

2009-2010 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 assessments of student achievement. The accountability system is part of a statewide program of support for the commonwealth's public schools and school divisions.

Schools receive two annual accountability ratings based on the performance of students on SOL tests and other statewide assessments.

A school's state accreditation rating reflects overall achievement in English, history/social science, mathematics and science. Schools in which students meet or exceed achievement objectives established by the Virginia Board of Education in these four major content areas are rated as "fully accredited."

Schools and school divisions are also rated according to the progress they are making toward the goals of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This federal law requires states to set annual achievement benchmarks in reading and mathematics leading to 100 percent proficiency by 2014. The law also requires testing in science at least once in elementary, middle and high school.

Schools and school divisions that meet or exceed all annual benchmarks in reading and mathematics are rated as having made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). States also receive AYP ratings.

While accreditation ratings are based on overall student achievement in all major content areas, AYP ratings are based on overall achievement *and* achievement by student subgroups in reading and mathematics.

ACCREDITATION: HIGH STANDARDS FOR LEARNING & ACHIEVEMENT

School accreditation ratings reflect student achievement on SOL tests and the other statewide 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 and may also reflect a three-year average of achievement. Adjustments may also be made for students with limited English proficiency and for students who have recently transferred into a Virginia public school. Additionally, accreditation ratings may reflect the success of a school in preparing students for retakes of SOL tests. Schools receive one of the following ratings:

FULLY ACCREDITED

High schools and middle schools are "fully accredited" if students achieve adjusted pass rates of 70 percent or above in all four content areas. A combined adjusted pass rate of at least 75 percent on English tests in grades 3-5 is required for full accreditation at the elementary school level and for other schools with students in these grades. Elementary schools must also achieve an adjusted pass rate of at least 70 percent in mathematics and in grade-five science and Virginia Studies (administered in grade 4 or 5), and pass rates of at least 50 percent in grade-three science and grade-three history.

Beginning with accreditation ratings announced in fall 2011, high schools must meet objectives for graduation — as well as achieve the required pass rates in English, history/social science, mathematics and science — for full accreditation. High schools that do not attain the minimum graduation benchmark, but meet all other requirements, can earn provisional accreditation until 2015 by meeting interim graduation benchmarks. High schools that achieve the required pass rates but do not meet the provisional benchmarks for graduation and completion will be rated as "accredited with warning."

ACCREDITED WITH WARNING

A school receives an “accredited with warning” rating if adjusted pass rates are below the achievement levels required for full accreditation. A school may hold this rating for no more than three consecutive years. Schools that receive this rating undergo academic reviews and are required to adopt and implement school improvement plans. Schools that are warned in English and/or mathematics are also required to adopt instructional programs proven by research to be effective in raising achievement in these subjects.

ACCREDITATION DENIED

A school is denied accreditation if it fails to meet the requirements for full accreditation for four consecutive years. Schools that are rated “accreditation denied” are subject to corrective actions prescribed by the Board of Education and agreed to by the local school board through a memorandum of understanding.

Within 45 days of receiving notice of a school being denied accreditation, a local school board must submit a proposed corrective action plan to the Board of Education describing the steps to be taken to raise achievement to state standards. The Board of Education will consider the proposed corrective action plan in developing a memorandum of understanding with the local school board, which must be in force by November 1 of the year that school has been denied accreditation.

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 superintendent and submit a copy of the evaluation to the Board of Education by December 1. In addition, the Board of Education may take action — as permitted by the Standards of Quality — against the local school board due to the failure of the local board to maintain accredited schools.

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);

ACCREDITATION BENCHMARKS (ADJUSTED PASS RATES)

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Grade 3</i>	<i>Grade 4-5</i>	<i>Grades 6-12</i>
English	75%	75%	70%
Mathematics	70%	70%	70%
Science	50%	70%	70%
History	50%	70%	70%

NOTE: Ratings for the 2009-2010 school year are based on achievement during 2008-2009 or on average achievement during the three most recent school years. Beginning with tests administered in 2010-2011, the pass rate for English will rise to 75 percent for all grades and the pass rates for the other three core areas will remain at 70 percent.

