

# Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item



**Agenda Item:** S

**Date:** October 25, 2012

<b>Title</b>	First Review of Request for Approval of an Alternative Accreditation Plan from Arlington County School Board for Arlington Mill High School		
<b>Presenter</b>	Dr. Kathleen M. Smith, Director, Office of School Improvement, Division of Student Assessment and Student Improvement		
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**Purpose of Presentation:**

Action required by Board of Education regulation.

**Previous Review or Action:**

No previous review or action.

**Action Requested:**

Action will be requested at a future meeting. Specify anticipated date below:  
November 29, 2012

**Alignment with Board of Education Goals: Please indicate (X) all that apply:**

	Goal 1: Expanded Opportunities to Learn
X	Goal 2: Accountability of Student Learning
	Goal 3: Nurturing Young Learners
	Goal 4: Strong Literacy and Mathematics Skills
	Goal 5: Highly Qualified and Effective Teachers and Administrators
	Goal 6: Sound Policies for Student Success
	Goal 7: Safe and Secure Schools
	Other Priority or Initiative. Specify:

**Background Information and Statutory Authority:**

Goal 2: Considering the request for alternative accreditation from Arlington County School Board for Arlington Mill High School will provide the most appropriate course of action to ensure accountability of student learning.

Section 8 VAC 20-131.280.C. of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* states:

Subject to the provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-350, the governing school board of special purpose schools such as those provided for in § 22.1-26 of the *Code of Virginia*, Governor’s schools, special education schools, alternative schools, or career and technical schools that serve as the student's school of principal enrollment may seek approval of an alternative accreditation plan from the Board

of Education. Schools offering alternative education programs and schools with a graduation cohort of 50 or fewer students as defined by the graduation rate formula adopted by the board may request that the board approve an alternative accreditation plan to meet the graduation and completion index benchmark. Special purpose schools with alternative accreditation plans shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the programs offered in the school and approved by the board prior to August 1 of the school year for which approval is requested. Any student graduating from a special purpose school with a Standard, Advanced Studies, or Modified Standard Diploma must meet the requirements prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-50.

**Summary of Important Issues:**

Arlington Mill High School is an alternative high school in Arlington County for students whose life circumstances have interrupted their schooling. Students must be age 16 or older and the population includes students who may be English language learners, older school-age and adult students working toward a high school diploma, and students who need a flexible program to accommodate work or family obligations. As part of restructuring and to better meet the needs of students, Arlington County Public Schools has changed the designation of the Arlington Mill High School Continuation Program to the Arlington Mill High School.

As part of its request for an alternative accreditation plan for Arlington Mill High School, Arlington County Public Schools is requesting a waiver of Section 8 VAC 20-131-280 of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* so that adjustments may be made to the accreditation calculations for accountability purposes as indicated in Attachment A.

In addition, the plan proposes that certain students be removed from the cohort including students who enter Arlington County Public Schools as their first Virginia public school at age 18 years or older; students who discontinue school because of incarceration; and students who are placed in a juvenile detention center.

**Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:**

None

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**

Final review at the November 29, 2012, meeting.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Virginia Board of Education accept for first review the proposed alternative accreditation plan for Arlington Mill High School from Arlington County School Board.

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF AN ALTERNATIVE ACCREDITATION PLAN

The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (8 VAC 20-131-10 et. seq.) set the minimum standards public schools must meet to be accredited by the Board of Education. Accreditation of public schools is required by the Standards of Quality (☐§§ 22.1-253.13:1 et. seq.). The annual accrediting cycle for public schools is July 1 through June 30. This cover sheet, with the supporting documentation, must be submitted to the Department of Education for review and recommendation to the Board at least 90 days prior to August 1 of the school year in which the plan is to be implemented.

