



RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE  
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION  
AND THE  
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
TO PROMOTE EXCELLENCE  
AND HIGHER STUDENT  
ACHIEVEMENT IN RESPONSE TO  
HOUSE BILL 938

JUNE 2023

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Last year, the General Assembly charged the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Secretary of Education to work with policy experts and education stakeholders to develop recommendations to promote excellence and higher student achievement in the commonwealth.

The Virginia Department of Education and the Education Secretariat have worked for almost eighteen months to study outcomes of policies in other states across the nation to ensure that Virginia is implementing best-in-class policies. Based on the input of key stakeholders—including those in the workgroup, policy experts, and the insights of the Secretary of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, this report has identified four key areas where Virginia schools can improve and develop best-in-class practices:

- **Develop a strong accreditation system:** Virginia’s accreditation system should communicate student achievement in school so that students, parents, teachers, and school leaders can assess student performance and provide targeted supports.
- **Set proficiency standards on SOL assessments that align with excellence:** Virginia must raise the expectations for our students to ensure they receive the best education and are equipped to compete with students across the country and the world.
- **Promote excellence in instruction and student achievement in mathematics:** The mathematic SOLs need to be reinvigorated with rigor and applicable content for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- **Expand pathways and options for students that ensure college and career readiness:** Our K-12 education system should prepare every student for success in life, whether that be pursuing postsecondary education and training, joining the military, or entering the job market right out of school.



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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Superintendent of Public Instruction

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The Honorable Louise Lucas  
Chair, Senate Education and Health  
P.O. Box 700  
Portsmouth, VA 23705-0700

The Honorable John Avoli  
Vice Chair, House Education  
P.O. Box #1942  
Staunton, VA 24402

Dear Senator Lucas and Delegate Avoli:

We are pleased to submit the attached recommendations to the General Assembly to promote educational excellence and higher student achievement in the Commonwealth of Virginia. House Bill 938 mandated the development and submission of recommendations to the General Assembly on six specific goals of public education, as identified in H.B. 938: 1) Promoting excellence in instruction and student achievement in mathematics; 2) Expanding the Advanced Studies Diploma as an option for students in public high schools in the Commonwealth; 3) Increasing the transparency of performance measures for public elementary and secondary schools in the Commonwealth; 4) Ensuring that performance measures for public elementary and secondary schools prioritize the attainment of grade-level proficiency and growth during the course of a school year and from school year to school year in reading and mathematics for all students, especially in grades kindergarten through five; 5) Ensuring that the Commonwealth's proficiency standards on Standards of Learning assessments in reading and mathematics are maintained; and 6) Ensuring a strong accreditation system that promotes meaningful accountability year-over-year.

Over the last year, the Youngkin Administration has had a laser-like focus on restoring excellence in education. At this juncture, we are poised to build on the progress we made in Year One to ensure our school divisions are serving the needs of every individual child. In the May 2022 report, [Our Commitment to Virginians](#), this Administration highlighted data that demonstrated the significant gaps in achievement of Virginia's students; decisions made at the state level exacerbated student achievement gaps. Specifically, when state leaders lowered expectations, achievement across all student populations declined. We then announced a plan to put Virginia on a new path toward success.

As we focus on restoring high expectations and excellence for all students, we are taking steps to ensure that parents, teachers, education leaders, the public and policymakers have access to quality, timely, and actionable information about how every public school is preparing students to be prepared for success in life after graduation. We are embarking on a full-scale plan to redefine proficiency, institute a transparent and rigorous accountability system, rethink Virginia's assessment system, and ensure that educators, parents, and students have access to actionable data that can be used to improve student outcomes.

Moving forward, we will further define the policies and take specific actions to build transparency and accountability in Virginia’s educational system. We are committed to increasing expectations so that Virginia’s education system is the strongest in the nation. As a part of this effort, we are working to create more educational opportunities and ensure that students have access to the individual supports and services they need.

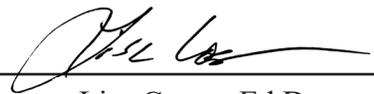
In addition, this Administration is committed to breaking up the one-size-fits-all education model. We know that students all learn differently and the K-12 system must adjust to accommodate different learners. We will build a best-in-class educational system that ensures every student is prepared for post-secondary opportunities and long-term success in life.

The recommendations included in this report provide strategic actions to raise expectations, increase rigor, and provide greater transparency and accountability for results. This plan must be a partnership between the Administration, Virginia State Board of Education, and the General Assembly to make the changes and improvements we know are necessary to get Virginia back on track. We look forward to working with stakeholders, the business community, higher education leaders, parents and families, the State Board of Education, and the General Assembly to prioritize student outcomes and put the individual needs of students and families first. We are committed to collaborating with you in this important work.

Please contact [Melissa Velazquez](mailto:melissa.velazquez@doe.virginia.gov), [melissa.velazquez@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:melissa.velazquez@doe.virginia.gov) Assistant Superintendent of Policy and Communications at the Virginia Department of Education if you have any questions or if you need additional information regarding the recommendations in this report.

Sincerely,

  
Aimee Rogstad Guidera  
Secretary of Education

  
Lisa Coons, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

# OVERVIEW OF HB 938 REPORT

In response to HB 938, the Board of Education recommended, and the Virginia Department of Education convened, key stakeholders to evaluate and make recommendations regarding six specific goals in public education in Virginia. A stakeholder workgroup met four different times from September 2022 through November 2022 to develop recommendations for the Secretary of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. We appreciate the work of the stakeholder workgroup.

Included in this report are the key action steps we can take to put Virginia on the right path toward educational excellence. The recommendations included in this report raise expectations for all students throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Having experienced a five-year downward trajectory in student performance, we are at crossroads in Virginia. It is imperative we shift our focus back toward educational rigor, transparency, and accountability for results. We must restore an educational system that is once again the best in the nation for aspiring scholars, job seekers, and overall self sufficiency

Virginia is also dealing with a nationwide decline in enrollment fueled by lower birth rates in recent years. This new reality dictates that we must become more strategic and intentional about the state's educational investments. Increasing funding to public education, absent data-driven, evidence-based solutions, will not result in the improvements we know we need to make. We must identify and prioritize those programs that will make the most difference for our students, and fully invest in and support those programs that raise the floor and the ceiling.

Where there is an educational need, we must utilize research-based and evidence-based supports and interventions that will make a difference. This Administration has supported increased funding for those evidence-based supports and services that make a meaningful difference, such as adding math coaches and literacy coaches to every school and fully implementing the science of reading based Virginia Literacy Act.

# Detailed Overview on HB 938

## CHAPTER 99

*An Act to require the Board of Education, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction, to convene a group of stakeholders to evaluate certain current and proposed policies and performance standards for public elementary and secondary schools and students and report recommendations for revising these policies and standards to promote excellence and higher student achievement.*

[H 938]

Approved April 6, 2022

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

*1. § 1. The Board of Education (the Board) shall collaborate with the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Secretary of Education to convene a group of stakeholders to include parents, public school principals, public school superintendents, public school board members, public school teachers, institutions of higher education, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, industry partners and employers, and other concerned stakeholders to evaluate, to implement where possible, and to otherwise make recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the following goals:*

*1. Promoting excellence in instruction and student achievement in mathematics;*

*2. Expanding the Advanced Studies Diploma as an option for students in public high schools in the Commonwealth;*

*3. Increasing the transparency of performance measures for public elementary and secondary schools in the Commonwealth;*

*4. Ensuring that performance measures for public elementary and secondary schools prioritize the attainment of grade-level proficiency and growth during the course of a school year and from school year to school year in reading and mathematics for all students, especially in grades kindergarten through five;*

*5. Ensuring that the Commonwealth's proficiency standards on Standards of Learning assessments in reading and mathematics are maintained; and*

*6. Ensuring a strong accreditation system that promotes meaningful accountability year-over-year.*

*§ 2. No later than November 30, 2022, the Secretary of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall report to the Chairmen of the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health the results of the evaluation conducted pursuant to § 1 of this act and recommendations to achieve the goals set forth in § 1 of this act.*

# ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

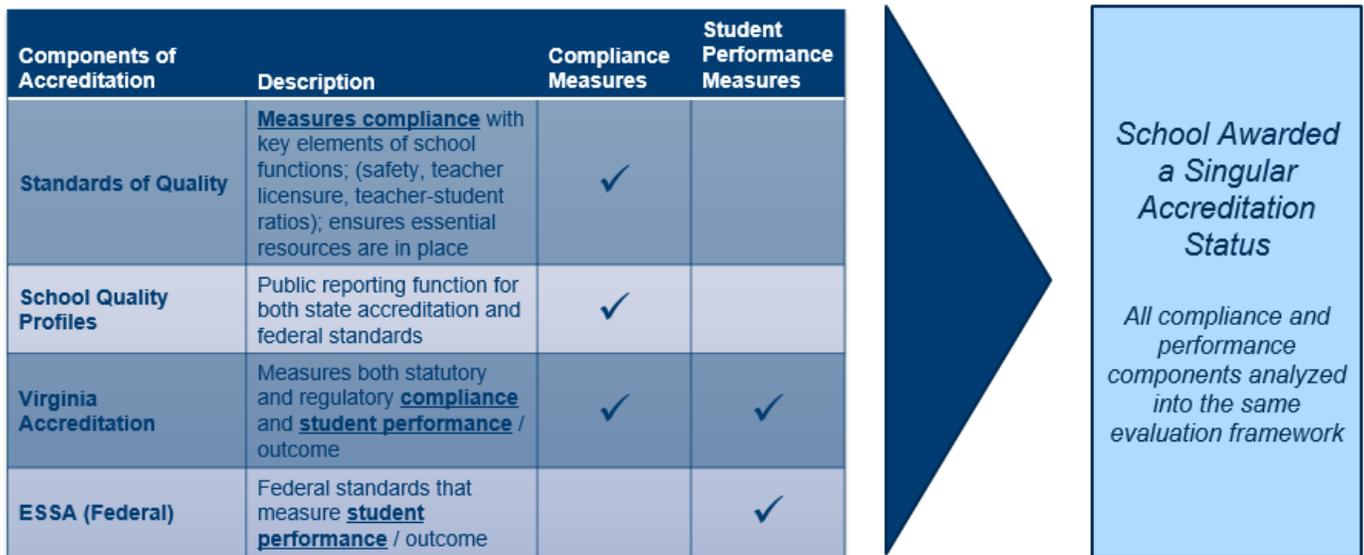
## Develop a Strong Accreditation System

### That Provides Meaningful Data Year-Over-Year and Prioritizes Proficiency While Rewarding Growth

*Addressing Charges 4 and 6 from the General Assembly*

Accreditation status is awarded to schools as an official recognition that a school is credible and maintains educational standards, such that parents and students can trust the school meets acceptable levels of quality. Most states throughout the nation have two distinct systems: 1) an accreditation system that is compliance-based and ensures that schools are meeting all state statutory and regulatory requirements; and 2) an accountability system that provides timely and transparent information on student and school performance. Virginia’s current accreditation system combines these two systems into one system as a single accreditation system, limiting transparency into how schools maintain compliance and recognize student achievement independent of each other.

## VIRGINIA'S CURRENT ACCREDITATION SYSTEM



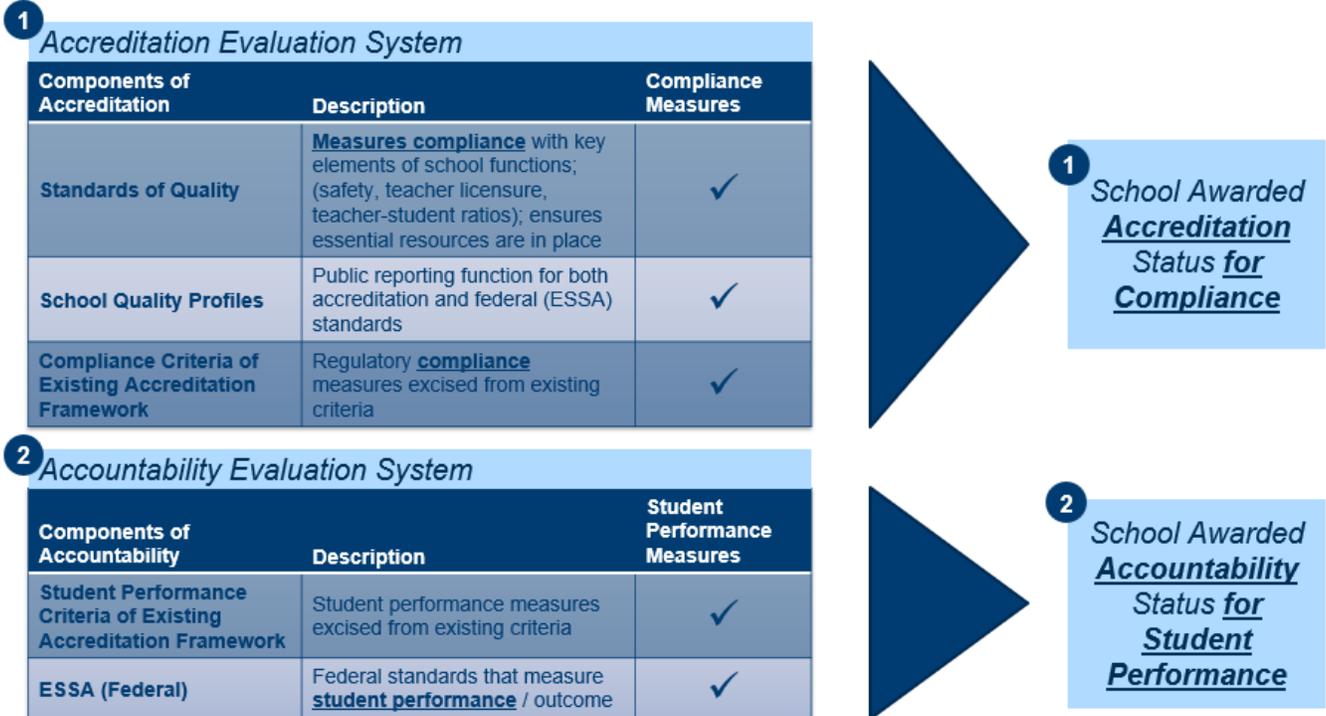
(8VAC20-131-370.B)

What is typically referred to as accountability measures—measurements including academic achievement, performance gaps, chronic absenteeism, graduation rate and dropout rate—are conflated in the same system that measures compliance with regulations such as maintaining clear fire exits and appropriate student-teacher ratios. Unfortunately, the combination of these two systems (accreditation and accountability) is impacting the effectiveness of each.

