Additional
Norfolk City Public Schools	Northside Middle School	Primary	Additional

Data indicating these schools' performance over the last three years is included in Attachment A. It should be noted that 2008-2009 was the first year that Norfolk City Public Schools implemented the social studies breakout tests for the middle grades. The performance of the students on the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment for U. S. History I impacted the overall achievement of students at both schools. Although the schools were able to improve pass rates in mathematics, the schools fell short of the benchmark for History/Social Studies by nine points at Lafayette-Winona Middle School and four points at Northside Middle School.

The Office of School Improvement has worked closely with these schools to design and implement an oversight committee as a formal mechanism to focus on and improve instruction in the area(s) of warning. The purpose of the oversight or shared governance committee is to:

1. Serve as a formal mechanism to guide instructional decisions based on data including, but not limited to, formative assessment data, classroom observations and review of lesson plans.
2. Monitor and adjust the school's improvement plan frequently.
3. Provide outside expertise and knowledge in the content area of warning and/or in research-based instructional practices that foster improved student achievement.
4. Align division resources with the needs of the school, including additional help and support from the central office.
5. Share the governance in the instructional area(s) of warning through a formal decision-making process. In these committees, the principal is not the sole instructional decision-maker.

The following table indicates the composition of the oversight committees for each school requesting ratings of *Conditionally Accredited*:

School Division	School Name	Outside expertise in area of warning	Division curriculum or instructional leader	Principal	Teacher	Outside monitor or facilitator
Norfolk City Public Schools	Lafayette-Winona Middle School	VDOE History Content Specialist	Director of Middle Schools	Principal	Lead Teacher	VDOE Contracted Auditor
Norfolk City Public Schools	Northside Middle School	VDOE History Content Specialist	Director of Middle Schools	Principal	Lead Teacher	VDOE Contracted Auditor

The following table provides an overview of the alternative governance efforts presented in the letters requesting ratings of *Conditionally Accredited*:

Division	School Name	Overview of Request
Norfolk City Public Schools	Lafayette-Winona Middle School	The role of the governance committee is to monitor the school improvement plan, review data, and make adjustments as needed. The governance committee meets at least monthly and will include representation from the school, division, and state levels. Decision-making is by consensus with majority vote. A Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) history content specialist will be assigned to the governance committee at the request of the division.
Norfolk City Public Schools	Northside Middle School	The role of the governance committee is to monitor the school improvement plan, review data, and make adjustments as needed. The governance committee meets at least monthly and will include representation from the school, division, and state levels. Decision-making is by consensus with majority vote. A VDOE history content specialist will be assigned to the governance committee at the request of the division.

Recommendations

The VDOE will provide technical assistance to the schools and division through a partnership with the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC), the Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership (VFEL), and the Center for Innovation and Improvement (CII). The technical assistance will provide staff with information regarding the division-level indicators that support the rapid improvement of low-performing schools. These indicators are as follows:

1. **Community.** The division includes civic leaders, community organizations, and churches in the division and school improvement planning and maintains regular communication with them.
2. **Achievement Targets.** The division sets division, school, and student subgroup achievement targets.
3. **Data System.** The division ensures that key pieces of user-friendly data are available in a timely fashion at the division, school, and classroom levels.
4. **Program Evaluation.** The division examines existing school improvement strategies being implemented across the division and determines their value, expanding, modifying, and culling as evidence suggests.
5. **Curriculum.** The division provides a cohesive division curriculum guide aligned with state standards or otherwise places curricular expectations on the school.
6. **Data Training.** The division provides the technology, training, and support to facilitate the school's data management needs.
7. **Staff Incentives.** The division provides incentives for staff who work effectively in hard-to-staff and restructured schools
8. **Resource Reallocation.** The division regularly reallocates resources to support school, staff, and instructional improvement.
9. **Quality Staff.** The division recruits, trains, supports, and places personnel to competently address the problems of schools in need of improvement.
10. **Division Intervention.** The division intervenes early when a school is not making adequate progress.
11. **Progress Monitoring.** The school reports and documents its progress monthly to the superintendent, and the superintendent reports the school's progress to the school board.
12. **Division Contact.** The division designates a central office contact person for the school, and that person maintains close communication with the school and an interest in its progress.
13. **Division-School Communication.** Division and school decision-makers meet at least twice a month to discuss the school's progress.
14. **Professional Development.** Professional development is built into the school schedule by the division, but the school is allowed discretion in selecting, training, and consulting that fit the requirements of its improvement/restructuring plan and its evolving needs.
15. **Programs and Practices.** The improvement/restructuring plan includes research-based, field-proven programs, practices, and models.
16. **Vision.** The improvement/restructuring plan includes a clear vision of what the school will look like when restructured or substantially improved.
17. **Quick Wins.** The improvement/restructuring plan focuses on "quick wins," early successes in improvement.
18. **School Teams.** A team structure is officially incorporated into the school improvement plan and school governance policy.
19. **Student Support.** The division works with the school to provide early and intensive intervention for students not making progress.
20. **Instruction and Performance.** The school's Leadership Team regularly looks at school performance data and aggregated classroom observation data and uses that data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs.

