

2016-2017 SCHOOL YEAR

Virginia’s accountability system supports teaching and learning by setting rigorous academic standards — known as the Standards of Learning (SOL) — and through annual statewide assessments of student achievement.

Results from these tests — which most students take online — are used by the commonwealth to identify schools in need of assistance and to inform parents and the public about the progress of schools through the awarding of annual accreditation ratings.

State Accreditation

The Virginia Board of Education revised its accreditation standards in 2015 to better inform the public about the progress of schools toward meeting the commonwealth’s high expectations for student learning and achievement.

The achievement levels required for a rating of Fully Accredited did not change. New “Partially Accredited” ratings, however, now differentiate schools that are close to full accreditation, or that are making acceptable progress, from those that are not.

Federal Accountability

The new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) designates 2016-2017 as a transition year during which the U.S. Department of Education issues final regulations and states develop implementation plans. The new law and the provisions of each state’s plan to implement ESSA go into full effect with the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year.

As Virginia transitions to the new law, the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) established by the state Board of Education under Virginia’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) flexibility waiver no longer apply to most schools but will factor in the identification of Priority and Focus schools for 2016-2017.

Accreditation: High Standards for Learning & Achievement

School accreditation ratings reflect student achievement on SOL tests and other approved assessments in English, history/social science, mathematics and science. Ratings are based on the achievement of students on tests taken during the previous academic year or on a three-year average of achievement. Schools receive one of the following ratings:

Fully Accredited

Elementary and middle schools are Fully Accredited if students achieve all of the following pass rates:

- English — 75 percent or higher
- Mathematics — 70 percent or higher
- Science — 70 percent or higher
- History — 70 percent or higher

High schools are Fully Accredited if:

- Students achieve pass rates of 75 percent or higher in English and 70 percent or higher in mathematics, science and history; and
- Attain a point value of 85 or greater based on the Graduation and Completion Index (GCI).

ACCREDITATION BENCHMARKS

(Adjusted Pass Rates)

Subject	Grades 3-5	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12
English	75	75	75
Mathematics	70	70	70
Science	70	70	70
History	70	70	70

Note: Ratings for the 2016-2017 are based on 2015-2016 results or on average achievement during the three most recent school years.

Partially Accredited: Approaching Benchmark-Pass Rate

Schools that are not Fully Accredited, but that are within a two-point narrow margin of the adjusted SOL pass rates required for full accreditation in one or more subject areas, receive this rating.

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 Graduation and Completion Index (GCI) required for full accreditation, receive this rating.

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

requirements within the agreed-upon term, or if it fails to have its annual application for Partially Accredited-Reconstituted School renewed.

Accreditation Denied

A school is rated Accreditation Denied if it fails to meet the requirements for full or provisional accreditation for four consecutive years. Any school denied accreditation must provide parents and other interested parties the following:

- Written notice of the school's accreditation rating within 30 calendar days of the announcement of the rating by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE);
- A copy of the school division's proposed corrective action plan describing the steps to be taken to raise achievement to state standards, including a timeline for implementation; and
- An opportunity to comment on the division's proposed corrective action plan prior to its adoption and the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the local school board and the Board of Education.

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 or that are raising the achievement of low-performing students.

Partially Accredited: Improving School-GCI

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.

Partially Accredited-Improving School	
Mathematics, Science & History/Social Science	
If the school's adjusted pass rate for the previous year was:	The school's adjusted pass rate must have increased by at least:
65	2 points
60-64	3 points
50-59	9 points
40-49	10 points
Below 40	15 points
English	
If the school's adjusted pass rate for the previous year was:	The school's adjusted pass rate must have increased by at least:
70	2 points
65-69	4 points
60-64	7 points
45-59	11 points
Below 45	15 points
<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>	

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-GCI

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

Graduation & Completion Index

The GCI calculation comprises students in the cohort of expected on-time graduates (students who were first-time ninth graders four years earlier, plus transfers in and minus transfers out) and students carried over from previous cohorts. A student earning a diploma who entered ninth grade for the first time five years ago is an example of a carryover student. Carryover students are included in annual GCI calculations until they graduate or otherwise leave school. Students with disabilities and limited-English proficient students are included in the GCI calculation when they earn a diploma, GED or certificate of completion; drop out or otherwise exit high school; or are no longer eligible for free public education services.

