



For Immediate Release: July 24, 2012

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VDOE Announces New Annual Reading & Math Objectives
Goal to Cut Gap between Highest- & Lowest-Performing Schools by Half

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), following a formula approved by the Board of Education and the US Department of Education (USED), has established new annual benchmarks for raising achievement in the commonwealth's lowest-performing schools.

Under the provisions of the two-year flexibility waiver granted by USED on June 29, ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives (AMOs) have been set for student subgroups, including new "proficiency gap groups" comprising students who historically have had difficulty meeting the commonwealth's achievement standards:

- Proficiency Gap Group 1 — Students with disabilities, English language learners and economically disadvantaged students, regardless of race and ethnicity (unduplicated)
• Proficiency Gap Group 2 — African-American students, not of Hispanic origin, including those also counted in Proficiency Gap Group 1
• Proficiency Gap Group 3 — Hispanic students, of one or more races, including those also counted in Proficiency Gap Group 1

The benchmarks are set with the goal of reducing by half proficiency gaps in reading and mathematics between schools performing at the 20th and 90th percentiles — overall and for each subgroup and proficiency gap group — over six years.

"Accomplishing this goal will make a difference in the lives of thousands of Virginia students in chronically underperforming schools," Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said.

"The commonwealth and school divisions are now able to focus federal resources on the schools most in need of reform while maintaining accountability for raising achievement in all schools through Virginia's accreditation standards," Board of Education President David M. Foster said.

The AMOs were determined using a formula based on the federal law and student-achievement data from the state's assessment program. Annual reading benchmarks for the first year of flexibility are based on achievement on 2010-2011 state assessments and mathematics benchmarks are based on achievement during 2011-2012.

Reading Annual Measurable Objectives

Table with 7 columns: Accountability Year, Assessment Year, and achievement percentages for various student groups (All Students, Proficiency Gap Groups 1-3, Students with Disabilities, ELL Students, Economically Disadvantaged Students, Asian Students, White Students). A note indicates that AMOs for 2013-2014 through 2017-2018 will be calculated based on revised Reading SOL tests administered during 2012-2013.

(more)

Mathematics Annual Measurable Objectives

Accountability Year	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Assessment Year	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
All Students	61	64	66	68	70	73
Proficiency Gap Group 1	47	49	52	54	56	58
Proficiency Gap Group 2 (Black Students)	45	48	50	52	54	57
Proficiency Gap Group 3 (Hispanic Students)	52	55	57	60	62	65
Students with Disabilities	33	36	39	42	45	49
ELL Students	39	42	45	48	51	54
Economically Disadvantaged Students	47	50	52	54	56	59
Asian Students	82	83	85	86	88	89
White Students	68	70	72	74	76	78

“The mathematics AMOs are based on student achievement on the rigorous new Standards of Learning (SOL) tests introduced last year and are designed for the specific purpose of cutting in half the gap between Virginia’s lowest- and highest-performing schools,” Wright said. “These new annual objectives should not be compared with last year’s AYP benchmarks.”

Reading benchmarks will be reset next year based on the performance of students during 2012-2013 on new reading SOL tests reflecting the increased rigor of the 2010 English standards.

Under the flexibility granted last month, Virginia schools and school divisions will no longer receive annual AYP ratings. However, information on schools and school divisions meeting and not meeting the new, annual federal benchmarks will be reported in early September on the VDOE website.

VDOE also will report on low-performing schools identified as “priority” and “focus” schools. Priority and focus schools are subject to state-approved and monitored school-improvement interventions. Priority and focus schools, however, are not subject to previous federal “improvement” sanctions, such as having to provide public school choice or private tutoring.

Five percent of Virginia’s Title I schools (36) will be identified as priority schools based on overall reading and mathematics achievement as well as graduation rates for high schools. Priority schools must engage a state-approved turnaround partner to help implement a school-improvement model meeting state and federal requirements.

Ten percent of Virginia’s Title I schools (72) will be designated as focus schools based on reading and mathematics achievement of students in the three proficiency gap groups. Focus schools must employ a state-approved coach to help the division develop, implement and monitor intervention strategies to improve the performance of students at risk of not meeting achievement standards or dropping out of school.

Many of the commonwealth’s underperforming schools are already subject to these and similar interventions as a consequence of state accountability provisions and requirements for schools receiving federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds.

All public schools — including schools that do not receive Title I funds under the federal education law — must develop and implement improvement plans to raise the achievement of student subgroups not meeting the annual benchmarks.

School divisions also are expected to meet the new annual measurable objectives in reading and mathematics for all student subgroups and proficiency gap groups.

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