# Title: Proposal to Adopt Special Provisions Regarding the Use of the

# Chronic Absenteeism Indicator for Accreditation Year 2022-2023

## Date: April 20, 2022

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## Presented to: Work Session

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## Summary of the Topic:

Chronic absenteeism is one of nine indicators in Virginia’s School Accreditation Model. Based on the relationship between school attendance and student achievement, chronic absenteeism was selected as a measure of student engagement. Chronically absent students are defined as those who are absent 10% or more of their enrolled school days. The performance level a school earns on the chronic absenteeism indicator is used in conjunction with the performance levels of the other indicators to determine a school’s accreditation status.

School division leaders have reported increased absenteeism in schools during school year 2021-2022 due to recommended quarantine guidelines for “close-contacts” (someone exposed to a person infected with COVID-19), isolation guidelines for those with illness, and students being kept at home because of symptoms that could not be easily distinguished from COVID-19.

Under normal circumstances, school divisions have control of the programs, school-level policies, processes, and practices they put in place to engage students in school. However, student absences due to COVID-19 were not necessarily a result of the lack of school-level policies and practices put in place to engage students and curb absenteeism, and as such, it could be argued that the chronic absenteeism data for 2021-2022 may not accurately reflect school efforts to engage students.

While school divisions were given flexibility to count student quarantine or isolation days as present if the student received remote instruction, this flexibility may not have been implemented with fidelity across the state due to staffing shortages, numbers of students being quarantined at one time, lack of reliable internet connectivity, and/or lack of understanding of the flexibilities afforded to schools. In addition, due to this unprecedented situation, student records may not accurately represent the status of students who were indeed absent or receiving remote instruction.

Because of the circumstances surrounding chronic absenteeism in 2021-2022, the VDOE is asking the Board to exercise its authority under [8VAC20-131-380 F3](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter131/section380/) of the *Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (SOA)* to adopt special provisions related to the use of a school quality indicator in determining the accreditation status of schools. Specifically, the SOA states: *“The board may adopt special provisions related to the measurement and use of a school quality indicator as prescribed by the board. The board may also alter the inclusions and exclusions from the performance level calculations by providing adequate notice to local school boards.”*

At the April 21, 2022 business meeting, the Board will be asked to consider the adoption of special provisions to remove the chronic absenteeism indicator from the determination of school accreditation status for 2022-2023 only. The school’s earned performance level and chronic absenteeism rate will still be assigned to schools and will be reported for schools to ensure public transparency.

The work session will give the Board the opportunity to hear and discuss research-based information, chronic absenteeism’s use in the Virginia school accountability system, the concerns regarding the use of chronic absenteeism in accreditation for 2022-2023, and the proposed adoption of special provisions being requested, in preparation for the business meeting on April 21, 2022.

## Timetable for Follow-up or Next Steps:

At the April 21, 2022 business meeting, the Board will be asked to consider the adoption of special provisions to remove the chronic absenteeism indicator from the determination of school accreditation status for 2022-2023 only.