

**Virginia Board of Education**  
**Standing Committee on School and Division Accountability**  
**Wednesday, April 26, 2017**  
**10:00 a.m.**  
**Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building**

**Welcome and Opening Comments**

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the April 26, 2017 meeting of the Committee on School and Division Accountability: Kim Adkins; Diane Atkinson; Dr. Billy Cannaday, Jr.; James Dillard; Daniel Gecker; Elizabeth Lodal; and Dr. Jamelle Wilson. Dr. Steven Staples, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, was also present. Anne Holton and Sal Romero, Jr. were absent.

Ms. Atkinson, chair of this committee, convened the meeting at 10:05 a.m.

**Approval of the Minutes from the March 22, 2017 Committee Meeting**

Ms. Lodal made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 22, 2017 committee meeting. Dr. Cannaday seconded the motion, and the draft minutes were approved, with Ms. Adkins and Dr. Wilson abstaining.

**Public Comment**

Ms. Atkinson opened the floor to public comment. No individuals requested to address the committee.

**Presentation: Accountability Matrix Benchmark Selection – College and Career Readiness Index**

Dr. Jennifer Piver-Renna, Senior Executive Director for Research for the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), presented information to the Board on the college and career readiness index as a potential school quality indicator to be used for accountability.

- Dr. Piver-Renna reviewed some of the tenets in the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*, and how college and career readiness relates to the *Profile*. These principles from the *Profile*, which guided the development of the college and career readiness index, include:
  - Increasing internships and work-based learning experiences.
  - Increasing career exposure, exploration, and planning.
  - Emphasizing the five C's: critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship.

- Expanding performance assessments and reducing the number of credits verified by Standards of Learning (SOL) tests.
- Dr. Piver-Renna presented the proposed college and career readiness index for the accreditation matrix. The first step in calculating this index would be to determine the unduplicated count of: (1) students receiving credit for advanced coursework; (2) Career and Technical Education (CTE) completers also having a CTE credential; and (3) students with a work-based learning experience. This total would be divided by the number of students in the graduation cohort to determine the college and career readiness index.
- Dr. Piver-Renna explained each of the three proposed components of the college and career readiness index:
  1. “Students receiving credit for advanced coursework,” which would include credit received for Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB,) and dual-enrollment courses. Beginning in 2016-2017, divisions began reporting this information to VDOE, whereas previously, divisions only reported participation.
  2. “CTE completers also having a CTE credential” would include students who have met the requirement for a CTE concentration or sequence of courses, and earned a CTE credential by passing an exam that tests technical skills.
  3. “Students with a work-based learning experience” would include students with a coordinated, coherent sequence of career-development experiences related to the students’ career interests or goals. The current definition includes cooperative education, apprenticeships, internships, and clinical experiences, but could be expanded to other experiences.
- The college and career readiness index would provide a cohort measure which focuses on graduating students and avoids duplication with other school quality indicators.
- The proposed college and career readiness index uses a benchmark of 85 percent. Using currently available data, an 85 percent benchmark would designate 23 percent of schools as having Level One, At or Above Standard (Green) performance. However, due to the limitations of this currently available data, the benchmark may need to be reevaluated in the future.
- Dr. Piver-Renna discussed the proposed implementation of the college and career readiness index, which would coincide with the implementation of new graduation requirements from the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate*. Data collection would begin with the freshman class of 2018-2019, and the index would become applicable to school accountability at the time that cohort graduates.

The Board discussed the following points:

- One Board member asked what changes the Board is hoping to drive through the use of the college and career readiness index, and what interventions will be taken by the Board when schools struggle with the index. Dr. Piver-Renna stated that, through the work-based learning experiences, schools will be encouraged to focus on new opportunities for students to become engaged outside the classroom. The index will also help identify gaps in AP and IB courses, showing where students are not participating in advanced coursework. Virtual Virginia could be a useful tool in providing more advanced coursework opportunities in those divisions where participation is limited by availability.
- One Board member asked how internships fit into “work-based learning experience” and why the word “internships” was not used in the name of that component. Dr. Piver-Renna explained that in the current data collection, “work-based learning experience” encompasses many different experiences, including internships, cooperative education, apprenticeship, mentorship, job shadowing, service learning, and clinical experience.
- The proposed benchmark of 85 percent was discussed. One Board member expressed concern about setting the benchmark too high and subsequently needing to lower it. It would be preferable to begin with a lower benchmark and subsequently raise the benchmark, if necessary.
- Dr. Staples noted that the “Blue,” or Exemplar performance level of the matrix, has been omitted from this meeting’s presentations. An area of concern identified by stakeholders was that not all schools have the capacity to meet the Blue performance level. As the intent of the matrix is to encourage schools to move from one level to the next, including the Blue performance level may not be appropriate. Staff will continue to set metrics to recognize exemplar schools separate from the accreditation matrix.