- A copy of the school division’s proposed corrective action plan — including a timeline for implementation — to improve the school’s accreditation rating; 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.

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

As an alternative to the memorandum of understanding, a local school board may choose to reconstitute a school denied accreditation and apply to the Board of Education for a rating of “conditionally accredited.”

CONDITIONALLY ACCREDITED

New schools — comprising students who previously attended one or more existing schools — are awarded this status for one year pending an evaluation of the performance of students on SOL tests and other statewide assessments. This rating may also be awarded to a school that is being reconstituted. A school rated as “conditionally accredited” following reconstitution will revert to a status of accreditation denied if it fails to meet the requirements for full accreditation by the end of the agreed-upon term, or if it fails to have its annual application for such rating renewed.

ACCREDITATION ADJUSTMENTS

Accreditation ratings may reflect credit awarded for successful remediation efforts and the exclusion of failing scores of some Limited English Proficient (LEP) students and transfer students.

REMEDICATION & RETESTING

Virginia’s accountability system recognizes successful remediation programs that help students achieve minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics in all tested grades. Schools are credited for successful remedial instruction when students pass tests in content areas in which they failed assessments during the previous year. If a student fails a test required for graduation and successfully retests during the same school year, the result of the first test is not included in the accreditation calculation.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

In kindergarten through grade 8, LEP students may be granted a one-time exemption from testing in history/social science and writing based on the judgment of a school-based committee. While state regulations also allow for a one-time exemption in science, federal law requires all students — including LEP students — to be tested in science at least once in elementary school, once in middle school and once in high school. Consequently, while LEP students may be exempted from the grade-three science assessment, they must take the grade-five test. The scores of LEP students enrolled in Virginia public schools for fewer than 11 semesters may be excluded from the calculation of accreditation ratings.

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 or from a private or home school 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.

ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS: VIRGINIA & THE ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states to set annual objectives for increasing student achievement with the goal of ensuring that all children have an opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. Schools, school divisions and states that meet these objectives make what law refers to as “Adequate Yearly Progress.”

ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

The yearly achievement benchmarks in reading and mathematics, established by the Board of Education as part of Virginia’s implementation of the ESEA are known as Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs).

ESEA IN BRIEF

- ESEA requires annual testing in grades 3-8 and at least once in high school to measure student progress in reading and mathematics. The law also requires states to test all students in science at least once in elementary school, once in middle school and once in high school.
- ESEA requires schools, school divisions and states to meet annual objectives for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for student performance on statewide tests in reading and mathematics.
- ESEA requires the identification of states, schools and school divisions making and not making AYP.
- ESEA requires all students to be proficient in reading and mathematics by 2013-2014.

KEY POINT: For a school, a school division or the commonwealth to make AYP, it must meet or exceed 29 benchmarks for student achievement and participation in statewide testing. Missing a single benchmark may result in a school, a school division or the state not making AYP.

AYP: ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES FOR READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS

2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
STARTING POINT 60.7	61.0	61.0	65.0	69.0	73.0	77.0	81.0	85.0	89.0	93.0	97.0	GOAL 100%

AYP: ANNUAL MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES FOR MATHEMATICS

2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
STARTING POINT 58.4	59.0	59.0	63.0	67.0	71.0	75.0	79.0	83.0	87.0	91.0	95.0	GOAL 100%

NOTE: AYP ratings for the 2009-2010 school year are based on student performance on tests administered during 2008-2009 or on average achievement during the three most recent school years. Achievement must equal or exceed the Annual Measurable Objective shaded above.

The tables show Virginia’s AMOs for reading and mathematics. For a school or school division to have made AYP (based on achievement during 2008-2009) at least 81 percent of students overall and in each subgroup must have demonstrated proficiency in reading and at least 79 percent of students overall and in each subgroup must have demonstrated proficiency in mathematics. To compensate for expected year-to-year fluctuations in achievement, Virginia uses up to three years of achievement data in calculating AYP.