The Commonwealth of Virginia needs a distinct, stand-alone accountability system that provides all education stakeholders—parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, taxpayers, and policymakers—access to quality, timely, actionable information about how each K-12 public school is preparing students for success in life after graduation.

Virginia also needs a robust accreditation system that measures compliance-based factors independent from student achievement. This separate system will annually determine whether each school division in the Commonwealth is meeting important statutory and regulatory requirements. The current combined system clouds transparency on each front.

## BIFURCATION OF VIRGINIA’S ACCREDITATION SYSTEM



The portion of the Commonwealth’s current accreditation system that evaluates student achievement includes nine performance indicators such as achievement/proficiency measures, measures for achievement gaps or the lack of proficiency realization, chronic absenteeism rates, graduation rates, and drop-out rates. All achievement measures are enshrouded in incredibly complex calculations that prioritize growth in performance over the achievement of true proficiency. Growth measures how much a student improves his or her academic performance, while proficiency measures demonstrated content mastery by a student.

Virginia began accrediting schools based on the achievement of students on state Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments in 1999. In that year, students in only a handful of the Commonwealth’s schools met the benchmark pass rates required for full accreditation. But student achievement improved as the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and school divisions worked in partnership to meet the accreditation standards. By 2005, 92% of schools were fully accredited. Along the way, bipartisan consensus had emerged around the importance of maintaining high standards for schools and students.

In 2015, this culture of excellence took a wrong turn in when the State Board of Education began a review of its accreditation regulations. The review culminated in 2017, when revisions to accreditation standards diluted the importance of grade-level proficiency in critical subjects such as math and reading. Along with these changes, annual accreditation was replaced with a triennial review.

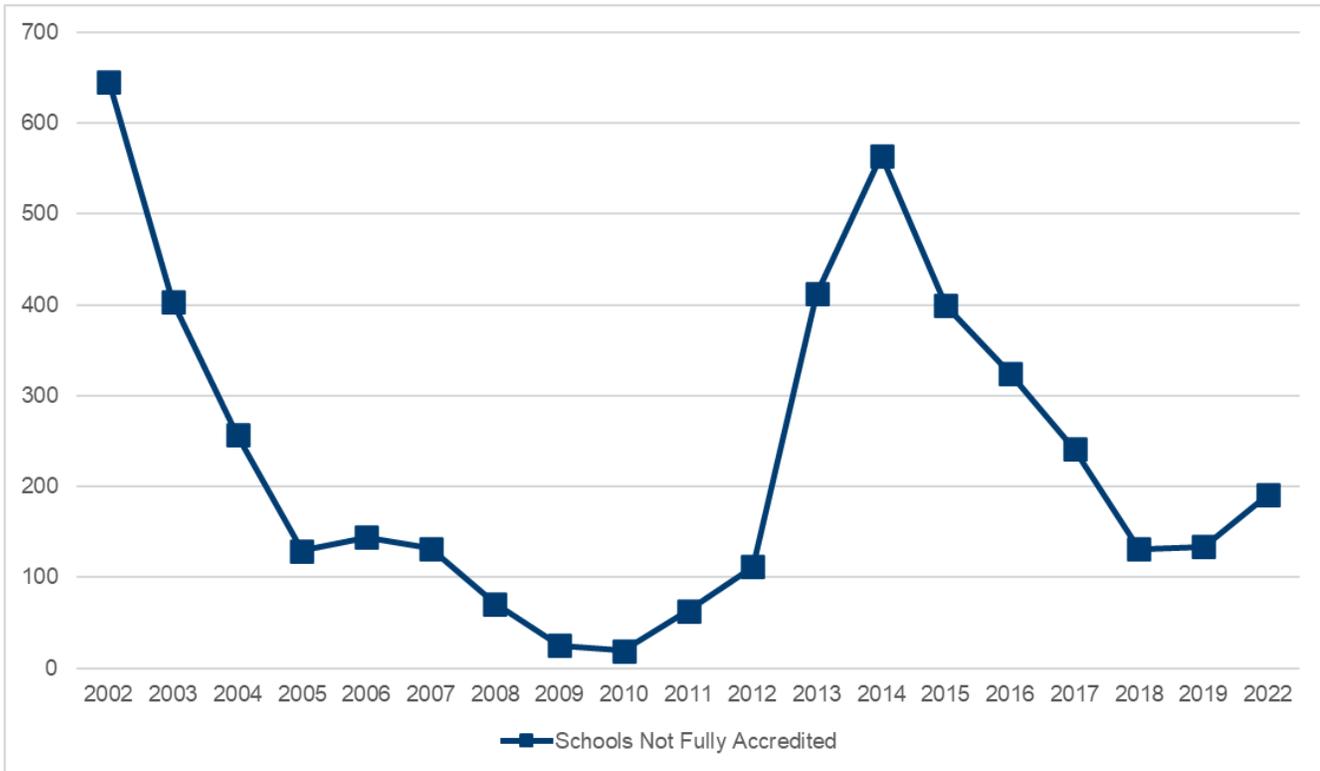
Consequently, a student who does not meet Virginia’s lowest-in-the-nation proficiency standards, but does meet a minimal objective for growth, receives the same positive weighting as a proficient student in calculating a school’s accreditation rating. The change to a triennial review, made it possible for students to support a

school’s accreditation without being proficient for as many as three consecutive years. This misguided triennial accreditation system, by which schools are reviewed once every three years, precludes education stakeholders from receiving timely, dynamic updates on schools’ ability to underperform, meet, or exceed, acceptable levels of quality and service to their students.

# VIRGINIA SCHOOL ACCREDITATION

## SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA NOT FULLY ACCREDITED

2002-2022



Year	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'22
Schools not Accred.	646	404	257	129	144	132	71	25	19	63	112	412	564	399	325	241	131	134	190

- 2006: To meet NCLB requirements for reading and mathematics: Assessments added for grades 4, 6, and 7; grades 5 and 8 tests no longer cumulative.
- 2011: New history/social science assessments; Board of Education adopted new higher cut scores, resulting in fewer schools reaching accreditation requirements
- 2012: New mathematics assessments; Board of Education adopted new higher cut scores, resulting in fewer schools reaching accreditation requirements.
- 2013: New reading, writing, and science assessments; Board of Education adopted new cut scores; Accreditation benchmarks increased for Grade-3 Science and History from 50% to 70%, and for Grades 6-12 English from 70% to 75%, resulting in fewer schools reaching accreditation requirements
- 2014: Board of Education allows expedited retakes of SOL tests by elementary and middle school students (previously only allowed on tests for high school credit), resulting in more schools receiving accreditation.
- 2018: First year of new accreditation model under the Revised 2017 Standards of Accreditation, resulting in more schools receiving accreditation.
- 2019: New mathematics tests; Board of Education lowered proficiency cut scores, resulting in more schools receiving accreditation.

See the deviations below highlighting how a school’s Annual Pass Rate, the proportion of students passing the state assessment, can deviate drastically from a school’s Accreditation Combined Rate, a measurement derived from calculations on student growth and achievement of proficiency.

School and Indicator	Annual Pass Rate	Accreditation Combined Rate	Accreditation Performance Level
School A: Math	56%	88%	Level 1
School A: Reading	66%	86%	Level 1
<b>School B: Math</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>Level 1</b>
School B: Reading	58%	82%	Level 1
School C: Math	91%	97%	Level 1
School C: Reading	93%	98%	Level 1

A school with only 40% of its student population reaching proficiency can receive the highest Accreditation Performance Level available, demonstrating how Virginia’s existing accreditation process is not always a reliable indicator of how well a school is serving its students. Importantly, this existing process diminishes the awareness of and urgency to support accredited schools at which most students are not achieving grade level proficiency.

While students experienced significant learning loss and record-low proficiency across NAEP and SOL assessments during the pandemic and associated school-closures, the percent of schools accredited in 2022-2023 (post-pandemic) was nearly identical to that in 2019-2020 (pre-pandemic). Despite these catastrophic declines in results, the state’s current accreditation system would leave parents, schools, teachers, and the broader public to believe that schools are meeting expectations and addressing the unique needs of students in a post-pandemic classroom.

Accreditation Rating	Number/Percentage 2019-2020	Number/Percentage 2022-2023
Accredited	1,682 / 92%	1,628 / 89%
Accredited With Conditions	132 / 7%	190 / 10%
Not accredited	0 / 0%	0 / 0%
Total*	1,825 / 100%	1,830 / 100%
NAEP Reading Proficiency* (4 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grade)	38% / 33%	32% / 31%
NAEP Math Proficiency* (4 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grade)	48% / 38%	38% / 31%

\*Note: NAEP results are from 2019 and 2022.

The utility of an accreditation system arises when its measurement framework accurately captures the true performance of a school and the students it serves. Importantly, a transparent, system that conveys performance with integrity enables the Department to identify and support the schools and students most in need of additional resources.

A school that is not fully accredited is a red flag for parents, communities, and taxpayers that serious redress

is required to meet the needs of all students. Schools that fail to achieve accreditation cannot be allowed to accept status-quo, operating in the same manner year after year. Such schools need enhanced support and direct intervention from VDOE to engage families, educators, and the community to provide a high-quality education tailored to the students the school serves. The unwavering commitment to attend to, support, and invest in schools whose students are underperforming is key tenant of reforming and bifurcating the existing accreditation system.

Parents and educators alike deserve a *best-in-class* accreditation system that is a transparent measure of how schools are serving all students. As we move forward, our North Star is high expectations for every student. While student growth is meaningful, proficiency is critical.

Content mastery is assessed during the spring administration of SOL end-of-course tests, while “through-year” growth assessments periodically inform how a student is progressing towards content mastery. While both assessments provide data that compares performance over time, the data that growth or “through-year” assessments provide is limited. Fall and winter growth assessments are based on current-year content. Often students are taking the assessments prior to receiving instruction on all or some of the test’s content. As a result, these tests do not discern whether a student has a true weakness in an area or the student’s performance is low because of the lack of instruction.

In addition, many divisions continue to use their own locally developed or locally purchased growth assessments to gather instructional data. The administration of all these additional assessments takes time and resources away from instruction and places a large testing burden on students and staff. Moreover, those locally purchased assessments may not be truly aligned with Virginia’s standards. When any assessment is administered to students, it should have a high instructional value to justify its use.

Measuring growth and proficiency accurately are vital components to realizing student achievement. However, accreditation standards must balance the impact of test administration on instructional time with the utility of information it provides to all stakeholders. Part of accreditation reform must include a review of assessment type and frequency – ensuring that those that are vital to the evaluation of the school or the student are maintained or refined, while those that are not are adjusted or discontinued. The Department and Secretary’s office are exploring ways to do so efficiently and effectively in the 585 Workgroup on the Future of Assessment, which will make recommendations to the General Assembly in November.

As we work to enact changes to our accreditation system, stakeholder input is critical. With accurate proficiency and timely growth reports, teachers, parents, students, and education leaders can inform the Board’s process to build best-in-class accreditation and accountability systems. All stakeholders will be empowered with quality, timely, actionable information about each K-12 public school. The VDOE will stand ready to attend to and support schools not meeting performance goals.

## Recommendations

- Bifurcate the Commonwealth of Virginia’s current accreditation system and create a:
  - 1) Transparent rigorous accountability system that measures student achievement, proficiency, and growth; and
  - 2) Accreditation system that will ensure school divisions are meeting state regulatory and statutory requirements.
- Simplify existing performance measures such that the resulting accountability system provides a clear, transparent, and honest depiction of both mastery of critical knowledge (proficiency) and student growth.
  - Governor Youngkin directed the Board of Education to create a meaningful, understandable accountability system that provides a clear picture of how every school is serving students.