It is imperative to emphasize not only the shared leadership between the central office and the school, but the importance of shared instructional leadership within the school. In the 2009-2010 school year, VDOE's partnership with ARCC, VFEL and CII will continue to provide technical assistance with a concentration on continued division-level support and school-level support with a focus on shared instructional leadership. Division staff, principals, school improvement teams, and lead teachers from the division and the two schools will receive research-based technical assistance throughout the school year

prepared by the CII and delivered by VFEL faculty and VDOE staff on the following rapid improvement leadership indicators. Rapid improvement leaders:

1. Make an action plan so that everyone involved knows specifically what they need to do differently.
2. First concentrate on a very limited number of changes to achieve early, visible wins for the school.
3. Make changes that deviate from organization's norms and rules if necessary to gain visible wins.
4. Implement an action plan in which change is mandatory for all staff, not optional.
5. Replace or redeploy some staff as necessary based on careful examination of skills and readiness for change.
6. Quickly discard tactics that don't work and spend more resources and time on tactics that work.
7. Report progress but keep the school's focus on high goals.
8. Motivate others inside and outside the school to contribute to success.
9. Use various tactics to help staff empathize with those they serve and be motivated for change.
10. Work hard to gain the support of trusted influencers among staff and community.
11. Silence critics with speedy success on "quick win" objectives.
12. Personally analyze data about the organization's performance to identify high-priority problems that can be fixed quickly.
13. Set up systems to measure and report interim results often.
14. Share results in open-air meetings to hold all staff accountable for results and to focus on solving problems.

Systems and processes are also necessary for improvement. For this reason, additional technical assistance will be provided by the CII and delivered by VFEL faculty and VDOE staff to focus on the following systems and processes:

1. Establishing a team structure with specific duties and time for instructional planning.
2. Focusing the principal's role on building leadership capacity, achieving learning goals, and improving instruction.
3. Aligning classroom observations with evaluation criteria and professional development.
4. Engaging teachers in aligning instruction with standards and benchmarks.
5. Engaging teachers in assessing and monitoring student mastery.
6. Engaging teachers in differentiating and aligning learning activities.
7. Assessing student learning frequently with standards-based assessments.
8. Expecting and monitoring sound instruction in a variety of modes.
9. Expecting and monitoring sound homework practices and communication with parents.
10. Expecting and monitoring sound classroom management.

The importance of data cannot be underestimated for schools that are chronically underachieving. Using research-based indicators that lead to increased student achievement is imperative for improvement. The VDOE has designed a quarterly reporting instrument that will help divisions and schools monitor critical indicators that are related not only to immediate increases in student achievement, but also to those indicators that are attributed to students not graduating on time.

The following are recommendations for each of the two schools requesting a rating of *Conditionally Accredited*:

1. The VDOE will appoint an auditor through the academic review process to monitor the implementation of the schools' reconstitution efforts monthly. Also, the VDOE will assign the VDOE history specialist to provide technical assistance to the division and schools throughout the year.
2. LEA staff assigned to work with the schools throughout the year will attend technical assistance provided by the VDOE regarding division support and the division framework needed to restructure and support low-performing schools. In addition, school staff, including the principal, will attend similar technical assistance regarding rapid improvement leadership indicators and systems and processes that support increased student achievement. This technical assistance will be provided by the VFEL, ARCC, and the CII, and will be monitored by a monthly online reporting system.
3. The division and schools will submit the required data profile as specified by the VDOE at least quarterly. This report may be found at <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/SchoolImprovement/>.
4. The division will adhere to any additional recommendations indicated in the Conditional Request and Recommendations form or by the auditor throughout the year and will comply with any reporting requirements requested (submission of Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Testing [ARDT] data on a regular basis, monthly reporting to the superintendent and Office of School Improvement). Specific recommendations for each school are as follows:

Division	School Name	Recommendations
Norfolk City Public Schools	Lafayette-Winona Middle School	Division staff, VDOE contractor, VDOE history content specialist, division staff, and school staff must participate in monthly meetings to discuss the progress in the school's implementation of the school improvement plan, addressing issues related to history instruction, and the alignment of state and local educational agency (LEA) resources.
Norfolk City Public Schools	Northside Middle School	Division staff, VDOE contractor, VDOE history content specialist, division staff, and school staff must participate in monthly meetings to discuss the progress in the school's implementation of the school improvement plan, addressing issues related to history instruction, and the alignment of state and LEA resources.