OUTCOME	POINT VALUE
Board-Recognized Diploma	100
GED	75
Still in School	70
Certificate of Program Completion	25
Dropout	0

The weighted index points are totaled and then divided by the sum of cohort students and carryover students who earned a credential or stayed in school, plus all cohort and carryover students who dropped out or left school without earning a credential. In the following example, the 80 students in a school earn a total of 7,155 points and achieve a GCI of 89.

OUTCOME	CALCULATION		RESULTS
	# of students	Point value	# of students x Point Value
Diplomas	66	100	6,600
GEDs	3	75	225
Certificates of Completion	2	25	50
Students still in school	4	70	280
Dropouts	5	0	0
TOTALS	80		7,155
GCI: 7,155 ÷ 80 = 89			

A GCI of at least 85 is required for full accreditation.

The local school board — within 45 days of receiving notice of the status — must submit to the Board of Education a proposed corrective action plan. The Board of Education will consider the proposal and develop a memorandum of understanding with the local school board, which must be implemented by November 1.

Also, the local school board must submit status reports detailing the implementation of actions prescribed in the memorandum of understanding; and the principal, division superintendent and local school board chairman may be required to appear before the Board of Education to present status reports.

Additionally, in any school division where one-third or more of the schools have been denied accreditation, the local school board is required to evaluate the division superintendent and submit a copy of the evaluation to the Board of Education by December 1. The Board of Education may take action — as permitted by the Standards of Quality — against the local school board for failure to maintain accredited schools.

Conditionally Accredited

A rating of Conditionally Accredited is awarded for one year to a new school — comprising students who previously attended one or more existing schools — to provide the opportunity to evaluate the performance of students on SOL tests and other statewide assessments.

Accreditation Adjustments

A school's accreditation rating may reflect adjustments to pass rates resulting from successful remediation efforts and for the allowable exclusion of some limited-English Proficient (LEP) students and transfer students.

Remediation & Retesting

Virginia's accountability system recognizes successful remediation programs that help students achieve minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics in all tested grades. A school is credited for successful remedial instruction when a student — who failed a particular content-area assessment during the previous year — subsequently passes the corresponding content-area test for the next grade.

If a student fails an SOL test and successfully retests during the same school year, the result of the first test is not included in the accreditation calculation for the school.

Limited-English Proficient Students

The scores of LEP students enrolled in Virginia public schools fewer than 11 semesters may be excluded from the accreditation rating calculations. While all LEP students are expected to participate in the state assessment program, a school-based committee determines the level of participation of each LEP student.

Transfer Students

The scores of students transferring within a Virginia school division are included in the calculation of accreditation ratings. Students transferring into a school from another Virginia school division, another state, a private school, or who have been home schooled are expected to take the assessments for the content areas in which they received instruction. Under limited circumstances as described in Board of Education regulations, the failing scores of some transfer students may be excluded from the accreditation calculation.

Every Student Succeeds Act

The new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) eliminates many No Child Left Behind Act-era requirements and provides greater flexibility for states.

ESSA designates 2016-2017 as a transition year during which the U.S. Department of Education develops final regulations and states create implementation plans. The new law and the provisions of each state's plan to implement ESSA go into full effect with the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year.

Under ESSA, the flexibility waivers granted under the old federal education law are null and void after August 1, 2016. While the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) established by the state Board of Education under Virginia's waiver won't apply to most schools in 2016-2017, the AMOs will factor in the identification of Priority and Focus schools.

Priority, Focus & Reward Schools

Five percent of Virginia's Title I schools are identified as Priority schools based on overall reading and mathematics achievement and graduation rates in the case of high schools. Schools meeting one or more of the following criteria are identified as Priority schools:

- Title I schools and other schools receiving federal School Improvement Grant funds and identified as a Tier I or Tier II school
- Title I high schools with a federal graduation indicator of 60 percent or less for two or more of the most recent consecutive years
- Title I schools that fail to test 95 percent of students overall and in all subgroups in reading and mathematics for three consecutive years
- Title I schools in which overall achievement in reading and/or mathematics does not meet annual benchmarks — as needed to identify a number of schools equivalent to five percent of the state's Title I 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 are identified as Focus schools based on participation and achievement by students in the three proficiency gap groups in reading and mathematics testing.

Focus schools must employ a state-approved coach to help the division develop, implement and monitor intervention strategies to improve the performance of at-risk students.

Participation in State Assessments

Like NCLB, ESSA requires states to annually assess the reading and mathematics achievement of not less than 95 percent of students overall and 95 percent of students in each reporting group, including major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English language learners. These participation requirements apply during 2016-2017.