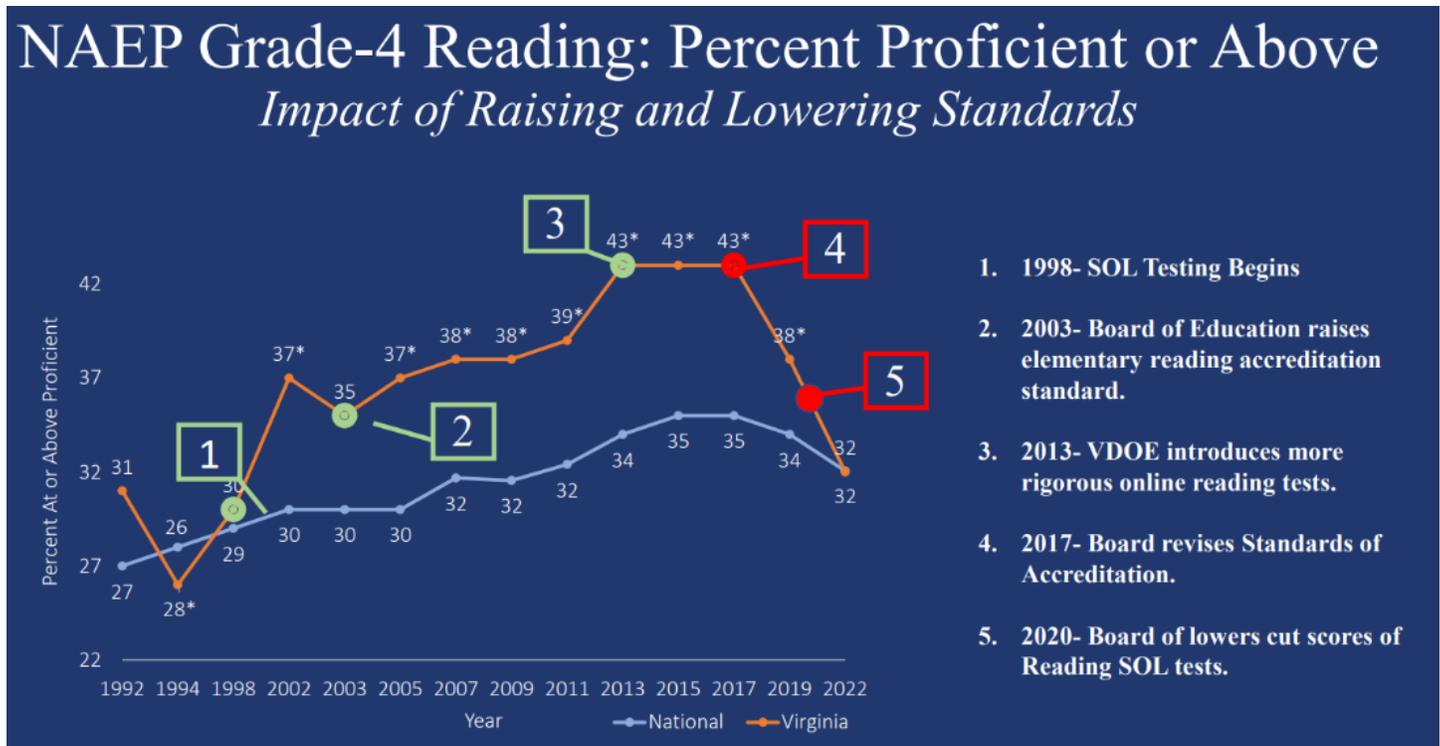
On February 2, 2023, the Board of Education voted to begin the process of building a transformational accountability plan.

- Proficiency and growth should be valued and calculated in an accountability system, but proficiency must be prioritized. Under the current system, it is possible for students to show growth year after year but never attain grade-level proficiency. Schools should be held accountable for both growth and proficiency, but growth to grade-level proficiency is the North Star.
- Remove triennial accreditation – a revised system needs to hold every school accountable for student performance, every year.
- In the resulting accountability system, ensure that through-year growth assessments are re-evaluated and do not replace year-to-year growth or proficiency measures
- The Virginia Department of Education’s Office of School Quality should be redesigned to ensure that schools receiving the lowest accountability marks receive additional evidence-based instructional supports that result in the increased academic achievement for all students.
- Prioritize the “Future of Assessments” workgroup convened as a result of HB 585 (2022) and work with stakeholders to develop recommendations on revising Virginia’s assessment system. The group is in the midst of a six-month review of best practices and innovations in summative assessments of proficiency to inform the development of a best-in-class assessment system that provides timely and actionable information to students, parents, educators and policymakers.

## Set Proficiency Standards on SOL Assessments that Align with Excellence That Increases the Transparency and Integrity of Performance Measures

*Addressing Charges 3 and 5 from the General Assembly*

The race for talent is on. Virginia’s students must be prepared to compete with students from across the nation and around the world. Past experiences prove that our students and our schools perform at higher levels when we expect more of them. Therefore, we must prioritize increasing—not merely maintaining—proficiency standards on SOL assessments.



In May of 2022, the Department issued [Our Commitment to Virginians](#) which sounded the alarm on how the systematic dismantling of excellence and transparency had harmed Virginia’s students. Unsurprisingly, but dishearteningly, the findings of [Our Commitment to Virginians](#) were affirmed in the release of the [2022 NAEP results](#) – which revealed Virginia had experienced the nation’s largest declines in proficiency in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math, with average test scores declining by 11% and 12% since 2017, respectively. While Virginia’s education system has long been lauded as premier in the nation, surpassing national benchmarks of proficiency by a significant margin, the 2022 NAEP release revealed that the Commonwealth had lost significant ground. For the first time in 30 years, performance had reverted to the national average.

Regardless of the proficiency definition, either that of the Virginia’s Board of Education (“SOL Cut Scores”), or The Nation’s Report Card (“NAEP”), an undeniable fact is true – proficiency and academic competency of Virginia’s students has declined meaningfully, across all student groups. We must restore high expectations and increase the rigor of standards, assessments, and proficiency definitions. Critical to this endeavor is empowering parents, educators, and students with timely, actionable data around student proficiency, allowing stakeholders to tailor solutions for each individual student.

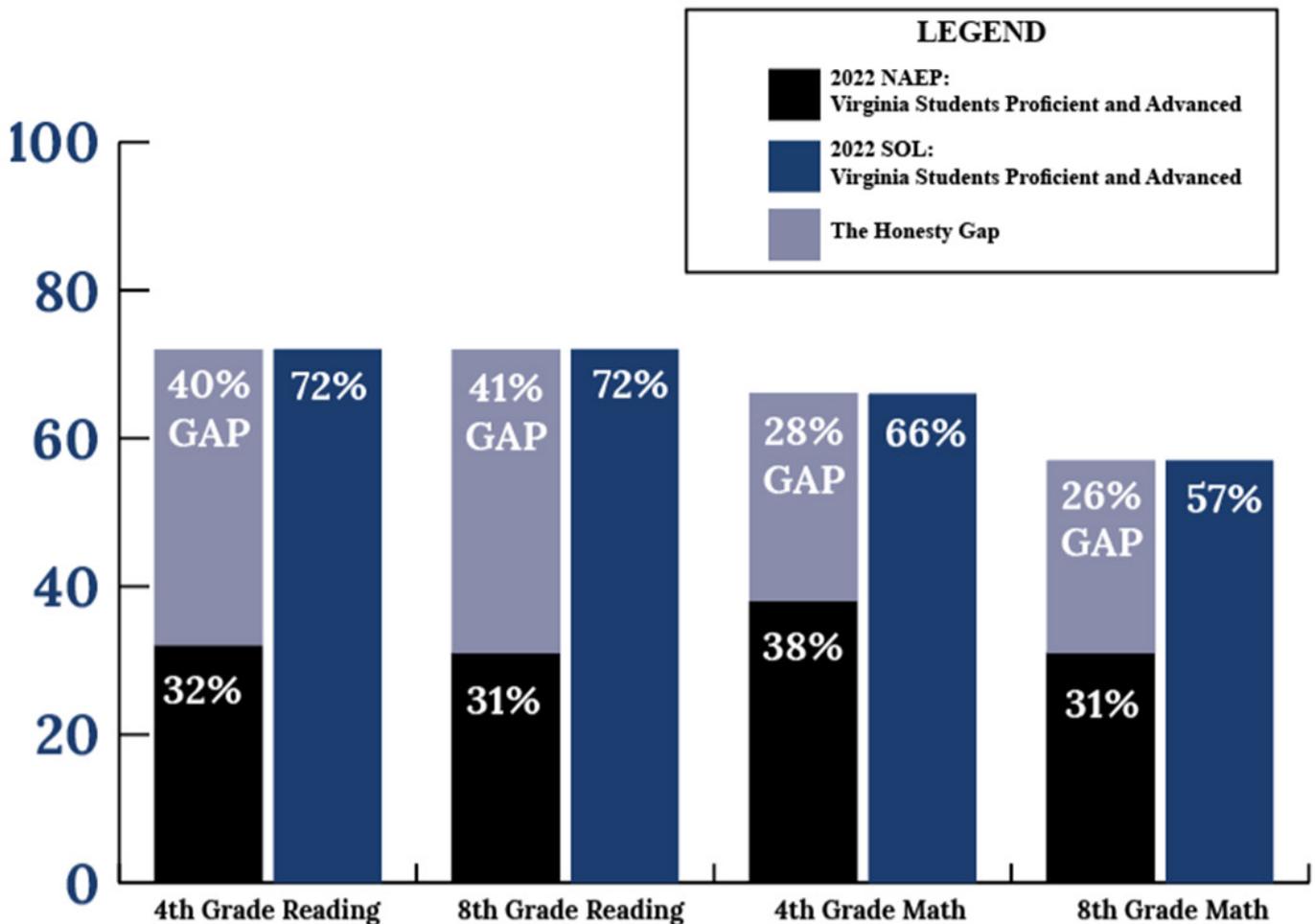
### Raise Definitions of Proficiency:

Defining proficiency for assessments is a systematic way of making a professional judgment on the level of achievement required to demonstrate a student’s mastery of skills and knowledge appropriate for the grade level or course. Student achievement, and the attainment of proficiency, is measured annually through SOL assessments and remains one of the most powerful indicators to parents, students, and educators of academic progress and performance.

However, that performance indicator loses critical functionality when it fails to accurately signal students’ readiness for grade level progression and opportunity for future success in school or post-secondary life. Virginia has wide gaps between student proficiency standards on state reading and math SOL assessments and the grade-level proficiency benchmarks on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).” This is called the “Honesty Gap,” a term of art used to describe the discrepancy between NAEP and state assessment scores.

Virginia’s 2022 honesty gap was significant: state SOL scores showed that 72% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders were at a proficient reading level, while the NAEP scores revealed only 32% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders scored at a proficient reading level. This issue is persistent across grade levels and subject matters – where the state’s definition of proficiency is significantly lower than that of national benchmarks. All the more heartbreaking, is the decline in performance experienced by vulnerable learners.

## “THE HONESTY GAP”



2022 Virginia NAEP vs. SOL	Reading Grade 4	Reading Grade 8	Math Grade 4	Math Grade 8
2022 NAEP Proficient and Advanced	32%	31%	38%	31%
2022 SOL Proficient and Advanced	72%	72%	66%	57%
NAEP difference from SOL Proficient and Advanced	-40%	-41%	-28%	-26%

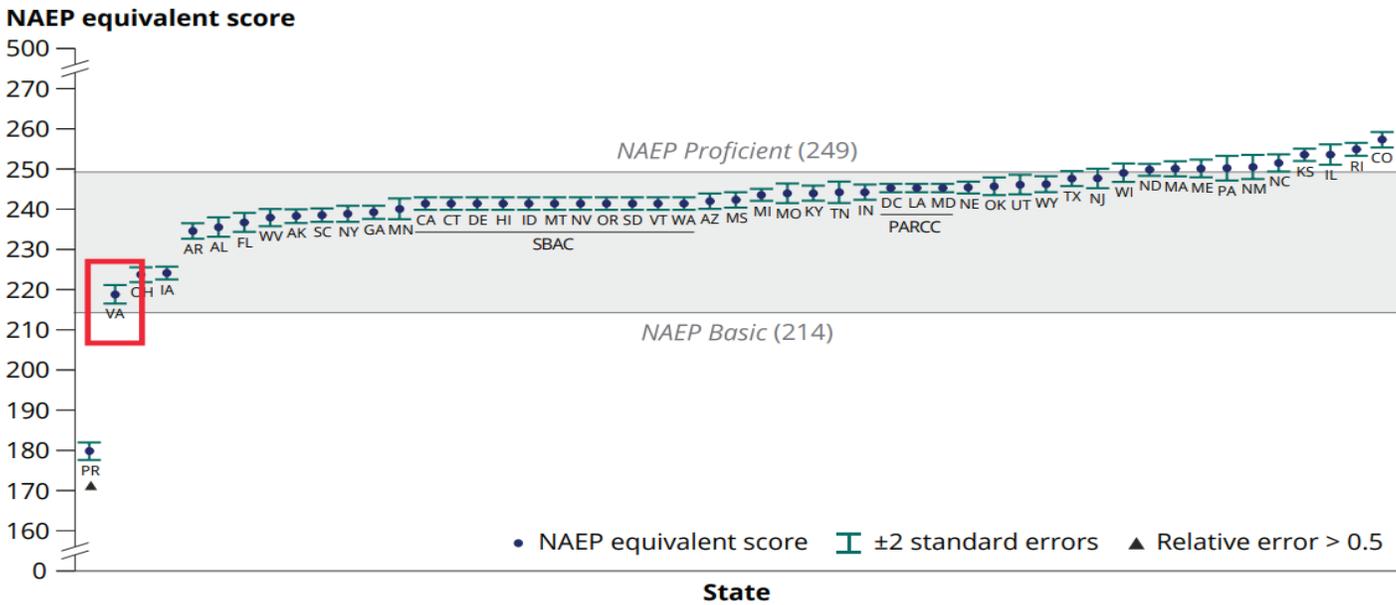
**Virginia Grade 4 Reading – Percent Proficient or Above Across Student Groups**

Other state education systems have much more rigorous definitions of proficiency. In 2019, [13 states/jurisdictions](#) had internal proficiency standards for 4<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics exams equal to or above that published by NAEP. Virginia’s SOL proficiency, by contrast, was the second lowest of 51 jurisdictions in the analysis.