**Presentation: Accountability Matrix Benchmark Selection – Achievement Gap Indicator**

Dr. Piver-Renna and Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent for Student Assessment and School Improvement for VDOE, presented information to the Board regarding the achievement gap indicator as a potential school quality indicator to be used for accountability.

- In considering achievement gaps, there are two main considerations: (1) How will achievement gaps be defined for accreditation? (2) How will student groups be defined for accreditation?
- For this presentation, Dr. Piver-Renna used the “combined rate” for determining achievement gaps. The combined rate for English reading and writing is based on an unduplicated count of students who pass state assessments, students demonstrating growth on state assessments, and English Learner (EL) students demonstrating progress toward English proficiency. The combined rate for mathematics is based upon an unduplicated count of students who pass state assessments, and students demonstrating growth on state assessments.

- Dr. Piver-Renna presented three options for defining the gap for the achievement gap indicator:
  - The state benchmark (75 percent for English; 70 percent for mathematics) is stable over time and aligns with the state standards for student performance. However, using the state benchmarks would not address gaps in higher-performing schools.
  - The all students state average captures gaps in higher-performing schools, but fluctuates year-to-year. This average is also significantly higher than the state benchmarks.
  - The “non” comparison groups (e.g., ELs versus non-ELs) avoids counting the same students in reporting and comparison groups, but also fluctuates from year-to-year. This could create inconsistent achievement goals across student groups.
  
- Dr. Piver-Renna presented three options for defining student groups for the achievement gap indicator:
  1. Economically disadvantaged students. (This is currently defined as those students who are eligible for free/reduced price meals or Medicaid, are receiving TANF, or are homeless/migrant.)
  2. Race, ethnicity, and an unduplicated count of economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and ELs. (This was formerly “Gap Group 1” under federal accountability.)
  3. Race, ethnicity, and separate groups for economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and ELs. (Students could potentially be counted in more than one group.)
  
- In choosing between these three options for the achievement gap indicator, the Board may select one or more groups for accreditation, or the Board may select each group for accreditation.
  - Selecting one or more groups for accreditation focuses attention on the selected groups, but may be detrimental to the progress of other groups. Furthermore, selecting a combined group, like Gap Group 1, has less of an impact because combining the data can mask individual groups.
  - Selecting each student group separately for accreditation increases transparency and is in alignment with the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*; however, the numerous data points would require additional interpretation for the accreditation matrix.
  
- Dr. Piver-Renna also discussed how performance in each individual reporting group would determine the overall school performance level for the achievement gap indicator.

She proposed that Level One, At or Above Standard (Green) would be the designation for schools where all reporting groups are performing at Level One or where only one reporting group is in the Level Two, Near Standard (Yellow) range; the Level Two, Near Standard (Yellow) performance level would be the designation for schools where two or more reporting groups are in the Level Two range and no more than one reporting group is at the Level Three, Below Standard (Red) range; and, Level Three, Below Standard (Red) would be assigned for schools where two or more reporting groups are in the Level Three range.

The Board discussed the following points:

- The Board discussed whether a three-year timeframe is the appropriate length of time to allow for improvement within the groups for achievement gaps. Dr. Piver-Renna explained that the purpose of using multiple years is stabilization. In comparing the data for achievement gaps using a three-year timeframe and a four-year timeframe, there was only a small difference in the benefit to schools. Additionally, movement can be achieved not just by meeting the benchmark, but also by reducing the failure rate.
- Board members discussed how using the combined rate (which includes the pass rate, student growth, and EL progress) affects the data for certain groups. In particular, when looking at achievement gaps using the “non” comparison groups, the inclusion of EL progress raises the combined rate for both the Hispanic and EL student groups. Dr. Piver-Renna noted that the combined rate recognizes different ways to define student achievement and also encourages schools to focus on all students, not just those that are close to achieving a passing score on assessments. It was requested that, when showing the combined rate, each of the three data points be shown individually, so that it is possible to see how much of the combined rate is attributed to student growth and EL progress.

### **Presentation: Review of Standards of Accreditation Part VIII**

Dr. Cynthia Cave, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications for VDOE, presented the Board with a review of Part VIII of the Standards of Accreditation which included school quality indicators, accountability, and accreditation.

- Dr. Cave reviewed the Board’s expectations for school accountability and accreditation, which include following: (1) Provide a comprehensive picture of school quality; (2) Drive continuous improvement for all schools; (3) Build on strengths and address gaps in the current system; and (4) Inform areas of technical assistance and school improvement resources.
- Part VIII lists and describes the school quality indicators used to measure school quality for accreditation, and the criteria used to select such indicators.