Attachment A provides a summary of each school's present and past SOL pass rates, area(s) of warning, overview of the reconstitution efforts, the VDOE's recommendations, and projected follow-up. Attachment B is the letter from Norfolk City School Board requesting a rating of *Conditional Accreditation* for Lafayette-Winona Middle School and Northside Middle School

Superintendent's Recommendation: The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education waive first review and approve the recommendations and rating of *Conditionally Accredited* for Lafayette-Winona Middle School and Northside Middle School as requested by Norfolk Public Schools.

Impact on Resources: The Office of School Improvement will be required to use the academic review budget to fund auditors assigned to schools.

Timetable for Further Review/Action: None

Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement
Conditional Request & Recommendations

Name of Division: Norfolk City		Name of School: Lafayette-Winona Middle School		
Title I: N	School Improvement Status: N/A		Grades: 6-8	
Subjects Warned in 2006: Mathematics	Subjects Warned in 2007: Mathematics	Subjects Warned in 2008 Mathematics	Subjects Warned in 2009 History	
Overview of 2009-2010 Request	Establish a governance committee. The role of the governance committee is to monitor the school improvement plan, review data, and make adjustments as needed. The governance committee meets at least monthly and will include representation from the school, division, and state levels. Decision-making is by consensus with majority vote. A Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) history content specialist will be assigned to the governance team at the request of the division.			

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Pass Rates	2006	2007	2008	2009
English Performance	64.89	71.21	73.32	75.99
Mathematics Performance	37.88	55.11	55.39	70.27
Science Performance	79.35	79.21	79.3	80.19
History Performance	AYP not available	76.25	75.7	60.98

Recommendations

The department recommends the following for each school requesting a rating of *Conditionally Accredited*:

1. The VDOE will appoint an auditor through the academic review process or the PASS program to monitor the implementation of the school's reconstitution efforts monthly.
2. Local educational agency (LEA) staff assigned to work with the school throughout the year will attend technical assistance provided by the department regarding division support and the division framework needed to restructure and support low-performing schools. In addition, school staff, including the principal, will attend similar technical assistance regarding rapid improvement leadership indicators and systems and processes that support increased student achievement. This technical assistance will be provided by the Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership (VFEL), the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC), and the Center for Innovation and Improvement (CII) and will be monitored by a monthly online reporting system.
3. The division and school will submit the required data profile as specified by the VDOE at least quarterly.
4. The division will adhere to any additional recommendations indicated in the Conditional Request and Recommendations form or by the auditor throughout the year and will comply with any reporting requirements requested (submission of Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Testing [ARDT] data on a regular basis, monthly reporting to the superintendent and Office of School Improvement).

Specific recommendations for each school are as follows: VDOE contractor, VDOE history content specialist, division staff, and school staff must participate in monthly meetings to discuss the progress in the school's implementation of the school improvement plan, addressing issues related to history instruction, and the alignment of state and LEA resources.

Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement
Conditional Request & Recommendations

Name of Division:		Name of School: Northside Middle School		
Title I: N	School Improvement Status: N/A		Grades: 6-8	
Subjects Warned in 2006: Mathematics	Subjects Warned in 2007: Mathematics	Subjects Warned in 2008 Mathematics	Subjects Warned in 2009 History	
Overview of 2009-2010 Request	Establish a governance committee. The role of the governance committee is to monitor the school improvement plan, review data, and make adjustments as needed. The governance committee meets at least monthly and will include representation from the school, division, and state levels. Decision-making is by consensus with majority vote. A Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) history content specialist will be assigned to the governance committee at the request of the division.			

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Pass Rates	2006	2007	2008	2009
English Performance	74.18	74.41	73.87	80.37
Mathematics Performance	45.03	52.25	63.86	71.93
Science Performance	83.82	79.73	88.25	88.34
History Performance	AYP not available	70.93	72.38	66.31

Recommendations
<p>The department recommends the following for each school requesting a rating of <i>Conditionally Accredited</i>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The VDOE will appoint an auditor through the academic review process or the PASS program to monitor the implementation of the school's reconstitution efforts monthly. 2. Local educational agency (LEA) staff assigned to work with the school throughout the year will attend technical assistance provided by the department regarding division support and the division framework needed to restructure and support low-performing schools. In addition, school staff, including the principal, will attend similar technical assistance regarding rapid improvement leadership indicators and systems and processes that support increased student achievement. This technical assistance will be provided by the Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership (VFEL), the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC), and the Center for Innovation and Improvement (CII) and will be monitored by a monthly online reporting system. 3. The division and school will submit the required data profile as specified by the VDOE at least quarterly. 4. The division will adhere to any additional recommendations indicated in the Conditional Request and Recommendations form or by the auditor throughout the year and will comply with any reporting requirements requested (submission of Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Testing [ARDT] data on a regular basis, monthly reporting to the superintendent and Office of School Improvement). <p>Specific recommendations for each school are as follows: VDOE contractor, VDOE history content specialist, division staff, and school staff must participate in monthly meetings to discuss the progress in the school's implementation of the school improvement plan, addressing issues related to history instruction, and the alignment of state and LEA resources.</p>



Norfolk Public Schools

NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED. GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE.