KEEP IN MIND

- A school that does not achieve AYP is not necessarily a “failing” school. A more balanced and accurate assessment of a school’s overall performance can be determined by comparing the number of AMOs that a school met with the total number of AMOs.
- Virginia is a national leader in implementing high academic standards and measures to hold schools accountable for achievement through objective testing.

AYP PARTICIPATION

ESEA requires a minimum of 95 percent participation of all students and all subgroups of students in the statewide assessment program at the school, division and state levels. If participation overall or in one or more subgroups is below 95 percent, a school or school division is not considered to have made AYP regardless of the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency.

AYP & STUDENT SUBGROUPS

AYP applies to all students and to these subgroups:

- Students with disabilities
- LEP students
- Economically disadvantaged students
- White students
- Black students
- Hispanic students

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

A student with disabilities is assessed in accordance with his or her Individualized Education Program (IEP). Students with disabilities may take SOL tests (with or without special accommodations), or may be assessed through alternative grade-level tests.

Students with significant cognitive disabilities are assessed through an alternate test. ESEA, however, places a one-percent cap on the percentage of test takers in the state who may be counted as proficient based on alternate assessments.

Virginia is also allowed to use a proxy percentage to represent the number of students with disabilities who would have met modified grade-level standards in reading and mathematics during 2008-2009 if assessments for these students had been available.

The proxy percentage (15 percent for reading and 16 percent for mathematics) is added to the pass rates of students with disabilities for schools and divisions that otherwise would not make AYP solely because of the achievement of disabled students. The proxy is also applied at the state level.

LEP STUDENTS

School-based LEP committees determine how LEP students participate in the state assessment program. ESEA allows a one-time exemption from testing in reading in grades 3-8 for LEP students who have attended school in the United States for less than 12 months. All LEP students must participate in mathematics assessments regardless of when they arrived in the United States.

If an LEP student in his or her first year of enrollment is tested, the student is counted as participating in the state assessment program for AYP purposes. Failing scores of tested LEP students in the first year of enrollment are not included in AYP calculations.

LEP students at the lowest levels of English proficiency may take an alternative grade-level assessment for reading and a plain-English version of the mathematics SOL test for up to three years.

OTHER ACADEMIC INDICATORS REQUIRED UNDER ESEA

In addition to the annual benchmarks in reading and mathematics, Virginia schools and school divisions must also meet annual objectives for progress on other indicators of academic achievement. These “other academic indicators” include attendance, science, writing, history/social science and graduation.

Prior to the start of the school year, school divisions, elementary schools and middle schools select one of the following as an academic indicator:

- Attendance — the objective for attendance during 2008-2009 is 94 percent.

- Science — the objective for science achievement during 2008-2009 is 70 percent.
- Writing — the objective for writing achievement during 2008-2009 is 70 percent.
- History/Social Science — the objective for history/social science achievement during 2008-2009 is 70 percent.

For high schools and other schools with a graduating class, graduation is the other academic indicator. School divisions and the commonwealth must also meet the annual objective for graduation.

- In 2007, the Board of Education established an interim objective for high school graduation of 61 percent until the commonwealth developed the capacity to calculate graduation rates based on longitudinal student-level data. Calculations of AYP ratings for the 2009-2010 school year include comparisons with this interim benchmark.
- In keeping with Title I regulations effective November 28, 2008, the Board of Education will establish a new graduation rate objective and set annual targets requiring continuous and substantial improvement.

RETAKE OF END-OF-COURSE TESTS

The achievement of students on all retakes of end-of-course assessments in reading and mathematics will be included in the calculation of AYP ratings. If a student fails a test required for graduation and successfully retests during the same school year, the first test does not count in calculating AYP.