8 VAC 20-131-280 of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* states (in part):

*Subject to the provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-350, the governing school board of special purpose schools such as those provided for in § 22.1-26 of the Code, Governor's schools, special education schools, alternative schools, or career and technical schools that serve as the student's school of principal enrollment may seek approval of an alternative accreditation plan from the Board of Education. Schools offering alternative education programs and schools with a graduation cohort of 50 or fewer students as defined by the graduation rate formula adopted by the board may request that the board approve an alternative accreditation plan to meet the graduation and completion index benchmark. Special purpose schools with alternative accreditation plans shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the programs offered in the school and approved by the board prior to August 1 of the school year for which approval is requested. Any student graduating from a special purpose school with a Standard, Standard Technical, Advanced Studies, Advanced Technical, or Modified Standard Diploma must meet the requirements prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-50.*

In addition, pursuant to § 22.1-253.13:3 of the *Code of Virginia*, any school board, on behalf of one or more of its schools, may request the Board of Education for releases from state regulations and for approval of an Individual School Accreditation Plan for the evaluation of the performance of one, or more of its schools as authorized for certain other schools by the Standards of Accreditation pursuant to 8 VAC 20-131-280 C of the *Virginia Administrative Code*.

The Board of Education, in its *Guidelines Governing the Implementation of Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* states:

*In accordance with the provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-350 of the standards, local school boards may seek waivers of provisions of the standards to address the unique needs of schools. Such requests must include documentation of the need for the waiver. Waiver requests for schools and schools with a graduation cohort of 50 or fewer student will be considered based upon specified criteria. All applications must be submitted to the Board for consideration at least 90 days prior to August 1 of the school year. Requests for consideration must be accompanied by information that documents the need for approval of the request. The chair of the local school board and the division superintendent are requested to be in attendance at the Board of Education meeting when the proposal is considered.*

We, the undersigned, submit this request for review and approval by the Board of Education and understand that we are expected to appear before the Board to discuss the program and respond to questions raised.

September 6, 2012

Date Approved by the Local School Board

Signature – Chairman of the School Board

September 7, 2012

Submission Date

Signature – Division Superintendent

**ARLINGTON MILL HIGH SCHOOL  
ARLINGTON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA**

**REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF AN ALTERNATIVE ACCREDITATION PLAN**

**School Name:** Arlington Mill High School  
**Division:** Arlington County Public Schools  
**School Address:** 4600 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 500, Arlington, VA 22203  
**Contact Person:** Dr. Barbara Thompson  
**Telephone Number:** (703) 228-5350  
**Email:** Barbara.Thompson@apsva.us  
**Proposed Duration:** Three Years  
**Grade Levels Served:** Grades 9-12; and adult

**Number of Students enrolled by grade:**

Grade	# of Students
9	16
10	18
11	31
12	62
<b>Total Graded =</b>	<b>127</b>
Adults	176
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>303</b>

**INTRODUCTION:**

Since 1929, Arlington County Public Schools has offered alternative educational programs to assist students in completing the requirements for a high school diploma, most recently, as a High School Continuation Program at two locations, including Arlington Mill. As part of restructuring and to better meet the needs of students, Arlington has changed the designation of the Arlington Mill High School Continuation Program to the Arlington Mill High School.

Arlington Mill High School is an alternative high school in Arlington County for students whose life circumstances have interrupted their schooling. Students must be age 16 or older and includes students who may be English language learners, older school-age and adult students working toward a high school diploma, and students who need a flexible program to accommodate work or family obligations. Specializing in credit recovery and dropout prevention, Arlington Mill High School seeks to support students at-risk of not completing high school through to graduation and planning individualized goals beyond. Because of the nature

of the students served, coupled with the additional requirements for graduation, the achievements of the staff and students at Arlington Mill are at risk. As a result, Arlington Mill High School seeks an alternative accreditation plan, where the school shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the programs offered in the school.

Arlington Mill High School meets the state definition of a special purpose school and seeks approval for an alternative accreditation plan as provided in the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, Part VIII, Section 8 VAC 20-131-280 D.

**INTENT:**

Arlington Mill High School strives to provide a supportive, flexible, and individualized approach to meeting all requirements necessary to earn a high school diploma.

**VISION/MISSION:**

Arlington Mill High School strives to be a supportive and caring environment that integrates the Arlington County Public Schools Strategic Plan: ensuring that every student is challenged and engaged, where every student can achieve [eliminating the achievement gap], with a high quality staff, in an optimal learning environment, and meeting the needs of the whole individual.

The mission of the school states:

Leading by example, the Arlington Mill community commits to delivering effective instruction toward completion of a high school diploma, fostering significant academic progress for all, and preparing students:

- To be self-reliant, positive, and productive citizens of the 21st century;
- To have a passion for life-long learning;
- To have an ability to fulfill their personal, educational, and career goals; and
- To have interpersonal skills to be caring and sensitive members of a diverse society.