Proficiency definitions and corresponding cut scores on tests should be benchmarked to the foundational skills, knowledge and competencies needed—in each grade level—for post-secondary success. If we want a Virginia education to be “best in class,” our definitions of proficiency must also align with and exceed the highest performing states in the nation. Importantly, this revitalized commitment to defining proficiency against higher levels of rigor brings sobering visibility into the reality of student achievement that is otherwise masked by low expectations.

Governor Youngkin has called for the State Board of Education to raise the definition of proficiency from the lowest in the nation to among the highest. The VDOE is working with a respected national expert on proficiency setting to conduct a benchmarking analysis and recommendations for proficiency setting for all of our core subjects. The VDOE will present this study and a set of recommendations to the State Board of Education in the next few months for discussion and action.

**State Grade 4 Math Proficiency Standards Compared with NAEP Proficiency Levels by State: 2019**



The creation of best-in-class definitions of cut scores and proficiency requires robust processes and review that incorporate content experts, statistical analysis, and stakeholder engagement. In addition to contracting with

national assessment experts, the VDOE has begun to engage critical consumers of education—the business community, higher education institutions, and the military, into the process of setting proficiency definitions and cut scores on tests.

### **Increase the Communication of Timely, Actionable Data on Student Achievement:**

As a part of this comprehensive approach to raising expectations and increasing student outcomes, we must ensure that schools have access to the support and resources they need to make measurable improvements in student achievement. To do this, we must prioritize making actionable data accessible to parents, students, and educators, so that they can use relevant information to improve outcomes as quickly as possible.

Historically, parents, students, and educators have had limited visibility and transparency into data regarding students' achievement. While certain data exists, it was not captured or fully leveraged to provide detailed analytics that can seamlessly provide invaluable insights to all education stakeholders. Data helps tell the story of today's districts, schools, and classrooms, and provides insights for educators and students to make progress and improve. Longitudinal testing information, tracking performance overtime, provides invaluable insights into how strategies have worked and how instruction can be improved. With these powerful analytics tools, VDOE can empower educators and parents and provide students with an inherent advantage.

With this in mind, on March 3, 2023, the Department launched VVAAS, Virginia's Visualization and Analytics Solution, a web-based tool available to all K-12 divisions, that will transform the availability of actionable performance data. VVAAS will provide, for the first time, digestible displays of students' academic growth over time, diagnostic reports for student groups, and student projections to help educators improve student achievement and inform classroom instruction.

In addition to the new release of VVAAs, LASER is another decision analytics system leveraged by educators and school administrators in Virginia. The program began development in 2021 and serves as an "early warning system" connected to each participating division's student information system (SIS). This allows teachers and administrators to monitor real-time course work, discipline, and attendance, empowering educators to make tailored corrections to students. LASER also provides a near real-time (2x per week) accreditation status report for participating schools. This has been highly desired by school personnel to focus the direction of remediation resources. Lastly, LASER has also been built to accommodate additional reports and data visualizations so that digestible and actionable information can be provided to all school divisions as technology evolves. As the first statewide system of its kind, this provides unparalleled analytics that will inform classroom decisions and improve student achievement.

Reports provided by VVAAS, in tandem with other data sources, like LASER, will empower educators to make decisions regarding curriculum changes, identify and support long-term student goals, and help reveal trends of student groups in need of additional support. The Department is providing training sessions across the Commonwealth, to ensure all educators and administrators can leverage the power of these tools. Most importantly, it will make it clear when a student is not on track for success and will provide parents with prompts for working with their child's teacher to discuss the plan for getting their child back on track for success.

The Department is currently working with a group of 25 school divisions to develop the data analysis and communication tools to leverage the power of data to improve student achievement and success. The "Bridging the Gap" initiative will leverage the VVAAS system to:

- Provide **individualized student data reports** so that every K-8 student, parent and teacher has all of a student's assessment information in an understandable, actionable report. This information about student proficiency and learning loss empowers these critical stakeholders to make the best decisions to ensure every child is prepared for life.

- Ensure every student who is not on track has a Personalized Learning Plan that commits to a set of actions that teachers, parents, and students will take to address learning gaps. These Personalized Learning Plans will be developed and executed in partnership with teachers, parents, and students.
- Provide **comprehensive training to teachers on how to communicate with parents and students** about where a student is academically and the steps that will be taken together to get a student to grade-level proficiency.

For the 25 school divisions participating, this hallmark program will create tailored, customized solutions to every student, and for the first time, create a data-based plan that is communicable to families.

In addition to the improving the quality of data and its communication through VVAAS, the Department is also working to develop a state-of-the-art Parent Portal. As stipulated in this past legislative session in HB 1629, the Department of Education is working on a digital platform that displays individualized student assessment data on all state-supported assessments in a format that shows both current and cumulative data over time within 45 days of the assessment window closing.

The legislation also requires that the platform provides a description of the purpose of each state-supported assessment, an explanation of how to interpret student data on each state-supported assessment, and a comparison of a student’s performance on each state-supported assessment with the performance of the student’s school, the student’s school division, and the Commonwealth; is viewable from a mobile device in addition to a desktop computer; and provides functionality to enable school division personnel to manage and restrict user access to students and their parents.

### **Increase the Rigor of our Standards of Learning:**

The Board of Education approves *Standards of Learning (SOL)* for Virginia Public Schools that establish minimum expectations for what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade or course in English, mathematics, science, history/social science and other subjects. Standards outline what should be taught and assessed in Virginia’s schools. The Department also publishes model curriculums that inform public school divisions in the creation of their own “aligned” **local curriculum** that guides the day-to-day instruction of the approved Standards. Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) have the authority to make local decisions regarding curriculum but must ensure alignment to the state *Standards of Learning*.

Content standards—known in Virginia as Standards of Learning (SOLs)—are a cornerstone upon which all other elements of education rests. They shape curricula, teacher preparation and professional development, SOL assessments, and more. Standards outline what our students should know and achieve by the end of a given course, and by the end of the cumulative K-12 experience. If the standards are diluted and vague, educators will fail to prepare students for success in life, and student achievement will suffer.

We must remain focused on preserving rigor in all state-issued standards documents, and that these SOLs prepare our students for the skills and knowledge needed in today’s economy. Equally important is that the standards have the clarity and specificity necessary for teachers to implement and cover the necessary topics for students.

The Thomas B. Fordham Institute regularly publishes [reports](#) on the quality of all 50 states’ standards. This analysis provides a sober evaluation of how Virginia’s standards perform on 1) content and rigor, and 2) clarity and specificity/communication. The analysis includes both states that have adopted the *Common Core State Standards (CCSS)* in math and language arts, as well as states that develop their own standards like Virginia. Please note: This report in no way recommends that Virginia adopt *Common Core State Standards (CCSS)*, but rather that the state uses the Fordham Institute analysis to ensure that Virginia adopts rigorous, best-in-class standards.

Virginia’s Fordham rankings are shown in the table below. States can receive a maximum of 10 points, including 7 for content and rigor, and 3 for clarity and specificity/communication.

**History of Virginia’s State Standards Ratings (Reading / English Language Arts):**

Year of Review	Content and Rigor	Clarity and Specificity	Total Score (Virginia)	CCSS Total Score	Top Ranking Individual State Standard ( <i>Indiana</i> )
2010	6/7	2/3	<b>8/10</b>	8/10	10/10
2018	2/7	2/3	<b>4/10</b>	9/10	8/10

**History of Virginia’s State Standards Ratings (Mathematics):**

Year of Review	Content and Rigor	Clarity and Specificity	Total Score (Virginia)	CCSS Total Score	Top Ranking Individual State Standard ( <i>Texas</i> )
2010	4/7	2/3	<b>6/10</b>	8/10	9/10
2018	4/7	3/3	<b>7/10</b>	9/10	9/10

Alarming, the report reveals between [2010](#) and [2018](#), the rigor of Virginia’s reading standards declined materially from 6 points to 2 points. The resulting overall score of 4 / 10 is defined by the Fordham Institute as “Inadequate”, and “should be completely overhauled as soon as possible.” Virginia’s math standards perform better – earning a 7 / 10 or “Good” rating but leaving meaningful room for improvement.

Both of Virginia’s Mathematics and Reading standards are due for their seven-year revision soon, in 2023 and 2024, respectively. The Fordham Institute has completed detailed evaluations that define “best-in-class” standards and provides tangible recommendations for improving the quality of Virginia standards on both content and clarity. Additionally, the analysis identifies states whose standards receive top marks in both categories – and this comparative data can serve as potential model templates by which Virginia’s standards can be improved.

The Board of Education has additional external groups that help develop Virginia’s standards. These groups are called Assessment Committees, and are made up of Virginia teachers, school administrators, and content specialists who participate in the development of SOL assessments by serving on committees that review test items and forms to ensure that they measure student knowledge accurately and fairly. The Assessment Committees should rely on the external, comparative analyses that to inform their revisions to the SOLs and ensure Virginia’s standards are the best in the nation, across rigor and clarity.

**Ensure Virginia Has Best-in-Class Assessments:**

HB585 established a workgroup to rethink Virginia’s assessment system and make recommendations for how the assessment system can be revised as a part of our broader efforts to ensure that every Virginia graduate is prepared for opportunities for success in life.

This workgroup—comprised of state and national experts in assessment—has started its work and will make recommendations to the General Assembly later this year. To ensure that Virginians can learn from national experts and leading states, VDOE will also host regular sessions for key Virginia stakeholders outside of the Workgroup to gain access to the presentations, information, data, and tools informing the Workgroup’s recommendations for assessment revisions. The goal is to build knowledge, awareness, and consensus around what a best-in-class assessment system would look like in Virginia.

### **Summary:**

Restoring excellence to Virginia’s K-12 education system requires addressing the following weaknesses:

- The least rigorous definition of proficiency in the nation has masked lower levels of achievement for Virginia’s students.
- The lack of actionable, timely, data on academic performance has limited the ability of parents, educators, and students to know when students are off-track and be able to quickly course correct.
- The quality of the existing Standards of Learning, in both Reading and Math, requires modest-to-severe reform to improve the rigor and clarity of content provided to Virginia educators and students.
- The absence of certain, detailed student achievement and impact data being incorporated in revisions to standards and cut scores. To restore excellence in our schools and prepare students for life beyond the classroom, this information must inform any standards or assessment changes.