- Part VIII establishes performance levels for school quality indicators, which would use benchmarks to form the upper and lower limits to define the performance levels for each school quality indicator.
  - The performance levels that would be established include: (1) Level One: At or Above Standard/Green, (2) Level Two: Near Standard/Yellow, and (3) Level Three: Below Standard/Red.
- Dr. Cave discussed implementation of the school quality indicators for accreditation:
  - Effective with the 2018-2019 school year, the Board would apply performance levels to the school quality indicators and apply them to accreditation, with the exception of the college and career ready index, which would be applied no later than the 2021-2022 school year.
  - The academic year 2018-2019 would be considered a transition year. For 2018-2019 only, a school may achieve full accreditation by meeting the criteria and rules of either the 2017-2018 year or those effective 2018-2019, whichever is most beneficial.
- Part VIII provides the basis of accreditation designations:
  - Full Accreditation: When each school quality indicator is in the Green or Yellow performance level. For the transition year of 2018-2019, a school which meets the accreditation standards for designation as fully accredited under either the 2017-2018 accreditation calculation rules or the 2018-2019 rules for multiple school quality indicators will be so designated.
  - Accredited with Conditions: When a school has any school quality indicator in the Red performance level.
  - Accreditation Denied: When a school or school division fails to implement corrective action plans according to planned timelines, or has taken no action on identified strategies and interventions, the school is reviewed for potential designation by the Board as “Accreditation Denied.” The Board shall deny accreditation for any school that continues to demonstrate Red performance levels in any school quality indicator due to a failure to implement actions prescribed in a corrective action plan.
- As required by the *Code of Virginia*, Part VIII establishes the review cycle for accreditation. This review cycle includes an annual review of the performance levels for school quality indicators of all schools in the Commonwealth, and a triennial review for schools that have been fully accredited for three consecutive years.
- Dr. Cave discussed the possible actions that would be taken in response to school quality indicator performance:

- At the Level One (Green) performance level, no review by VDOE or submittal of reports by the school division or school would be required.
- At the Level Two (Yellow) performance level, a school and its division would have primary responsibility to analyze the issues and conditions which are probable causes and to determine, plan, and implement interventions and strategies to achieve improvement to Level One.
- At the Level Three (Red) performance level, a school and its division would work cooperatively with VDOE to analyze the issues and conditions which are probable causes of the indicator's level and to determine, plan, and implement the interventions and strategies to achieve improvement to Level One.
- Part VIII also includes recognition and rewards available to schools and school divisions for accountability performance. In the current regulations, this is the Virginia Index of Performance Incentive Program. Dr. Cave suggested that this section of Part VIII could include recognition for schools having exemplary performance in one or more school quality indicators.
- Dr. Cave discussed waivers and alternative accreditation. Part VIII provides conditions under which the board may grant waivers of regulations not mandated by state or federal law or designed to promote health or safety. This includes waivers for "School Divisions of Innovation," as established and specified in 2017 legislation. The regulations currently provide the basis for Board approval of alternative accreditation plans for certain special purpose schools, schools offering alternative education programs, and schools with a graduation cohort of 50 or fewer. Dr. Cave proposed adding language to Part VIII to reflect flexibility that has been added to the *Code*—this would permit a school board to request, on behalf of one or more of its schools, approval of an Individual School Accreditation Plan as authorized for other schools for specific circumstances.

The Board discussed the following points:

- One Board member noted that school quality indicators being considered for the purposes of accreditation should be clearly distinguished from school quality measures used for the School Quality Profile.
- One Board member inquired about the Board's flexibility to subsequently add additional school quality indicators to the SOA. Dr. Cave stated that it would be necessary to verify with the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB) whether or not this could be accomplished through Board-approved guidance or if regulatory action would be required.
- Board members discussed the definition of the Level Two (Yellow) performance level, and inquired whether growth would be necessary to remain designated Level Two for

successive years. Dr. Staples noted that these schools would be receiving interventions from VDOE to collaboratively build and adhere to an improvement plan.

- One Board member noted that the performance levels should be referenced as “At or Above Standard,” “Near Standard,” and “Below Standard” instead of using the colors associated with the levels.
- One Board member inquired about the Board’s ability to change the benchmarks associated with each school quality indicator, and whether or not that would be permissible under the currently proposed language. Dr. Cave stated that the Board would be able to reevaluate and amend those benchmarks as necessary.
- The challenges associated with limited resources were discussed. Some localities may have difficulty making achievements and improving their accreditation status due to the limited resources available to them. One Board member stated that the General Assembly should aid in supplying such resources. Dr. Cave noted that such potential impact would be noted on the fiscal impact statement submitted to DPB with the regulations.
- Board members discussed the Accreditation Denied designation and the ability of schools to avoid that designation by implementing a corrective action plan. In the proposal, it is unclear how long schools will be able to use a corrective action plan to avoid the Accreditation Denied designation. The designation should include provisions for limiting the amount of time schools can use corrective action plans without demonstrating results.