SAFE HARBOR

Another way for a school, a school division or the state to make AYP is through “safe harbor.” Safe harbor recognizes improvements in teaching and learning that reduce the failure rate of students in a subgroup by at least 10 percent - even if the AMO was not met. However, subgroups making AYP through safe harbor must also meet the objective or show improvement on the school or division’s other academic indicator(s).

TITLE I SCHOOLS

A Title I school is a school that receives federal funds to help children in high-poverty areas who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. Title I funding is based on the number of low-income children in a school, generally those eligible for free lunch or reduced-fee lunch programs. Some Title I schools provide supplemental federally funded instructional programs for qualifying students. These schools are known as targeted-assistance schools. Title I schools in which 40 percent or more students qualify for free or reduced-fee lunch may provide schoolwide programs. The following accountability ratings and actions apply to Title I schools that do not make AYP for two or more consecutive years in the same subject area(s):

PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE — YEAR ONE

A Title I school that does not make AYP for two consecutive years in the same subject area is identified for improvement and must notify parents of its status prior to the beginning of the school year. The school must offer all students the opportunity to transfer to a school within the division that is not identified for improvement. Lowest-achieving students receive priority in the awarding of transfers. A school in year one of improvement must also develop and implement a school improvement plan.

A Title I school in its first year of improvement that makes AYP is held in first-year improvement status. A school identified for improvement exits improvement status by making AYP for two consecutive years.

SUPPLEMENTAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES & PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE — YEAR TWO

A Title I school identified for improvement that does not make AYP for a third consecutive year in the same subject area enters the second year of improvement. The school must notify parents of its status and continue to offer public school choice. In addition, the school must offer supplemental educational services to low-income students. If funds are insufficient to provide supplemental services to all students whose parents request tutoring, school divisions must give priority to the lowest-achieving eligible students.

A Title I school in its second year of improvement that makes AYP remains in second-year improvement status.

CORRECTIVE ACTION — YEAR THREE

A school division must take corrective action to raise achievement in a Title I schools in the third year of school improvement status. The school must continue to offer public school choice and supplemental services, and the school division must take at least one of the following corrective actions:

- Replace school staff deemed relevant to the failure to make AYP
- Implement a new curriculum shown by research as effective in raising achievement
- Decrease the authority of school-level management
- Appoint an outside expert to advise the school on the implementation plan developed during the first year of school improvement
- Extend the school year or school day
- Restructure the internal organization of the school

A Title I school in its third year of improvement that makes AYP remains in third-year improvement status.

RESTRUCTURING (PLANNING) — YEAR FOUR

A school division must develop restructuring/alternative governance plan for a Title I school that enters year four of school improvement status. A school in year four must also:

- Continue to provide public school choice
- Continue to offer supplemental educational services
- Continue to take the corrective action selected in year three
- Prepare a plan and make necessary arrangements for restructuring/alternative governance of the school

A Title I school in its fourth year of improvement that makes AYP remains in fourth-year improvement status.

RESTRUCTURING (IMPLEMENTATION) — YEAR FIVE

A restructuring/alternative governance plan developed during year four is implemented if the school again does not make AYP in the same subject area and moves into year five of improvement status. The implemented plan must include one of the following actions:

- Reopen the school as a charter school
- Replace all or most of the school staff relevant to the school's failure to make AYP
- Turn the management of the school over to a private educational management company or other entity with a demonstrated record of effectiveness
- Any other major restructuring of school governance

NOTE: If a Title I school in restructuring fails to make AYP, the school continues to implement its restructuring/alternative governance plan while receiving technical assistance from the school division and state.

NON-TITLE I SCHOOLS

Non-Title I schools in Virginia are not subject to school improvement sanctions under ESEA. However, non-Title I schools that do not make AYP for three or more consecutive years must analyze data and implement corrective actions as specified by the school division.