### **Recommendations:**

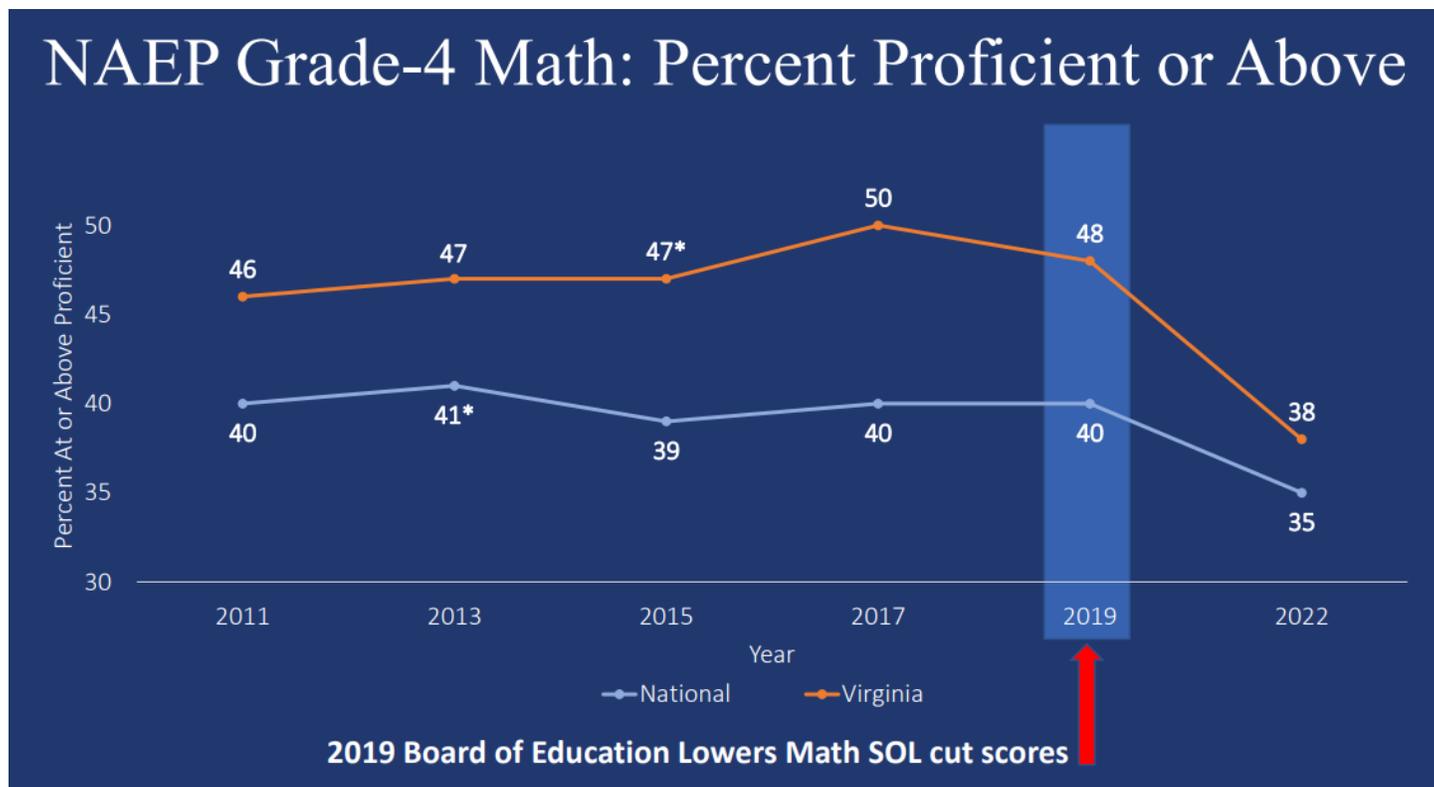
- Conduct a benchmarking study that compares the definition of proficiency across all states in the nation and will inform and facilitate Virginia’s proficiency definitions (“cut scores”) as the most rigorous in the nation.
  - Study must be completed by summer of 2023, so that standard setting committees can implement best-in-class cut scores on the Math and Reading state assessments.
- Hold the Department accountable for eliminating the Honesty Gap by benchmarking SOL results of new assessments and cut scores to NAEP assessments that are administered thereafter.
- Prioritize the “Future of Assessments” workgroup convened as a result of HB 585 (2022) and work with stakeholders to develop recommendations on revising Virginia’s assessment system. The group will consider best practices and innovations in summative assessments of proficiency to build a best-in-class assessment system that supports student achievement and content mastery.
- Model revisions of the upcoming Reading and Math Standards of Learning off best-in-class standards as analyzed by esteemed third-party academic organizations, placing a priority on increasing the rigor of content in both subjects.
- Support the expansion of standard setting committees to include additional stakeholders (e.g. parents, higher education representatives, business representatives, etc.) with appropriate knowledge or background in the content area and training to ensure they are fully prepared to contribute to the process.
  - Ensure the opportunity to serve on the standard setting committee is widely communicated to all school divisions to ensure a broad representation of educators are included.
- Require that standards committees receive projections of how cut-score changes will affect proficiency populations ahead of revisions, providing transparency into how new proficiency definitions do or do not align to proficiency realized in recent NAEP assessments.
- Provide actionable data around student and school performance to students, educators, and parents. The implementation of the initiatives below will help school divisions address learning gaps and tackle catastrophic learning loss.
  - Ensure successful implementation of Learning Analytics to Support Education and Reporting (LASER), an online data system tailored to provide educators real-time data analytics at the

- student, class, school, and division level.
- Support the successful implementation of VVAAS to all Virginia K-12 divisions, students, and parents.
- VDOE should develop best communications practices for teachers, parents, and students as they access reports, so they understand what the results mean and why it matters
- Ensure successful implementation of Bridging the Gap and expand to all school divisions by the end of 2025.
- Revise the School Quality profiles to make information clear and accessible to all stakeholders, including parents, community members, and school staff.
- Identify alternatives to the traditional practice of promotion and progression through the K-12 experience based on age and grade.

# Promote Excellence in Instruction and Student Achievement in Mathematics

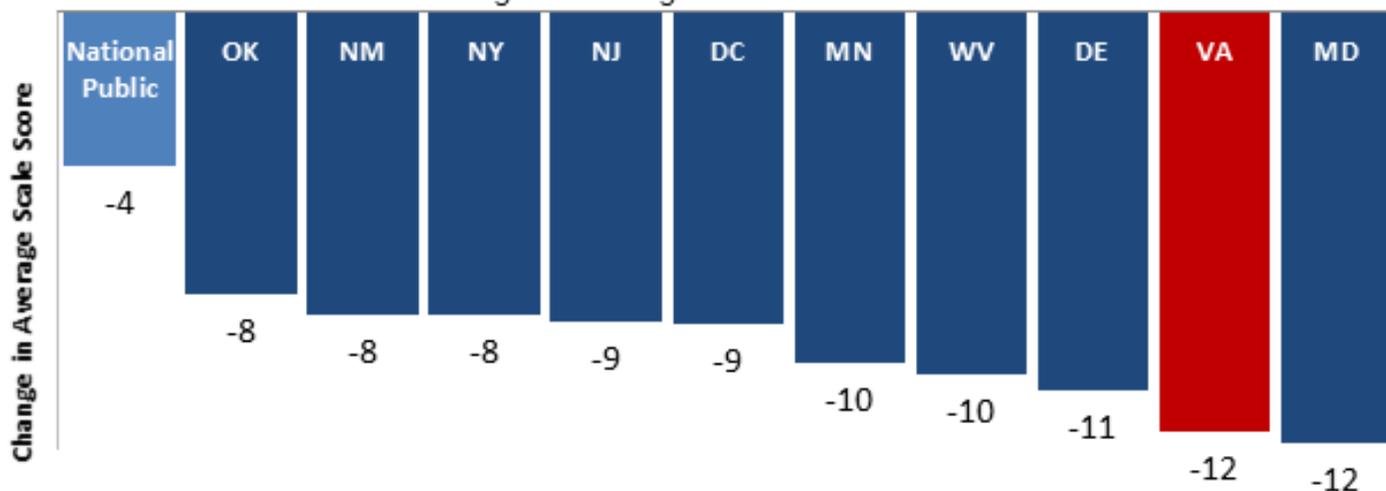
*Addressing Charge 1 from the General Assembly*

The 2022 [National Assessment of Education Progress \(NAEP\) data](#) released in October 2022 demonstrated catastrophic declines in student achievement in mathematics. Virginia experienced a 12-point decline in the percentage of students who scored proficient or above from 2017 to 2022, tied with Maryland as having the largest decline in 4<sup>th</sup> grade math proficiency. While decreasing achievement levels plagued all states across the nation, Virginia’s decline in proficiency was nearly three times as severe as the national average.



## NAEP Mathematics Grade 4 – Top 10 Declines

*Change in Average Scale Score: 2017-2022*



New state Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments in mathematics – and reading – were administered for the first time in 2019 and 2020, with revised proficiency definitions (“cut scores”). The cut scores adopted by the Virginia Board of Education represented lower levels of achievement than were required to pass the previously administered mathematics and reading tests. Even more troubling is that while NAEP results—with a higher required mastery of skills and knowledge—communicated that only 38% of fourth graders were proficient in math – the SOL results communicated to parents, students, and teachers that **66%** of fourth grade students demonstrated proficiency on the state Standard of Learning mathematics assessment. This confusion is known as the “honesty gap” and is described in more detail in the previous section.

Grade-8 NAEP results for Math were just as concerning. Eighth graders experienced a 7-point decline in performance from 2019 and a 9-point decline from 2017. Additionally, Virginia experienced a 10-percent decline in Grade-8 Math performance since 2017. Virginia’s decline in student achievement is not limited solely to Math.

This is a reiteration of what we already know to be true – lowering definitions of proficiency for Virginia’s students contributes to declines in student achievement and reduces opportunities for future success. The visage of content mastery while students continue to struggle to meet national benchmarks serves no student, educator, or parent, and fails to prepare students for the rigor of today’s workforce.

To fully address the drastic declines in student achievement we must raise our standards and prioritize high expectations through the adoption of more rigorous Standards of Learning (SOLs). This year, the Department can make meaningful revisions through the SOL revision process that occurs at least every seven years. These revisions are already underway on many subjects.

**Standards of Learning (SOL) Revision Schedule:**

<b>Content</b>	<b>Adoption Year</b>	<b>Next Revision</b>
Computer Science	2017	2024
Digital Learning Integration	2020	2027
Driver Education	2022	2029
Economics & Personal Finance	2019	2026
English	2017	2024
Family Life	2020	2027
Fine Arts	2020	2027
Health Education	2020	2027
History and Social Science	2015	2023
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2023</b>
Physical Education	2022	2029
Science	2018	2025
World Language	2021	2028

Mathematics standards in the United States have been criticized as being a “mile wide and an inch deep” in comparison to higher performing countries on the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) assessment. Trends in many states show a shift toward more holistic mathematics standards with a focus on balancing conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, and application. Most states expect some level of computational fluency (addition and multiplication with single-digit numbers, for example) in elementary school. While still retaining a strong emphasis on number sense and computational fluency in grades K-5, state standards are also acknowledging the role of 21st century learning in which technology tools can support deeper

conceptual understanding and application of mathematics.

Based on the GAISE II report (2020), the role of data analysis in K-12 mathematics has never been more important, as students live in a world inundated with data and need stronger math and data analysis capabilities to get good jobs in the knowledge economy. Many states, including Minnesota in their 2022 revised standards, seek to equip students to analyze information in a data-rich environment by including data science and computational thinking throughout the K-12 mathematics experience.

As mentioned, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute regularly publishes reports titled [The State of State Standards Post Common-Core](#), which compare the quality of standards employed by states across the nation, providing third-party analysis on how Virginia’s standards perform on two measures 1) content and rigor, and 2) clarity and specificity/communication. States can receive a maximum of 10 points, including 7 for content and rigor, and 3 for clarity and specificity/communication. Virginia scored a 4/7 for content and rigor and 3/3 for specificity/communication and was considered “good” on a scale of strong, good, weak, and inadequate.

## History of National State Standards Ratings (Mathematics):

Table 2. State Standards Ratings: Mathematics

	Content & Rigor* (out of 7)	Clarity & Specificity* (out of 3)	Total Score (out of 10)	Overall Rating
Common Core Math	7	2	9	Strong
Texas	7	2	9	Strong
Indiana	5	2	7	Good
Tennessee	5	2	7	Good
Virginia	4	3	7	Good
Minnesota	4	2	6	Weak
North Carolina	5	1	6	Weak
Missouri	4	1	5	Weak
Nebraska	3	2	5	Weak
Oklahoma	3	2	5	Weak
Pennsylvania	3	1	4	Inadequate

\* Referred to more broadly as Content and Communication in the mathematics standards reviews.

Virginia trails behind forty-four other states. Weaknesses identified by the Fordham Institute, and other organizations, in the existing Mathematics standards are being evaluated and revised using the state review process. This process requires extensive input before standards are revised as well as ongoing feedback on draft standards. The first draft of the rigorous and coherent 2023 Mathematics standards will be presented to State Board of Education for first reading in June 2023. After extensive public comment and revision, Mathematics standards will be revised and presented to the state school board for final approval in Fall 2023.

### Recommendations:

- Adopt revisions to the Mathematics Standards in 2023 that receive full marks for content and rigor as defined by analysis from independent, third-party, education establishments.
  - Address concerns identified by third-party analysis that compares Virginia’s standards to other states and the world, including but not limited to:
    - Eliminate numerous redundancies and inconsistencies in the curriculum frameworks.
    - Eliminate repetition across grade levels.
    - Address the absence of explicit fluency expectations for multi-digit whole number operations.
    - Emphasize and prioritize development of conceptual understanding within the number, number sense, computation, and estimation standards.
- Subsequently prioritize the adoption of rigorous SOL Mathematics “cut scores” on assessments that support the closure of the “Honesty Gap” and honestly communicate student achievement in mathematics.
  - The revised SOL Mathematics assessment will be administered in 2026, the same year in which a NAEP assessment will be administered. This provides the Department a powerful opportunity to measure the closure of the Honesty Gap.

- Ensure that all students are challenged to learn rigorous mathematics and achieve at their highest levels, from students at basic proficiency up through advanced proficiency.
  - The VDOE should work with local school divisions to promote additional opportunities for all students to learn mathematics at advanced levels across K-12. Advanced mathematics learning should include opportunities for conceptual understanding and application of knowledge and skills such as how mathematics can be applied in various careers even at the elementary level.
  - The VDOE should develop resources, including model pacing guides and curriculum, that support the development of advanced mathematics concepts through funding provided by the Governor and General Assembly.
  - The Board should ensure that the revised 2023 *Mathematics Standards of Learning* for high school level courses allow opportunities for deeper mathematical understanding. This may include reducing the breadth of standards so that teachers can engage students in more application of knowledge and skills across fewer standards.
- Enact a mathematics instruction reform that will prioritize the “science of math” approach to teaching mathematics in grades K-8.
  - As part of this reform, increase the focus on mastery and competency of skills and knowledge as condition to moving on to subsequent topics and grades. Develop innovative and mastery-based approaches to math education, such as Math Innovation Middle Schools and other grant programs that create competency-based mathematics education and evidence-based mathematics learning models for students. Report outcomes of these innovative approaches so that other divisions can replicate successful intervention models.
- Support the expansion of teacher professional learning opportunities to ensure high quality mathematics instruction is provided to all students.
  - The General Assembly should provide funding for mathematics specialists in elementary and middle schools and incentivize teachers to acquire the endorsement – the Governor provided \$7 million in targeted funding to support math instruction in the lowest performing schools in the Commonwealth in his introduced budget.
  - Promote teacher professional learning (preservice and in-service) through the completion of higher education mathematics courses that incorporate both the conceptual development and application of student mathematics skills and knowledge. Consider bonuses or higher pay for teachers that pursue additional training in advanced mathematics. Professional learning opportunities should also include how to increase expectations and provide opportunities for all students to benefit from learning mathematics at advanced levels.
  - The Governor and General Assembly should provide funding for the resources to local school divisions for additional classroom support in mathematics education, such as teacher assistants, tutors, and expanded instructional resources.
- Prioritize STEM, computer science, and cybersecurity in the upcoming standard setting processes in 2025. Establish rigorous definitions of proficiency and advanced proficiency for students to strive for.