**Presentation: *The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)* - Virginia’s Federal Program Application**

Dr. Lynn Sodot, Director of the Office of Program Administration and Accountability for VDOE, and Ms. Loving-Ryder presented the Board with information on federal accountability under ESSA and Virginia’s Federal Program Application.

- Although ESSA provides states with some flexibility that was not permitted under *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), there are some mandated accountability requirements in ESSA that are the same or similar to what was required under NCLB. Accordingly, there is a continued requirement for states to:
  - Assess reading/language arts and mathematics annually in grades 3-8 and once in high school.
  - Assess science once in grades 3-5, once in grades 6-9, and once in grades 10-12.
  - Disaggregate results of accountability indicators for all students and designated reporting groups.

- Under ESSA, each state’s federal accountability system must address academic achievement, academic progress, graduation rates, progress for ELs gaining proficiency in English, and school quality. Academic indicators must carry greater weight than the school quality indicator in federal accountability.
- ESSA requires states to identify the lowest five percent of Title I schools as “Comprehensive Support and Improvement” schools, based on the performance of all students and any high school with a federal four-year cohort graduation rate below 67 percent. Comprehensive support and improvement schools will be identified beginning with the 2018-2019 school year.
- ESSA requires states to identify “Targeted Support and Improvement” schools as any school in which one or more reporting groups is performing at a very low level when compared with the schools identified for comprehensive support. These low-performing schools will be identified beginning with the 2018-2019 school year. ESSA also requires the identification of consistently underperforming schools for targeted support and improvement. Consistently underperforming schools include any school with one or more low-performing reporting groups over two years, and such schools will be identified beginning with the 2019-2020 school year.
- Dr. Sodot emphasized that, wherever possible, the federal accountability measures that determine how schools are identified should be aligned with the state determinations on accountability. Accordingly, schools identified for federal improvement would have school quality indicators at the Level Three (Red) or Level Two (Yellow) performance levels on the state accountability matrix.
- Some rules used in Virginia’s current state accountability calculations are not permitted under ESSA:
  - Virginia uses the Graduation and Completion Index (GCI) which incorporates all diploma types into the graduation calculation and does not penalize schools if students continue to attend high school after the fourth year as they pursue completion of diploma requirements. The Federal Graduation Indicator (FGI) differs in that to count as a graduate for the FGI, a student must earn a Standard or Advanced diploma, and other diplomas or certificates are not included in this rate. The FGI also provides less flexibility for students not graduating within four years.
  - In assessing ELs in Virginia, if the student has been enrolled in Virginia schools for fewer than 11 semesters, the student’s score counts in accreditation only if it is passing. ESSA provides less flexibility for ELs.
- ESSA requires states to establish long-term goals and interim measures of progress for all students and all reporting groups for each indicator. The five required indicators for federal accountability under ESSA are:

- Student achievement (pass rates on SOL reading and mathematics assessments)
  - Growth for elementary and middle schools (progress tables)
  - Graduation rates for high schools (FGI)
  - Progress in ELs gaining proficiency in English
  - School quality or student success indicator (chronic absenteeism, which is VDOE’s proposed indicator)
- Dr. Sodat proposed methodology to identify schools for comprehensive support and improvement, as required by ESSA. First, all Title I schools would be ranked separately using (1) the combined rate for all students in reading; and (2) the combined rate for all students in mathematics. These rankings would be averaged. The bottom five percent would then be identified from the average of the rankings. Dr. Sodat proposed that chronic absenteeism be used as the “tie breaker,” if necessary. Additionally, as required by ESSA, any high school with a federal four-year cohort graduation rate below 67 percent would also be identified.

The Board discussed the following points:

- In response to a question from a Board member, Dr. Staples explained that when using the FGI, which is more rigorous than Virginia’s GCI, there is currently only one high school in Virginia that is below a 67 percent graduation rate.
- Chronic absenteeism was discussed. When determining the federal “school quality or student success” indicator, for which chronic absenteeism was proposed, Dr. Sodat noted that other measures had been considered, such as the GCI or school climate. Dr. Sodat explained that chronic absenteeism was selected because research shows a strong correlation between chronic absenteeism and student achievement, and because it is an indicator that applies across all grades. Dr. Staples also noted that chronic absenteeism is already collected under the current data collection system, whereas measures, such as teacher effectiveness or school climate, are not currently collected statewide.
- In response to a question from a Board member, Dr. Sodat clarified that each group is distinct and identified through a separate process, and that no schools would be in both groups.

## **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.