



October 2015

Frequently Asked Questions: Revised Standards of Accreditation

Why did the Board of Education revise the Standards of Accreditation?

The Virginia Board of Education revised the Standards of Accreditation (SOA) to better inform the public about the progress of schools toward meeting the commonwealth's high expectations for learning and achievement.

The revisions also align the board's school accreditation regulations with legislation approved by the 2015 General Assembly. House Bill 1873 — sponsored by Del. Rob Krupika, D-Alexandria — and Senate Bill 1320 — sponsored by Sen. Mamie E. Locke, D-Hampton — require the board to establish additional accreditation ratings that recognize the progress of schools toward full accreditation.

Has the Board of Education changed the requirements for a school to be Fully Accredited?

No. The standards schools must meet to earn full state accreditation have not changed. Students still must achieve adjusted pass rates of at least 75 percent on state assessments in English and adjusted pass rates of at least 70 percent on tests in mathematics, science and history/social science for a school to be Fully Accredited. And high schools still must achieve a Graduation and Completion Index (GCI) of at least 85 points.

What are the new accreditation ratings that recognize schools that are close to earning full accreditation or are making acceptable progress?

The Board of Education has created a series of "Partially Accredited" ratings that recognize schools that are within a board-defined "narrow margin" of full accreditation (Approaching Benchmark), or that are making what the board has determined to be acceptable progress (Improving School).

- **Partially Accredited: Approaching Benchmark-Pass Rate** — Schools that are not Fully Accredited but that are within two points of the adjusted SOL pass rates required for full accreditation in one or more subject areas
- **Partially Accredited: Approaching Benchmark-Graduation and Completion Index** — High schools that have attained the adjusted pass rates required for full accreditation and that are within one point of the GCI required for full accreditation
- **Partially Accredited: Improving School-Pass Rate** — Schools that are not Fully Accredited, and do not qualify for a rating of Partially Accredited: Approaching Benchmark-Pass Rate, but that are making acceptable progress toward full accreditation
- **Partially Accredited: Improving School-Graduation and Completion Index** — High schools that have attained the adjusted pass rates required for full accreditation, and that have improved their GCI by at least one point from the previous year, but that are not within a narrow margin of the GCI required for full accreditation.

How does the Board of Education define "narrow margin" and acceptable progress?

At its October 22 meeting, the state Board of Education is scheduled to approve criteria for awarding partial accreditation. The proposed criteria are displayed in the following tables.

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Partially Accredited: Approaching Benchmark		
	Full Accreditation	Narrow Margin
English	75%	73%
Mathematics	70%	68%
Science	70%	68%
History/Social Science	70%	68%
Graduation & Completion Index	85	84

The benchmarks for a Partially Accredited: Improving School rating require the lowest-performing schools to make the largest gains on state assessments.

Partially Accredited: Improving School			
Mathematics, Science & History		English	
Previous Pass Rate	Required Improvement	Previous Pass Rate	Required Improvement
66-67%	See note below	71-72%	See note below
65%	2 points	70%	2 points
60-64%	3 points	65-69%	4 points
50-59%	9 points	60-64%	7 points
40-49%	10 points	45-59%	11 points
Below 40%	15 points	Below 45%	15 points
Graduation and Completion Index (GCI)			
Previous GCI		Required Improvement	
Below 83		1 point	
<i>Note: Schools with previous pass rates of 71-72 percent in English and/or 66-67 percent in mathematics, science and history/social science are ineligible for a Partially Accredited: Improving School rating and must meet the criteria for Partially Accredited: Approaching Benchmark or be rated as Partially Accredited: Warned School.</i>			

Have any accreditation ratings been eliminated?

Yes. The “Accredited with Warning” and “Conditionally Accredited-Reconstituted School” ratings have been replaced by the following three Partially Accredited ratings:

- **Partially Accredited: Warned School-Pass Rate** — Schools that are not within a narrow margin of, nor making acceptable progress toward, achieving the adjusted SOL pass rates required for full accreditation
- **Partially Accredited: Warned School-Graduation and Completion Index** — High schools that have achieved the adjusted SOL pass rates required for full accreditation, but that are not within a narrow margin of, nor making acceptable progress toward, achieving the GCI required for full accreditation
- **Partially Accredited-Reconstituted School** — Schools that fail to meet the requirements for full accreditation for four consecutive years and receive permission from the state Board of Education to reconstitute. A reconstituted school reverts to accreditation-denied status if it fails to meet full accreditation requirements within the agreed-upon term, or if it fails to have its annual application for Partially Accredited-Reconstituted School renewed.

Can a school still be denied state accreditation because of chronically low student achievement?

Yes. Under the revised SOA, schools rated as Partially Accredited: Approaching Benchmark-Pass Rate, Partially-Accredited: Approaching Benchmark-Graduation and Completion Index, Partially Accredited-Improving School-Pass Rate, Partially Accredited: Improving School-Graduation and Completion Index, or Partially Accredited-Warned School that do not earn full accreditation within three years are denied state accreditation, unless allowed by the state board to reconstitute, or granted an extension.

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If a school ultimately is denied state accreditation, the local school board must submit a corrective action plan to the Board of Education and enter into a binding memorandum of understanding with the state board detailing steps to be taken to raise student achievement to state standards. Schools denied accreditation, however, do not lose state funding, nor are they subject to state takeover.

Do schools that were Accredited with Warning get a “clean slate” under the new rating system?

No. Under the revised accreditation regulations, a school that has not been Fully Accredited for four consecutive years will still be denied accreditation. For example, a school that was Accredited with Warning for a second consecutive year in 2014-2015, and earns a Partially Accredited: Improved School-Pass Rate rating for 2015-2016, will be denied accreditation in 2016-2017 if the school does not meet the requirements for full accreditation, unless the Board of Education grants the school a rating of Partially Accredited: Reconstituted School.

When do the new accreditation standards take effect?

Under the “fast-track” regulatory process followed by the Board of Education, the revised Standard of Accreditation become effective on October 8. The board will formally approve the specific benchmarks for the new Partially Accredited ratings at its October 22 meeting. The Virginia Department of Education will issue accreditation ratings for 2015-2016 shortly thereafter.

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