# Expand Pathways and Options for Students that Ensure College and Career Readiness

## *Addressing Charge 2 from the General Assembly*

Our goal for K-12 education must be to ensure that every student graduates prepared for life after graduation, whether that student’s chosen pathway is college, entering the workforce, enlisting in the military, or attaining additional technical skills and training. Virginia’s graduates have endless opportunities for their post-secondary pursuits, and their K-12 education should reflect that.

School divisions, and individual schools, should embrace flexibility and expand educational options that best meet the needs of their students. The traditional model of education delivered in a classroom in a lecture-style format should not be the only option—students may be better served pursuing a college-level math course at the community college or taking an internship at a hospital for part of their school day. Divisions should feel empowered to try new approaches in education, to bring in successful models from across the state, country, and world that provide students with access to rigorous, high-quality opportunities.

Below are details about alternative pathways that already, or will soon, exist for Virginia’s students. The VDOE looks forward to partnering with school divisions to expand these opportunities and build out other paths that will prepare students for success after high school.

### **Advanced Diploma**

In Virginia, the most commonly awarded High School diplomas are the Standard Diploma and the Advanced Studies Diploma. Advanced Studies diplomas require students to adopt more rigorous and voluminous course requirements when compared to the Standard Diploma.

A [research](#) project sponsored by the VDOE revealed that Advanced Studies diploma students were almost twice as likely to remain in or graduate from college after four years compared to graduates who earned Standard diplomas. Additionally, high school graduates who earned Advanced Studies diplomas were more likely to earn associate’s or bachelor’s degrees than those who earned Standard diplomas. Four years after high school, Advanced Studies diploma-earners were twice as likely to stay in college or earn a degree as Standard diploma-earners (83 percent vs. 46 percent).

The chart below shows the different course expectations between the two diplomas:

### **Advanced Studies Diploma Credit Requirements**

[Full diploma requirements](#) are posted on the Virginia Department of Education website.

Subject Area	Standard Diploma		Advanced Studies Diploma	
	Standard Credit	Verified Credit	Standard Credit	Verified Credit
English	4	2	4	2
Mathematics	3	1	4	1
Laboratory Science	3	1	4	1
History and Social Sciences	3	1	4	1
Health and Physical Education	2	0	2	0

Subject Area	Standard Diploma		Advanced Studies Diploma	
	Standard Credit	Verified Credit	Standard Credit	Verified Credit
World Language, Fine Arts or Career & Technical Education	2	0		
World Language			3	0
Fine Arts or Career & Technical Education			1	0
Economics & Personal Finance	1	0	1	0
Electives	4	0	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>5</b>

In addition to the above course credit requirements, a student must also complete the following to earn an Advanced Studies Diploma:

- **AP, Honors, IB, Dual Enrollment, Work-Based Learning, or CTE Credential** - Students shall (i) complete an Advanced Placement, honors, International Baccalaureate, or dual enrollment course; or (ii) complete a high-quality work-based learning experience, as established by Board guidance on work-based learning; or (iii) earn a career and technical education credential approved by the board, except when a career and technical education credential in a particular subject area is not readily available or appropriate or does not adequately measure student competency, in which case the student shall receive satisfactory competency-based instruction in the subject area to satisfy the advanced studies diploma requirements. The career and technical education credential, when required, could include the successful completion of an industry certification, a state licensure examination, a national occupational competency assessment, or the Virginia workplace readiness assessment.
- **Virtual Course** - Students shall successfully complete one virtual course, which may be a non-credit-bearing course or a required or elective credit-bearing course that is offered online. Guidance on this requirement is provided in the [Guidance Document Governing Certain Provisions of the SOA \(8VAC20-131\)](#).
- **First Aid, CPR, and AED Training** - Students shall be trained in emergency first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and the use of automated external defibrillators (AED), including hands-on practice of the skills necessary to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Students with an IEP or 504 Plan that documents that they cannot successfully complete this training shall be granted a waiver from this graduation requirement, as provided in [8VAC20-131-420\(B\)](#).
- **Demonstration of the 5 C's** – In accordance with the Profile of a Virginia Graduate, students shall acquire and demonstrate foundational skills in Virginia’s 5 C’s: critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship.

Given the outperformance of Advanced diploma-earners in higher education institutions, expanding the flexibility of the program provides one meaningful lever to prepare students for success and gainful employment after high school. However, the Advanced Diploma requires course sequencing and applicable substitutions are increasingly complex, which creates concerns around the barriers to achieving an Advanced Studies Diploma. While the requirements are intentionally complex and represent higher levels of curricula rigor, much improvement can be made to educate parents, educators, counselors, and students about, and create a clearer path to, the Advanced Studies Diploma.

Importantly, the Department is continuing to expand the menu of alternative rigorous pathways that enable and encourage all students to pursue the pathway of his or her choosing.

### **Lab Schools**

Governor Youngkin secured \$100 million in the 2022 Budget for College Partnership Laboratory Schools (Lab Schools). These K-12 schools are established by institutions of higher education, in collaboration with businesses, nonprofits, and other community organizations, and will leverage the resources, expertise, and capacity based at such institutions to create innovative educational service delivery models.

Lab schools can partner with businesses, nonprofits, and other community organizations, exposing students to opportunities and learning beyond the classroom. There is no one design of a lab school—school proposals range from a high school with computer science specialization to an elementary school with a visual arts focus. Lab schools uniquely allow for students to engage directly with the rigor and content knowledge that employers and higher education institutions provide, ahead of formal entry into those institutions. There are currently 21 grants in the application process, and the goal is to launch 20 Lab Schools within the next three years.

### **Career and Technical Education**

Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes prepare young people for productive futures while meeting the Commonwealth's need for well-trained and industry-certified technical workers. Currently, Virginia public schools serve more than 670,000 students in one or more CTE courses in grades 6-12 in one of eight areas: agricultural education, business and information technology, career connections, family and consumer sciences, health and medical sciences, marketing, technology education, and trade and industrial education.

Virginia also recognizes 12 high-quality work-based learning (HQWBL) opportunities for students who can participate in workplace experiences such as shadowing, interning, or participation in a registered apprenticeship and have it count towards a graduation requirement. Below is a chart that outlines the 12 types of recognized activities:

HQWBL Experience	Suggested Grade Levels	Related CTE Instruction	Training Agreement	Training Plan	Minimum Duration	Paid Option	Credit Option	Meets Graduation Requirement	CCCRI
Job Shadowing	6-12	✓	✓		Varies by type				
Service Learning	6-12	✓	✓		Varies by type			✓	✓
Mentorship	6-12	✓	✓		Course duration or 140 hours for .5 credit option		✓	✓ (at least 140 hours)	✓ (at least 140 hours)
Externship	6-12	✓	✓		40 hours			✓ (at least 40 hours)	✓ (at least 40 hours)
School-Based Enterprise	6-12	✓	✓		Course duration	✓		✓	✓
Internship	11-12	✓	✓	✓	Course duration or 280 hours for 1 credit option	✓	✓	✓	✓
Entrepreneurship	11-12	✓	✓	✓	Course duration or 280 hours for 1 credit option	✓	✓	✓	✓
Clinical Experience	11-12	✓	✓		Varies by type			✓	✓
Cooperative Education	11-12	✓	✓	✓	280 hours for 1 credit option	✓	✓	✓	✓
Youth Registered Apprenticeship	11-12	✓	✓		280 hours for 1 credit option	✓	✓	✓	✓
Registered Apprenticeship	11-12	✓	✓		144 hours RTI per 2,000 hours OJT	✓		✓	✓
SAE (Immersion)	9-12	✓	✓	✓	280 hours for 1 credit option	✓	✓	✓	✓

Middle and high school students can gain hands-on experience in the workplace to explore their interests and build professional skills, all while still in secondary school. Both CTE courses and work-based learning experiences provide students exposure to the world of work and the many career paths they can explore once they graduate.

### Dual Enrollment

Dual enrollment programs allow eligible high-school students to enroll in college coursework while still in high school, reducing the average time to credential, preparing students for higher education, and increasing access to rigorous course options. Student demand for dual enrollment has grown significantly over the last 10 years in Virginia: An estimated 27,500 students participated in one or more dual enrollment courses statewide during the 2012–13 academic year; by the 2021–22 academic year, over 42,000 students were participating in dual enrollment statewide, a 54 percent increase from 2012–13.

### Improve the Quality of Special Education Services

While outside of the scope of HB 938, it should be noted that the VDOE is focused on improving the quality

and rigor of courses for all students, including those in special education. The Department is working to implement SB 943, which will require high schools to identify a faculty member responsible for special education transitions to postsecondary life. Successful transition planning will ensure that special education students are prepared for life after graduation.

### **Recommendations:**

- VDOE should use existing resources to develop a technical assistance and outreach program to assist school counselors, parents, and students respectively, in creating greater clarity and better understanding the Advanced Studies Diploma.
  - This technical assistance and outreach program would promote awareness of the Advanced Studies Diploma as an option for all students, the purpose and benefits, and existing flexibilities for how students can meet the course requirements. Technical assistance should also be designed to target outreach to economically disadvantaged students who have been significantly less likely to earn an Advanced Studies Diploma than non-economically disadvantaged students.
  - This information should be provided to counselors and parents early in a student’s academic career to allow for adequate course planning. Further, parents should be made aware of how the Advanced Studies Diploma aligns to admissions requirements for Virginia institutions of higher education and that course selection rather than diploma type is a more meaningful metric of competitiveness for college admission.
  - A technical assistance and outreach program may include partnerships between the schools and applicable industry to help teachers, counselors, and parents visualize pathways into non-traditional higher education and career pathways (e.g. apprenticeship training, internships, trade-related schools).
- The Board of Education should consider other Advanced Diploma options, such as a specialization in CTE, foreign language, or other specializations, maintaining the rigor of the Advanced Studies Diploma while recognizing multiple pathways for students to pursue interests and strengths.
- The Department of Education must launch its Office of Innovation to create and support a culture of innovation throughout K-12 education in the Commonwealth. This office should begin by cataloging schools which are approaching teaching and learning in a non-traditional manner, capture results and create a network of these innovators, and work to spread successful education models across the Commonwealth.
  - The Office of Innovation should collect success stories from innovative leaders, celebrate their successes and replicate them to meet the goal of growing more Governors Schools, Lab Schools, Magnet Programs and other successful models.
- The Department should audit, revise, and reduce the current career and technical education program offerings to ensure they are aligned with high-wage, high-demand fields, especially leveraging the new labor market data out of the Virginia Office of Education Economics.
  - Reviews of CTE courses should occur every two years that the courses meet the needs and required merits of the relevant professions.
- The Department should develop a five-year strategic plan to expand career pathways for students, focusing on increased access to CTE opportunities, high-quality dual enrollment programs, and work-based learning opportunities.
  - The strategic plan should include details on how the Department will create a pathway for every student to graduate high school with an industry-recognized credential or associate degree in a relevant field.
- Broaden dual enrollment opportunities by redefining dual enrollment as any postsecondary level work a student takes that increases the opportunities for success in future employment and postsecondary education while still in high school. This should include both degree and non-degree

related course.

- Evaluate and provide recommendations on “seat time” policies to ensure the policies prioritize student achievement and proficiency, not how much time they spend in a chair within the four walls of a school.
- School divisions should collaborate with VDOE to bring innovative education opportunities to their schools.
  - School divisions should also identify any barriers that could prevent students from accessing innovative education opportunities, including lack of transportation or broadband issues.

# STAKEHOLDERS

Fifteen stakeholders from eight Virginia regions served on the HB938 workgroup. Stakeholders represented parents, public school principals, public school superintendents, public school board members, public school teachers, institutions of higher education, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and industry partners. Workgroup members are listed below.

## Stakeholder Representatives as Required by HB938

**Ms. Danielle Allen**

Principal, Hurt Park Elementary School, Roanoke City  
Representing: Principals

**Mrs. Courtney Baker**

Director of Workforce and Training, Associated  
General Contractors of Virginia  
Representing: Business and Industry

**Dr. Kimberly Bridges**

Assistant Professor, VCU School of Education  
Representing: Institutions of Higher Education

**Ms. Abby French**

Seventh Grade Teacher, Frederick County Middle  
School, Frederick County Public Schools  
Representing: Teachers

**Ms. Kim Greer**

Principal, Langley High School, Fairfax County  
Representing: Principals

**Mr. Rodney Jordan**

School Board Member, Norfolk City Public Schools  
Representing: Local School Board Members

**Ms. Erin McGrath**

Assistant Director for College Access and PK-12  
Outreach, State Council of Higher Education for  
Virginia (SCHEV)  
Representing: SCHEV

**Mrs. Laura Medina**

Kindergarten teacher, Clarksville Elementary School,  
Mecklenburg County Public Schools  
Representing: Teachers

**Mr. Robert Nomberg**

Parent, Henrico County Public Schools  
President and CEO, Virginia LEARNS  
Representing: Parents

**Ms. Tian Olson**

Parent, Fairfax County Public Schools  
Chinese American Parent Association  
Representing: Parents

**Ms. Tammy Silipigni**

Principal, Katherine Johnson Middle School, Fairfax  
County  
Representing: Principals

**Mrs. Nancy Welch**

Superintendent, Mathews County Public Schools  
Representing: Superintendents

**Mr. David Woodard**

School Board Member,  
Tazewell County Public Schools  
President-elect, Virginia School Boards Association  
Representing: Local School Board Members

**Mr. Michael (Mike) Zuk**

Mathematics and Computer Science Teacher,  
CodeRVA  
Representing: Teachers

## Virginia Department of Education

VDOE staff members organized workgroup meetings and served as subject matter specialists supporting workgroup activities.