SCHOOL DIVISIONS IN IMPROVEMENT

School divisions that do not make AYP in the same subject area across all grade spans for two consecutive years must develop and implement improvement plans within three months of identification. ESEA requires that school division improvement plans include:

- Scientifically based strategies and best practices for raising student achievement
- Professional development for faculty and instructional staff
- Specific achievement goals for subgroups not making AYP
- Identification of impediments to higher achievement by low-performing students
- Strategies to promote parental involvement
- Relevant student learning activities, before school, after school or during the summer
- Fiscal responsibilities of the school division and the technical assistance needed

ACCOUNTABILITY TERMINOLOGY

Academic review - A process for helping schools and school divisions identify and analyze instructional and organizational factors affecting student achievement

Academic review team - A team that conducts an academic review

Accreditation denied - Accreditation rating given to a school when students achieve adjusted pass rates below those required to earn the fully accredited rating for the current year as well as the preceding three consecutive years

Accredited with warning - Accreditation rating given to a school when students achieve adjusted pass rates below those required to meet the fully accredited rating. The rating includes the subject area(s) in which the school is deficient (for example, accredited with warning in English). A school can receive the accredited with warning classification no more than three consecutive years.

Achievement gap - Differences in academic performance among student groups

Adjusted pass rate - In calculating accreditation ratings, allowances are made for certain transfer students, students who speak little or no English and students who pass retakes of tests after receiving remedial instruction. These allowances result in adjusted pass rates which are used to determine accreditation ratings.

AYP - Adequate Yearly Progress represents the minimum level of improvement that schools and school divisions must achieve each year as required by ESEA.

Alignment - The correlation between Virginia's SOL, what is taught in the classroom and what appears on the SOL tests. Curriculum alignment ensures that students are taught the material subject to testing.

Alternate and Alternative assessments - Students with disabilities may be tested through the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) or the Virginia Grade-Level Alternative (VGLA) depending on the

nature of the disability. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students at the lowest levels of English proficiency may also be tested using the VGLA. The Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP) provides students with disabilities with an alternative means of meeting the commonwealth's testing-related graduation requirements.

AMOs - Annual Measurable Objectives are the minimum required percentages of students determined to be proficient in each content area

Assessment - A test or other method for measuring achievement

Conditionally accredited - Accreditation rating given to a new school for one year in order to allow for tests to be given. This rating may also be given to a school that is being reconstituted.

Corrective action plan - A plan outlining methods to improve teaching, administration or curriculum that a school or school division classified as "in improvement" undertakes to improve student achievement

Disaggregated data - Data sorted by groups of students. Groups include students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic groups, have special education needs, or have limited English proficiency.

ESEA - Elementary and Secondary Education Act is the primary federal law affecting K-12 education. The most recent reauthorization of the law is also known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Expedited retake - A SOL test taken during the same academic year, and before the next scheduled test administration, by a student who, on his first attempt, scored within 25 points of passing or has exceptional or mitigating circumstances

Fully accredited - The accreditation rating earned by a school when students achieve an adjusted pass rate of 75 percent in third-grade and fifth-grade English,

70 percent in mathematics and 50 percent in third-grade science and history/social science. Otherwise, the student results must meet the adjusted pass rate of 70 percent in each of the four core academic areas – English, mathematics, history/social science.

indicators. Prior to the beginning of the school year, school divisions must declare whether they will use attendance, science, writing or history as the other academic indicator for elementary and middle schools.

Graduation rate - Graduation rates used as AYP indicators for schools, school divisions and the state include all recipients of any type of certificate or diploma (as well as students who have dropped out) in the denominator and only those students receiving a Standard Diploma or Advanced Studies Diploma (excluding students receiving a Special Diploma, Modified Standard Diploma, Certificate of Attendance or GED certificate) in the standard number of years in the numerator. All Board of Education-approved diplomas will be included in accreditation calculations when graduation is added as an accreditation indicator with ratings for the 2011-2012 school year.

Parental involvement - The participation of parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communication involving student learning and school activities. Parental involvement is a component of ESEA.

Public school choice - See “Transfer Option”

Reconstitution - A process used to initiate a range of accountability actions to improve pupil performance, curriculum and instruction to address deficiencies that caused a school to be rated accreditation denied which may include, but is not limited to, restructuring a school’s governance, instructional program, staff or student population.