August 25, 2009

Dr. Mark E. Emblidge
 President
 Virginia Department of Education
 413 Stuart Circle
 Suite 303
 Richmond, VA 23220

Dear Dr. Emblidge:

Norfolk Public Schools is requesting conditional accreditation for Lafayette-Winona Middle School and Northside Middle School for the 2009-2010 school year. These two middle schools missed the mark for accreditation in the area of History. For the first time in 2008-2009, Norfolk Public Schools administered the US History 1 and 2 tests in grades 6-7.

Summary of History Standards of Learning Test Pass Rates for the Norfolk Public School:
 2004-05 through 2008-09

Subject Test	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09
Grade 6 History: US to 1877	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	44.4
Grade 7 History: US 1877 to Present	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	78.2
Grade 8 History: Civics & Economics	81.3	79.8	79.8	73.6	68.1

Lafayette-Winona Middle	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09
Grade 6 History: US to 1877	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	34
Grade 7 History: US 1877 to Present	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	68
Grade 8 History: Civics & Economics	78.9	71.5	67	74.2	69

Northside Middle	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09
Grade 6 History: US to 1877	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	42
Grade 7 History: US 1877 to Present	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	82
Grade 8 History: Civics & Economics	82.9	76.7	70.7	68.4	70

The schools' Data Team has received training in data analysis and data driven decision making by certified trainers and they have received ongoing support in data analysis. The district administers quarterly assessments in the core content based on state standards. Teachers received much assistance using this data to drive instruction in their classrooms.

Teachers in the history department have had the opportunity to participate in numerous full day "power planning" sessions sponsored by the district. These work sessions allowed teachers from all schools to work and plan with their grade level colleagues. Best instructional practices and data-driven decision making are the focus of these sessions.

Additionally, support has been provided to the school from outside experts. Dr. Doug Reeves provided coaching and support to the principal and teachers on instructional best practices through quarterly webinars and Dr. Linda Gregg worked on-site with the special education staff to raise achievement in all contents. Both of these individuals are from the Leadership and Learning Center for Performance Assessment founded by Dr. Douglas Reeves.

The district conducted comprehensive Academic Reviews using an in-house team consisting of: Executive Director of Elementary Schools, history teacher specialists, reading specialist and senior coordinators of Special Education. The Academic Reviews provided much insight into the operations of the schools history and math departments.

Upon receipt of the preliminary scores this July and in-depth analysis of the results, it became apparent to us that further steps would be necessary if we are to ensure success for all students at both Lafayette-Winona and Northside Middle Schools. For the 2009-2010 academic year:

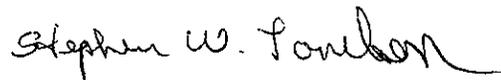
- The entire history instructional teams has been staffed with teachers who are highly qualified. Norfolk Public Schools is requesting conditional accreditation based on these staff changes and the implementation of shared governance in the area of history. The shared governance committees will include representation from the two schools, district, and state and university levels.
- The district requests that the VDOE history and social sciences coordinator visit classrooms and provide feedback.
- Collaboration with the VDOE history and social sciences coordinator and NPS history senior coordinator to review curriculum and professional development.
- A focus on the adult actions for accountability from all levels of the organization including:
 - Executive Director to monitor and provide feedback of monthly data team meeting minutes and attend when possible
 - Chief Academic Officer and Executive Director will review the quarterly content observations completed by Lafayette-Winona and Northside Middle School administrators and department chairs
 - The Superintendent's senior leadership team will receive monthly status updates and provide support through the various departments (Academics, Operations, Human Resources, Technology, Testing, Finance)
 - Accountability Plans will focus on adult actions. The Executive Director will monitor the deep implementation of these actions. Review quarterly reports

We believe that through these efforts, the students at both middle school will benefit from improved instruction and will be able to demonstrate increased academic success.

We look forward to meeting the Board to make this formal request for conditional accreditation for Lafayette-Winona and Northside Middle Schools.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen W. Tonelson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Dr. Stephen W. Tonelson
Chairman
Norfolk School Board

CC: Kathleen Smith