We commit to helping our students affirm their sense of self, respecting their own uniqueness and that of others, and completing their high school diploma.

**TARGET POPULATION:**

Arlington Mill High School serves students in grades 9 – 12 and adults who are overage, behind academically, have had interrupted schooling, and/or who prefer a smaller setting with increased personal attention. The student body is primarily composed of students who are at significant risk to drop out of school. Students/parents choose to enroll in the school as it serves the entire county of Arlington. Most of the students at Arlington Mill High School are already behind their cohort for graduation when they enroll. Some students transfer in after one to three years of high school with few or no course or verified credits. Despite the discrepancy, many Arlington Mill High School students are able to recover credits through the school's unique instructional program. Students under the age of 18 are enrolled by their parents.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM:**

1. The academic program for Grades 9-12 and adults focuses on the Virginia Standards of Learning and Virginia requirements for a standard diploma with elective courses offering vocational training, career counseling, job readiness and college preparation;
2. The academic program at Arlington Mill High School provides for:
  - Personalized Learning, including:
    - Courses are offered in a day program, an evening program, and through a state-approved online provider
    - Students may take four semester classroom based courses each fall and spring term in the day program, and three classroom based courses each year in the evening program
  - Technology:
    - Additional online courses may be taken with classroom based courses to enhance and accelerate course completion
    - Credit recovery programs are provided to students in Grades 9-12 using on-site technology and after-school programs
    - Students are given additional time to master specific course objectives, particularly in courses that have an end-of-course (EOC) *Standards of Learning* (SOL) test. This decision will be based on students' performance on competency mastery (based on Virginia's Standards of Learning) per course, and periodic assessments
  - Partnerships:
    - A partnership with ***Communities in Schools*** is being developed to support students in addition to existing partnerships with outside groups
    - Students have a variety of avenues to career and technical preparation. At the school, students may gain skills and experience in Fine Arts, Information Technology, Electricity, Cosmetology; as well as opportunities to take courses at the Arlington Career Center

## **STAFFING:**

Arlington Mill High School is staffed with a faculty of highly qualified teachers certified to teach the core subject areas proposed. The average class size is approximately 14, but varies greatly by subject, quarter, and time of day.

## **STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION:**

Course and verified credits, and individual course achievement are evaluated per student per semester. Course loads are individually prescribed based on course performance and achievement to include recovery and remediation options. Student competency mastery of course standards are assessed with teacher developed tests aligned with the SOLs and documented each quarter in the core subject areas with the achievement data tracked and analyzed. Students participate in the Virginia Standards of Learning Assessment Program.

## WAIVER REQUESTED:

### 8 VAC 20-131-280. Expectations for school accountability.

- B. Each school shall be accredited based, primarily, on achievement of the criteria established in 8 VAC 20-131-30 and in 8 VAC 20-131-50 as specified below:
1. The percentage of students passing the Virginia assessment program tests in the four core academic areas administered in the school, with the accreditation rating calculated on a trailing three-year average that includes the current year scores and the scores from the two most recent years in each applicable academic area, or on the current year's scores, whichever is higher.
  2. The percentage of students graduating from or completing high school based on a graduation and completion index prescribed by the Board of Education. The accreditation rating of any school with a twelfth grade shall be determined based on achievement of required SOL pass rates and percentage points on the board's graduation and completion index. School accreditation shall be determined by the school's current year index points or a trailing three-year average of index points that includes the current year and the two most recent years, whichever is higher. The Board of Education's graduation and completion index shall include weighted points for diploma graduates (100 points), GED recipients (75 points), students not graduating but still in school (70 points), and students earning certificates of program completion (25 points). The Board of Education's graduation and completion index shall account for all students in the graduating class's ninth-grade cohort, plus students transferring in, minus students transferring out and deceased students. Those students who are not included in one of the preceding categories will also be included in the index.

## ACCREDITATION:

### ***Alternate SOL Core Subject Composite Index Point System:***

Students will participate in SOL end-of-course tests as required by *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*. Student performance for accreditation will be determined based on students passing the SOL end-of-course tests, as shown in Table 1. The SOL scores of students, who receive an AYP Adjustment Code of A, B, or C, will be considered transfer students for the purpose of calculating the state accreditation rating. This will include those students who transfer within Arlington County Public Schools.