Inclusion - The practice of placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms

Restructuring/Alternative governance - For Title I schools that move into year four of school improvement, this may include reopening the school as a charter school, replacing staff relevant to the school’s failure to make progress, or turning the management of the school over to a private educational management company with a demonstrated record of effectiveness

In improvement - If a Title I school or a school division does not make AYP in the same subject area for two consecutive years, the school or division is considered to be “in improvement” and is required under ESEA to take certain actions to raise achievement.

Safe harbor - A provision for making AYP under ESEA intended for schools and school divisions that are making progress in raising student achievement but not yet meeting target goals for AYP

Instruction - The methods used to teach students, including lecture, discussion, hands-on activity, exercise, experiment, role-playing, small group work and writing.

SEA - State Education Agency refers to the Virginia Board of Education, which is responsible for the general supervision of a state’s public elementary and secondary schools.

LEA - Local Education Agency is the term used by the federal education law to describe a local school division.

School Improvement Plan - Strategies and steps that a school will utilize to raise student achievement. A plan may involve new programs, more assistance for students, new curricula and/or teacher training.

LEP - Limited English Proficient refers to students for whom English is a second language and who are not reading or writing English at their grade level.

NCLB - See “ESEA”

Scientifically based research - Research that involves the application of rigorous, systemic and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge regarding the effectiveness of educational activities and programs

Other academic indicator - For AYP calculations, in addition to meeting reading and mathematics objectives, elementary and middle schools must also meet benchmarks for attendance, science, writing or history, and high schools must also meet or show improvement in graduation. These additional objectives are known as other academic

Substitute Tests - Virginia allows high school students to use nationally recognized assessments such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and SAT II subject tests as substitutes for the related SOL tests. All Board of Education-approved substitute tests measure content that incorporates or exceeds the related SOL content.

- For AYP purposes, AP and IB tests are counted in the same way as all other state assessments.
- For accreditation, all board-approved substitute assessments are included.

Supplemental educational services - Students in a Title I school in year two of improvement are eligible to receive tutoring or supplemental educational services. Parents can choose the appropriate services for their child from a list of state-approved providers. The school division must pay for the services.

SOL - Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools describe the commonwealth's expectations for student learning and achievement in grades K-12 in English, mathematics, science, history/social science, technology, the fine arts, foreign language, health and physical education and driver education.

Title I – Federal program designed to help low-income children who are behind academically or at risk of falling behind. Title I funding is based on the number of low-income children in a school, generally those eligible for free lunch or reduced-fee lunch programs.

Transfer option - Also referred to as “Public School Choice.” Title I schools identified as needing improvement have to provide the option for students to transfer within the division to a school that has made AYP. The school division is required to provide transportation to those students.

VAAP - The Virginia Alternate Assessment Program is designed to evaluate the performance of students with significant cognitive disabilities. The VAAP is available to students in grades 3-8 and students in grade 11 who are working on academic standards that have been reduced in complexity and depth. Students participating in the VAAP must compile a collection of work samples to demonstrate performance on the SOL content for which they have received instruction.

VGLA - The Virginia Grade Level Alternative is available for some students with disabilities and LEP students in grades 3-8 as an alternative assessment for SOL testing. Students who qualify to participate in the VGLA are required to demonstrate grade-level achievement through a collection of student work in the content area. Eligible LEP students are those at level 1 or level 2 of English language proficiency.

VSEP - The Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program provides students with disabilities who are unable to participate in the regular SOL assessments with an alternative means of meeting the commonwealth's testing-related graduation requirements. Students participating in the VSEP are expected to provide evidence of achievement through a compilation of coursework.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING SCHOOLS RECEIVING “ACCREDITATION DENIED” STATUS

What does it mean if my child’s school receives an accreditation denied rating?

Public schools in Virginia receive an accreditation rating each year based on results of tests given during the previous school year. For example, the accreditation rating for school year 2009-2010 is based on the results of tests given during the 2008-2009 school year.