**Dr. Brendon Albon**  
Director, STEM and Innovation

**Sarah Bazemore**  
School Counseling Specialist

**Kelly Bisogno**  
Fine Arts Coordinator

**Kathleen Dempsey**  
Project Consultant

**Dr. Christine Harris**  
Director, Humanities

**Dr. Lisa Harris**  
World Languages Coordinator

**Shelley Loving-Ryder**  
Assistant Superintendent, Office of Student  
Assessment, Accountability, and ESEA Programs

**Tina Mazzacane**  
Mathematics Coordinator, K-12

**Dr. Anne Petersen**  
Science Coordinator

**Dr. Leslie Sale**, Workgroup Co-Lead  
Director of Policy

**Dr. Amy Siepka**  
Director, Accountability

**Dr. Sarah Susbury**  
Director, Student Assessment

**Emily Webb**, Workgroup Co-Lead  
Director, Office of Board Relations

**Joseph Wharff**  
Associate Director, Student Services

## Region 5 Comprehensive Center (R5CC)

R5CC staff collaborated with VDOE to organize and facilitate workgroup meetings.

**Dr. Jill Feldman**  
Subject Matter Expert

**Dr. Boris Granovskiy**  
Subject Matter Expert

**Dr. Kimberly Hambrick**  
Director

**Dr. Terry Lashley**  
Subject Matter Expert

**Laura Taylor**  
Deputy Director

**Jeff Sellers**  
Subject Matter Expert

**Kerri Wills**  
Research Associate

# STAKEHOLDER MEETING SCHEDULE

Stakeholders participated in four virtual meetings to provide input and formulate recommendations on the six topics related to public education set out in HB938. The meetings were scheduled as follows:

- Meeting #1: September 23, 2022
- Meeting #2: September 30, 2022
- Meeting #3: October 21, 2022
- Meeting #4: November 4, 2022

## Meeting #1: Clarify the Task

Meeting #1 introduced stakeholders to the overall HB938 task, the timeline, and the six education topics identified in the legislation. Prior to meeting #1, VDOE staff identified several related themes across the six topics so proposed that stakeholders organize their thinking and discussion on the topics under four broader, thematic headings, defined below. To prepare for meeting #1, stakeholders received briefing materials for each topic area to include:

- **Promoting excellence in mathematics instruction and achievement**
  - National and state trends in mathematics achievement
  - A comparison of Virginia’s Mathematics Standards of Learning with the standards from other states
  - Status of *the Mathematics Standards of Learning* revision process
  - Delineation of state agency and local agency roles regarding standards and curriculum development
- **Expanding options for attaining the Advanced Studies Diploma**
  - Existing flexibilities for the Advanced Studies Diploma
  - Considerations in the Design of the Advanced Studies Diploma
  - Reported barriers to acquiring the Advanced Studies Diploma
- **Promoting data transparency and meaningful accountability**
  - School Accreditation
    - Accreditation Indicators
    - Accreditation Ratings
    - Triennial Accreditation
    - Student Growth
    - College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index
  - Availability of Accountability Data
    - School Quality Profiles Overview
    - VDOE Single Sign-on Web System
  - Growth Assessment Overview
    - Implementation of Growth Assessments
    - Virginia Assessment Parent Portal
- **Maintaining Standards of Learning (SOL) proficiency standards**
  - Definition and Historical Context of Standard Setting in Virginia
  - Standard Setting Process (who’s involved, how standards are set, when the process occurs)
  - Other Standards Setting Methodologies

During meeting #1, VDOE subject matter experts provided overviews on each HB938 topic. Stakeholders were encouraged to pose questions during and following the meeting, and VDOE staff provided written responses to these questions which were shared with stakeholders prior to meeting #2.

Additionally, as part of meeting #1, stakeholders participated in interest polls to identify which HB938 topics they preferred to focus on during meeting #2 breakout groups.

## **Meeting #2: Provide Input on HB938 Topics**

Meeting #2 engaged workgroup members in breakout discussion groups so that stakeholders could dive deeper into each HB938 topic area and provide input. Stakeholders were assigned to discussion groups based on their preferred topics of interest, and they focused on two or three topic areas during the meeting. Breakout groups included facilitators, note takers, subject matter experts, and stakeholders who discussed the education topic using a set of established questions. Discussion questions included the following:

### Promoting Excellence in Mathematics Instruction and Achievement

- What does promoting excellence in mathematics instruction and student achievement look like to you?
- What can the Board and the Department, in general, do to help educators and students reach this mathematics goal?
- What are your initial recommendations (if any)?

### Expanding options for attaining the Advanced Studies Diploma

- What does success (expanding the options for an Advanced Studies Diploma) look like to you?
- How can the Advanced Studies Diploma be expanded without compromising rigor, college/career readiness?
- How can communication about the Advanced Studies Diploma be improved?
- What can the Board and the Department, in general, do to expand flexibilities?
- What are your initial recommendations (if any)?

### Promoting Data Transparency and Meaningful Accountability

- How can the current methodology for including growth in accreditation be reconsidered to emphasize proficiency?
- What information on the [School Quality Profiles](#) and other sources of information on the DOE website is essential/helpful, and what additional information is needed?
- How can the Board and the Department, in general, help make the accreditation model and/or results more transparent to the community?
- What changes should be made to the current accreditation system to promote meaningful accountability year-over-year?
- Does the triennial accreditation legislation positively or negatively impact the current accreditation system? Should this legislation remain or be removed?

### Maintaining Standards of Learning (SOL) Proficiency Standards

- What indicators would you expect to find in a system that sets and maintains its proficiency standards in state-level assessments?
- What changes should be made to
  - Consider NAEP data in establishing “cut scores” on the SOL tests?
  - Expand the stakeholder groups involved in the standard setting process?
- What are your thoughts about the proposed VDOE changes to
  - Provide information to the standard setting committees about the difficulty of the items following the round 1 judgments.
  - Provide estimated impact data (the percent of students who would fall into each performance level if the cut scores were adopted) to the standard setting committees after round 2 judgements.

- Provide information to the articulation committee about what the cut score on the new test would be if the same level of achievement was required to be proficient as was required on the old test.
- What can the Board and the Department, in general, do to maintain Standards of Learning proficiency standards?
- What are your initial recommendations (if any)?

The facilitators for each of the breakout groups, which included VDOE and R5CC staff, sought to ensure the questions presented were fully addressed and each workgroup member had a chance to contribute. Their role was to offer prompting questions and promote discussions but stakeholders themselves were solely responsible for steering the discussion.

To keep all meeting participants informed, the stakeholders reconvened as a whole group to debrief the discussion points from each breakout session. Individuals from each group shared the key points from their discussions and elicited questions/comments from others.

After meeting #2, VDOE staff compiled the breakout group notes and sent them to all stakeholders for their review. Stakeholders were invited to offer additional input through an online form sent via email following meeting #2. VDOE staff compiled the written feedback and shared it with stakeholders prior to meeting #3.

### **Meeting #3: Formulate HB938 Recommendations**

Meeting #3 was organized for a whole group discussion so that all stakeholders could contribute to each HB938 topic. Stakeholders reviewed the meeting #2 key discussion points, the follow-up written input, and proposed draft recommendations for each of the four themes. These recommendations were reviewed and edited by the group prior to the close of the meeting.

After meeting #3, VDOE staff compiled the list of proposed recommendations and set up shared forms to elicit stakeholder input and feedback. VDOE staff sent the list of proposed recommendations with links to four shared forms to all stakeholders. The shared forms afforded individual stakeholders the opportunity to provide written feedback on each discussion theme.

After the stakeholder feedback was gathered, VDOE staff updated proposed recommendations and an agency of authority was identified for each proposed recommendation. VDOE staff then sent the updated list of recommendations to stakeholders for their review prior to meeting #4.

### **Meeting #4: Finalize HB938 Recommendations**

Meeting #4 offered stakeholders another opportunity to discuss and further refine proposed HB938 recommendations. As with the previous meeting, meeting #4 was structured for whole group discussion so that all members could contribute to each HB938 topic.

# STAKEHOLDER MEETING AGENDAS

HB938 Workgroup Meeting #1  
September 23, 2022  
10 a.m. to noon

## Purpose of the HB938 Stakeholder Workgroup

Stakeholders will provide recommendations to the Board of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and General Assembly about how education topics within HB938 might be addressed as well as the identified priorities.

**Meeting #1 Purpose:** This meeting introduces workgroup members to the HB938 task and the six education topics. It provides important briefing material so that all members are better prepared to provide input to the topics in meeting #2.

**Meeting #1 Desired Outcomes:** Workgroup members understand the task, the workgroup’s timeline, and can access supporting resources. They are prepared to discuss education topics in meeting #2.

## Meeting #1 Agenda:

Time	Facilitator	Task
10:00	Emily Webb, Director, Office of Board Relations	Welcome, Introduction to Superintendent Balow
10:10	Emily Webb, Office of Board Relations and Dr. Leslie Sale, Director of Policy	Introduction to workgroup support staff and workgroup members
10:25	Dr. Leslie Sale, Director of Policy	Workgroup task overview, meeting organization, and agenda overview
10:40	Tina Mazzacane, Mathematics Coordinator, K-12	Briefing and discussion: Promoting mathematics excellence and achievement
10:55	Dr. Leslie Sale, Director of Policy	Briefing and discussion: Expanding options for attaining the Advanced Studies Diploma
11:10	Dr. Amy Siepka, Director, Office of Accountability	Briefing and discussion: Increasing data transparency, school accreditation
11:25	Dr. Sarah Susbury, Director, Office of Student Assessment	Briefing and discussion: Maintaining Standards of Learning proficiency standards
11:45	Emily Webb Director, Office of Board Relations	Identifying focus areas for discussion
11:55	Emily Webb Director, Office of Board Relations	Wrap-up, next steps

HB938 Workgroup Meeting #2  
September 30, 2022  
10 a.m. to noon

**Purpose of the HB938 Stakeholder Workgroup**

Stakeholders will provide recommendations to the Board of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and General Assembly about how education topics within HB938 might be addressed as well as the identified priorities.

Meeting #2 Purpose: This meeting is designed for stakeholders to discuss the topic areas of HB938 and provide input.

Meeting #2 Desired Outcomes: Stakeholders contribute input on the topic areas of HB938 and are prepared to formulate HB938 recommendations during meeting #3.

Meeting #2 Agenda:

Time	Facilitator	Task
10:00	Emily Webb, Director, Office of Board Relations	Welcome, review agenda, and discuss topic area organization
10:05	Emily Webb	Break into discussion groups
10:50	Emily Webb	Workgroup members in breakout groups #1, #2, and #4 switch topics. Members in breakout group #3 remain with topic #3.
11:30	Emily Webb	Workgroup members transition to whole group discussion
11:55	Emily Webb	Wrap-up and next steps

Breakout Discussion Groups			
Rm.	R5CC Facilitators	VDOE Notetakers	Topic
1.	Terry Lashley, Jeff Sellers	Dr. Brendon Albon, Tina Mazzacane	Mathematics Excellence and Achievement (Round #1 only)
2.	Dr. Boris Granovskiy, Terry Lashley	Joseph Wharff, Dr. Lisa Harris	Advanced Diploma Options
3.	Dr. Kimberly Hambrick, Laura Taylor	Dr. Amy Siepka, Kathleen Dempsey	Data Transparency and School Accreditation
4.	Dr. Jill Feldman, Jeff Sellers	Dr. Sarah Susbury, Shelley Loving-Ryder	Standards of Learning Proficiency Standards

HB938 Workgroup Meeting #3  
 October 21, 2022  
 10 a.m. to noon

**Purpose of the HB938 Stakeholder Workgroup**

Stakeholders will provide recommendations to the Board of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and General Assembly about how education topics within HB938 might be addressed as well as the identified priorities.

**Meeting #3 Purpose:** This meeting is designed for stakeholders to further discuss the HB938 education topics, formulate recommendations, and identify priorities to be shared with the Board of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and General Assembly.

**Meeting #3 Desired Outcomes:** A list of recommendations and priorities for each HB938 education topic is formulated. Stakeholders perceive the input process as transparent and inclusive.