Due to the small student population, a composite pass rate is necessary to create a larger number of student scores upon which to calculate state accreditation. An Alternate SOL Core Subject Composite Index score of at least 75 points and an Alternate Graduation and Completion Composite Index score of 85 points must be earned by Arlington Mill High School and will serve as the criteria for a rating of full accreditation.

- For purposes of calculating the Alternate SOL Core Subject Composite Index:
  - test results for all students in reading and mathematics will be included as follows:
    - A scaled score of 500-600 will be weighted at 100 points,
    - A scaled score of 400-499 will be weighted at 100 points,
    - A scaled score of 375-399 will be weighted at 75 points, and
    - A scaled score below 375 will carry no points in the calculation.

This measure will reflect the success of all SOL test-takers, including those students who meet the requirements for an expedited retake (scale scores 375-399) and are most likely to benefit from short-term remediation and support, one of the strengths of Arlington Mill High School's instructional program.

**Table 1**  
*SOL Core Subject Composite Index Points*

Number of Tests Meeting Criteria	SOL Scaled Score	Tiers	Points Awarded for Each Tier	Points Awarded
	500-600	1	100	
	400-499	2	100	
	375-399	3	75	
	Below 374	4	0	
(A)Total Number of Points Awarded				
(B)Total Number of Student Scores				
Alternate SOL Core Subject Index Score = (A)/(B)				
Met Alternative Accreditation Requirements: YES/NO Yes = Index Score of 75 or above				

**Alternate Graduation and Completion Composite Index Point System:**

An *Alternate Graduation and Completion Composite Index (GCI)* will be used to determine the score for the school's graduation and completion index. The index includes points assigned for the type of diplomas awarded during the school year. The Board of Education's graduation and completion index shall include weighted points for diploma graduates (100 points), GED recipients (75 points), students not graduating but still in school (70 points), and students earning certificates of program completion (25 points). The total points awarded will be divided by the total number of students in the on-time graduation cohort (see Table 2).

**Table 2**  
*Alternate Graduation and Completion Index Points*

Number of Students	Types of Diplomas	Points Awarded for Each Diploma	Points Awarded
	Advanced	100	
	Standard	100	
	GED	75	
	Still In School	70	
	Certificate of Completion	25	
(C)Total Number of Points Awarded			
(D)Total Number of Students in Cohort			
Graduation and Completion Index Scores =(C)/(D)			

Additional GCI points may be earned by meeting the performance criteria in the other GCI indicator category (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Additional Graduation and Completion Index Points*

Other GCI Indicator	Points Awarded
Increase from the previous year in the percentage of students who complete high school with an Advanced or Standard diploma	5
Increase from the previous year in the percentage of students who pass industry certification tests	5
Increase from the previous year in the percentage of graduating students who enter postsecondary studies in a two- or four-year college, vocational school, enter the military, or obtain a full-time job as reported on the APS Senior Survey	10
Increase from the previous year in the percentage of students who have 18 or more credits	5
Increase the graduation rate by 10 percentage points	10
Maintain a dropout rate below 30%	10
Increase from the previous year the percentage of students who reach the maximum age for educational services and continue in school	5
Increase from the previous year the percentage of students who enroll in a post-secondary transition program (i.e., NOVA Pathways to the Baccalaureate Program).	5

This measure will reflect the status of all students with respect to graduation or program completion as well as the progress Arlington Mill High School is making in supporting all students in completing a high school diploma.

**Cohort Membership:**

In addition, the plan proposes that certain students be removed from the cohort as indicated:

- Students who enter Arlington County Public Schools as their first Virginia public school at age 18 years or older;
- Students who discontinue school because of incarceration, and
- Students who are placed in a juvenile detention center.

The categories used to calculate the Alternate Graduation and Completion Index Score are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Alternate Graduation and Completion Index Score Calculations*

Categories	Points Awarded
Graduation and Completion Index Scores $= (C)/(D)$	
Total Number of Additional Index Points (up to 25 points)	
Alternate Graduation and Completion Index Composite Index Score = $[(C)/(D) + \text{Total number of additional GCI Indicator points up to 25}]$	

**Alternate Accreditation Composite Index Point System**

An *Alternate Accreditation Composite Index Point System* will be used to determine the accreditation rating (see Table 5).