Schools receive the rating of accreditation denied when students fail to achieve adjusted pass rates to meet the fully accredited rating for the current year as well as the preceding three consecutive years.

If my child’s school is denied accreditation, does that mean my child is not getting a good education?

Accreditation ratings reflect overall achievement within a school, not the performance or learning of individual students. In assessing the quality of the education provided by a school, parents should also consider individual achievement on SOL tests, classroom grades and other measures of learning and performance.

If my child’s school is denied accreditation, does that mean the state is going to take over my child’s school?

Because the state constitution gives local school boards the responsibility of the day-to-day operations of schools within a division, the Virginia Department of Education or the Board of Education cannot “take over” a public school.

If my child’s school receives an accreditation denied rating, what will happen?

The school receiving an accreditation denied rating must provide parents of the enrolled students:

- Within 30 days, written notice of the school’s accreditation rating

- A copy of the school division’s proposed corrective action plan that includes a timeline for implementation
- An opportunity for public comment on the proposed corrective action plan prior to its adoption

After considering public comment, the school division will finalize the school’s corrective action plan. Then the local school board and the Board of Education will sign a memorandum of understanding on or before Nov. 1.

The memorandum of understanding may include, but is not limited to:

- An educational service delivery and management review approved by the Board of Education
- Employing an approved turnaround specialist to address conditions preventing educational progress, effectiveness and academic success

In addition to the memorandum of understanding, the local school board will submit periodic status reports — signed by the principal, division superintendent and local school board chairman — to the Board of Education.

A school division with any schools denied accreditation must submit a report to the Board of Education by October 1 describing each school’s progress toward meeting the requirements for full accreditation. The Board of Education will include the information in its annual report to the governor and General Assembly.

If a school division has one-third or more of its schools denied accreditation, the local school board must evaluate the superintendent and submit a copy of the evaluation to the Board of Education by December 1. In addition, the Board of Education may take action against the local school board, as permitted by the Standards of Quality, for failure to maintain accredited schools.

Are there any other options if my child's school is denied accreditation?

A local school board may choose to close the school, combine the school with a higher performing school in the division or reconstitute the school. Reconstitution may include, but is not limited to, restructuring a school's governance, instructional program, staff or student population.

If a school is reconstituted, the local school board may apply to the Board of Education for conditional accreditation. The application must outline specific responses to all areas of deficiency.

A reconstituted, conditionally accredited school will be denied accreditation if it fails to meet the requirements for full accreditation after three years, or if it fails to have its annual application renewed.

Is the staff at my child's school going to be replaced because of the accreditation denied rating?

There may be some personnel changes in your child's school, but that decision will be made by the local school division. School staffing is the responsibility of the local school board.

What happens if my child's school closes?

Your child will continue to receive a public school education, but at a different school. Your local school division will be able to tell you where your child will be attending school.

Can I request a transfer for my child to a school that is fully accredited?

Schools receive two annual accountability ratings; a state accreditation rating and an adequate yearly progress rating under ESEA. Your child may be eligible for a transfer if his or her school is under ESEA school improvement sanctions in addition to being denied state accreditation. ESEA requires schools to notify parents if their children are eligible to transfer to a higher-performing school.

What can I do if I receive notification that my child's school is denied accreditation?

Talk with your child's teacher to see what you can do to help increase or maintain your child's academic level. Attend any meetings held by the PTA, local school officials or division officials concerning your child's school. Share your comments and concerns with your school officials and local school board.

If my child's high school is not fully accredited, will that impact my child's ability to get into college?

The accreditation status of a high school does not appear on transcripts that are provided to colleges, universities or employers. Your child's diploma is recognized as equal to any other Virginia diploma of the same type, regardless of the school's accreditation status.

Colleges and universities look at a variety of factors such as SAT or ACT results, individual SOL test results, types of courses and rigor of courses taken in high school, grade-point average and class ranking when making acceptance decisions.