Table 5  
*Accreditation Status*

Accreditation Category	Score	Score Required	Status (Met or Not Met)
Alternate SOL Core Subject Index Score = (A)/(B)		Must Meet or Exceed 75 points	
Alternate Graduation and Completion Composite Index Score = [(C)/(D) + Total number of additional GCI Indicator points up to 25]		Must Meet or Exceed 85 points	
<b>Accreditation Rating</b>			

**PROGRAM EVALUATION:**

The effectiveness of the program will be evaluated using several criteria. Student achievement will be monitored using report card grades; teacher-made quarterly assessments aligned with the SOLs; and summer, fall and spring SOL test results. Student attendance and behavior will be monitored monthly by using the Student Data Management System used by Arlington County Public Schools to track attendance and violations of the *Student Standards of Conduct*. Surveys developed by Arlington Mill High School will be distributed per semester to students and faculty/staff to gather data for school improvement.

**TRANSITION PLAN:**

Upon enrollment in Arlington Mill High School, students and their parents participate in an orientation in which they receive a written academic and career plan outlining their course of study, requirements for graduation, and plan for continuing their education, career preparation, and/or employment. In addition, this orientation includes academic and behavioral expectations of students and information about the different support services available to students and parents.

A minimum of twice per school year, potential term graduates meet with counselors (including Northern Virginia Community College Counselors) to review high school graduation requirements and begin college or training program entrance requirements. A partnership with Northern Virginia Community College provides a Career Coach to assist students in developing these plans, applying for entrance, taking placements tests, or entrance into specialized support programs (i.e. Pathways to the Baccalaureate Program @ NOVA).

Few students typically transition back to a comprehensive high school, however, when they do, academic and career plans are reviewed with the receiving high school counselor to assure a smooth transition.

**Virginia Department of Education  
Evaluation Criteria  
Arlington Mill High School, Arlington County Public Schools  
Alternative Accreditation Plans for Special Purpose Schools**

Alternative Accreditation Accountability Criteria	Evidence in Attachment A	Yes	No	N/A
<b>School characteristics and instructional program:</b>				
1. Mission, purpose, and target population of the school justify its categorization as a “special purpose” school and, therefore, eligible to request an alternative accreditation plan.	Pages 1-2	X		
2. The characteristics and special needs of the student population are clearly defined, and the criteria for student placement require parental consultation and agreement	Pages 1-2	X		
3. The program of instruction provides all students with opportunities to study a comprehensive curriculum that is customized to support the mission of the school.	Pages 2 - 3	X		
4. The school provides transition planning to help students be successful when they return to a regular school setting.	Page 8	X		
5. Strategies used to evaluate student progress are aligned to the mission/purpose of the school and include academic achievement measures.	Page 4	X		
6. Convincing evidence has been provided that students enrolled in the school have not been successful in other schools subject to all the accrediting standards.	Pages 2-3	X		
7. Students will be taught with highly qualified teachers who meet the Board of Education’s licensure requirements for instructional personnel.	Page 4	X		
8. Rationale and documentation provide convincing evidence that the “special purpose” nature of the school precludes its being able to reach and maintain full accreditation status as defined in the <i>Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (SOA)</i> .	Pages 2-3	X		
9. Alternative accreditation criteria described in the plan include academic achievement measures that are objective, measurable, and directly related to the mission and purpose of the school.	Pages 5-8	X		
10. The plan includes use of statewide assessment student achievement results of English and mathematics.	Page 5	X		

Alternative Accreditation Accountability Criteria	Evidence in Attachment A	Yes	No	N/A
<b>School characteristics and instructional program:</b>				
11. The plan meets the testing requirements of the SOA.	Page 5	X		
12. The plan meets the testing requirements of ESEA and describes how the school plans to meet “adequate yearly progress” requirements of the federal law.	Page 5	X		
13. The plan provides convincing evidence that all pre-accreditation eligibility criteria are met for standard in which waivers have not been requested.	Page 3	X		
14. Waivers have been requested for accrediting standards that are not being met, and the rationale for waivers are clear and appropriate for the mission/purpose of the school.	Page 5	X		