**Meeting #3 Agenda:**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Facilitator</b>	<b>Task</b>
10:00	Dr. Leslie Sale, Director of Policy	Welcome, review agenda, and discuss meeting organization
<b>10:05</b>	<b>Whole group discussion by topic area</b>	
10:05	Dr. Sarah Susbury, Director, Student Assessment	Maintaining Standards of Learning (SOL) proficiency standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss input</li> <li>• Formulate recommendations</li> <li>• Identify priorities</li> </ul>
10:25	Dr. Leslie Sale	Expanding options for attaining the Advanced Studies Diploma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss input</li> <li>• Formulate recommendations</li> <li>• Identify priorities</li> </ul>
10:50	Tina Mazzacane, Mathematics Coordinator, K-12	Promoting excellence in mathematics instruction and achievement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss input</li> <li>• Formulate recommendations</li> <li>• Identify priorities</li> </ul>
11:10	Dr. Amy Siepka Director, Accountability	Promoting data transparency and meaningful accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss input</li> <li>• Formulate recommendations</li> <li>• Identify priorities</li> </ul>
11:45	Dr. Leslie Sale	Review recommendations
11:55	Dr. Leslie Sale	Wrap-up and next steps

HB938 Workgroup Meeting #4  
November 4, 2022  
11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Purpose of the HB938 Stakeholder Workgroup**

Stakeholders will provide recommendations to the Board of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and General Assembly about how education topics within HB938 might be addressed as well as the identified priorities.

**Meeting #4 Purpose:** This meeting is designed for stakeholders to finalize recommendations and priorities to be shared with the Board of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and General Assembly.

**Meeting #4 Desired Outcomes:** A list of recommendations and priorities for each HB938 education topic is finalized. Stakeholders perceive the input process as transparent and inclusive.

**Meeting #4 Agenda:**

Time	Facilitator	Task
11:00	Dr. Leslie Sale, Director of Policy	Welcome, review agenda, and discuss meeting organization
<b>11:10</b>	<b>Whole group discussion by topic area</b>	
11:10	Dr. Amy Siepka Director, Accountability	Promoting data transparency and meaningful accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize recommendations</li> <li>• Finalize priorities</li> </ul>
11:40	Dr. Leslie Sale	Expanding options for attaining the Advanced Studies Diploma <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize recommendations</li> <li>• Finalize priorities</li> </ul>
12:05	Tina Mazzacane, Mathematics Coordinator, K-12	Promoting excellence in mathematics instruction and achievement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize recommendations</li> <li>• Finalize priorities</li> </ul>
12:25	Dr. Sarah Susbury, Director, Student Assessment	Maintaining Standards of Learning (SOL) proficiency standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize recommendations</li> <li>• Finalize priorities</li> </ul>
12:45	Dr. Leslie Sale	Reviewing recommendations
12:55	Dr. Leslie Sale	Wrap-up and next steps

# **APPENDIX A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON ACCREDITATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

*The appendices are the background materials that were provided to workgroup members to inform their recommendations.*

# Background Information on Accreditation and Accountability

*Virginia's School Accreditation Model Based on the 2017 Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*

## Overview of the School Accreditation Model

### School Quality Indicators

School accreditation ratings are based on student performance across nine school quality indicators:

- *Academic Achievement -English (includes reading and writing)*
- *Achievement Gap-English (includes reading and writing)*
- *Academic Achievement-Mathematics*
- *Achievement Gap-Mathematics*
- *Academic Achievement-Science*
- *Chronic Absenteeism*
- *Graduation and Completion Index (GCI) (only applies to schools with a 12<sup>th</sup> grade)*
- *Dropout Rate (only applies to schools with a 12<sup>th</sup> grade)*
- *College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index (CCCRI) (only applies to schools with a 12<sup>th</sup> grade)*

### Performance Level Descriptions

Performance on each school quality indicator falls into three levels:

- **Level One-At or Above Standard:** Performance meets or exceeds the state standard by using the best of the current or cumulative three-year rate; OR current year rate is in the Level Two range and performance demonstrates adequate improvement from the previous year.
- **Level Two-Near Standard:** Performance meets a specified range using the best of the current or cumulative three-year rate; OR current year rate is in the Level Three range and performance demonstrates adequate improvement from the previous year.
- **Level Three-Below Standard:** Performance meets a specified range using the best of the current or cumulative three-year rate; OR performance has stayed at a Level Two or Level Three rating through four consecutive years (Level Three-4 YRS rating).

### Demonstrating Adequate Improvement

- Demonstrating adequate improvement is accomplished by either reducing a rate by at least 10% from the previous year (designated as R10) or increasing the Graduation and Completion Index by at least 2.5% (designated as I2) from the previous year.
- R10 is used in all *Academic Achievement* and *Achievement Gap* indicators (where R10

is a reduction in the failure rate of at least 10%), as well as *Chronic Absenteeism*, and *Dropout Rate*.

## Accreditation Ratings

A school's accreditation rating of *Accredited* or *Accredited with Conditions* is determined by its performance on all school quality indicators.

- **Accredited:** the performance levels of all school quality indicators are Level One or Level Two.
- **Accredited with Conditions:** the performance level of any school quality indicator is Level Three.

Accredited	Schools with all school-quality indicators at either Level One or Level Two
Accredited with Conditions	Schools with one or more school quality indicators at Level Three

There are three additional accreditation ratings:

- **Accreditation Denied:** determined by the Board of Education when a school designated as *Accredited with Conditions* fails to adopt and implement school division or school corrective action plans with fidelity;
- **Accreditation Withheld:** used when there is a serious testing irregularity and the validity of data cannot be determined; and
- **New School:** awarded for a one-year period to a new school that comprises students who previously attended one or more existing schools; provides the opportunity to evaluate the performance of students on school quality indicators.
  - In September 2019, the Board of Education adopted special provisions for schools that had a *New School* rating during the year in which the data used for accreditation are collected and only have one year of data on which to evaluate indicator performance levels, such that –
    - If an academic indicator is rated Level Three based on current year data and the combined rate in English or mathematics (elementary and middle schools), or the mathematics pass rate (EOC) or science pass rate (elementary, middle, and high school) is at least 50%, the indicator shall be rated a Level Two.
    - If the chronic absenteeism rate, dropout rate, or Graduation and Completion Index are rated Level Three based on current year data, the indicator shall be rated as Level Two.

## Additional Details Regarding Accreditation

### Level Three – 4 YRS Performance Rating

- A school quality indicator with a status of Level Two or Level Three through four consecutive years will be designated in the fifth year as *Level Three – Below Standard* (noted as Level Three – 4 YRS) if the fifth year’s performance remains at Level Two or Level Three.
- For the *Achievement Gap-Mathematics* and *Achievement Gap-English* indicators, the Level Three - 4 YRS designation applies to the student groups within the indicator, not to the overall *Achievement Gap* level designation.
- Example of Level Three – 4 YRS Rating for Science Pass Rates:

Assessment Year	Accreditation Year	Performance Level
2015-2016	2016-2017	Level Two
2016-2017	2017-2018	Level Three
2017-2018	2018-2019	Level Two
2018-2019	2019-2020	Level Two (4th consecutive year of Level Two or Three)
<b>WAIVED ACCREDITATION YEARS 2020-2021 and 2021-2022</b>		
2021-2022	2022-2023	If the 5th consecutive year is a Level Two or Three, rating will be: Level Three – 4 YRS

A school quality indicator designated as Level Three – 4 YRS will remain Level Three until the indicator meets Level One criteria by either meeting or exceeding the benchmark for Level One, or demonstrating adequate improvement from Level Two.

### Triennial Accreditation

- Part of [§22.1-253.13:3 A](#) of the Code of Virginia:
 

*The Board shall review the accreditation status of a school once every three years if the school has been fully accredited for three consecutive years. Upon such triennial review, the Board shall review the accreditation status of the school for each individual year within that triennial review period. If the Board finds that the school would have been accredited every year of that triennial review period the Board shall accredit the school for another three years.*
- Schools rated *Fully Accredited* under the previous accreditation system and schools rated *Accredited* under the new accreditation system are considered synonymous for the purposes of identifying schools eligible for multi-year accreditation status.

Example:

Accreditation Year	School Performance	School Accreditation Status
2016-2017	Met all Benchmarks	<i>Fully Accredited</i>
2017-2018	Met all Benchmarks	<i>Fully Accredited</i>
2018-2019	All indicators are Level One or Level Two	<i>Accredited</i>
2019-2020	All indicators are Level One or Level Two	<i>Accredited</i> under Triennial Accreditation
2022-2023	One indicator is a Level Three	<i>Accredited</i> under Triennial Accreditation
2023-2024	All indicators are Level One or Level Two	<i>Accredited</i> under Triennial Accreditation
2024-2025	One indicator is a Level Three	<i>Accredited with Conditions</i>

- In accreditation year 2019-2020, the school starts its triennial accreditation period because it was *Accredited* or *Fully Accredited* the previous three consecutive years.
- After accreditation year 2023-2024, a triennial review occurs (a “look-back” at the three previous years). The triennial review indicates that the school did not meet the status *Accredited* using its data in accreditation year 2022-2023, therefore the triennial review does not result in awarding another triennial accreditation period.
- In 2024-2025, the Level Three performance level gives the school a status of *Accredited with Conditions*.

## Academic Achievement and Achievement Gap Indicators

This section provides the performance level descriptions, and the type of rate used for each of these indicators: *Academic Achievement-English*, *Achievement Gap-English*, *Academic Achievement-Mathematics*, *Achievement Gap-Mathematics* and *Academic Achievement-Science*.

### Performance Level Descriptions for all *Academic Achievement* and *Achievement Gap* Indicators

	English (Includes Reading and Writing Assessments)	Mathematics	Science
<p><b>LEVEL ONE</b></p> <p>Meets or exceeds state standard or sufficient improvement</p>	<p>Current or cumulative three-year rate is greater than or equal to <b>75%</b> <u>OR</u></p> <p>Current year rate is in the Level Two range (less than 75% but greater than 65%) and the school decreased the failure rate by at least 10% (R10) from the previous year.</p>	<p>Current or cumulative three-year rate is greater than or equal to <b>70%</b> <u>OR</u></p> <p>Current year rate is in the Level Two range (less than 70% but greater than 65%) and the school decreased the failure rate by at least 10% (R10) from the previous year.</p>	<p>Current or cumulative three-year rate is greater than or equal to <b>70%</b> <u>OR</u></p> <p>Current year rate is in the Level Two range (less than 70% but greater than 65%) and the school decreased the failure rate by at least 10% (R10) from the previous year.</p>
<p><b>LEVEL TWO</b></p> <p>Near state standard or sufficient improvement</p>	<p>Current year or cumulative three-year rate is less than 75% but greater than 65% <u>OR</u></p> <p>Current year rate is greater than or equal to 50% and less than or equal to 65% and the school decreased the failure rate by at least 10% (R10) from the previous year.</p>	<p>Current year or cumulative three-year rate is less than 70% but greater than 65% <u>OR</u></p> <p>Current year rate is greater than or equal to 50% and less than or equal to 65% and the school decreased the failure rate by at least 10% (R10) from the previous year.</p>	<p>Current year or cumulative three-year rate is less than 70% but greater than 65% <u>OR</u></p> <p>Current year rate is greater than or equal to 50% and less than or equal to 65% and the school decreased the failure rate by at least 10% (R10) from the previous year.</p>
<p><b>LEVEL THREE</b></p> <p>School demonstrated performance below the benchmarks for Level One and Level Two.</p>	<p>Current year or cumulative three-year rate is less than or equal to 65% <u>OR</u></p> <p>School has stayed at a Level Two or Three through four consecutive years. (Level Three - 4 Years Rating)</p>	<p>Current year or cumulative three-year rate is less than or equal to 65% <u>OR</u></p> <p>School has stayed at a Level Two or Three through four consecutive years. (Level Three - 4 Years Rating)</p>	<p>Current year or cumulative three-year rate is less than or equal to 65% <u>OR</u></p> <p>School has stayed at a Level Two or Three through four consecutive years. (Level Three - 4 Years Rating)</p>

## ***Achievement Gap Student Groups***

Performance rates for *Achievement Gap-English* and *Achievement Gap-Mathematics* are calculated for the following student groups.

- Asian students
- Black students
- Hispanic students
- Multiple Races
- White students
- Economically disadvantaged students
- English Learners
- Students with disabilities (excludes 504 students)

## **Determining the Performance Level for *Achievement Gap* Indicators**

- The final performance level for achievement gaps is determined through a two-step process.
- First, a performance level is assigned to each student group based on the same criteria used for the all students' performance levels for English and mathematics for groups that meet the minimum student group size rules.
- Second, a set of decision rules is applied across all student groups in which a final performance level is assigned to determine the overall performance level rating for the achievement gap indicator. The decision rules are as follows:
  - Schools with no more than one student group in Level Two and no student groups in Level Three will have an overall rating of Level One;
  - Schools with more than one student group in Level Two but no more than one student group in Level Three will have an overall rating of Level Two; and
  - Schools with two or more student groups in Level Three will have an overall rating of Level Three.

This table provides three examples of the application of decision rules to determine the final performance level for achievement gap indicators.

<b>Student Groups</b>	<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>	<b>School C</b>
Asian	Level One	Level One	Level One
Black	Level One	Level Two	Level One

Student Groups	School A	School B	School C
Economically Disadvantaged	Level One	Level Two	Level One
English Learners	Level Two	Level One	Level Three
Hispanic	Level One	Level One	Level Three
Multiple Races	Level One	Level One	Level Two
Students with Disabilities	Level One	Level Three	Level Two
White	Level One	Level One	Level One
<b>Final Performance Level</b>	<b>Level One</b>	<b>Level Two</b>	<b>Level Three</b>

### Rate for the Academic Achievement-Science Indicator

- *Academic Achievement-Science* is measured using a **pass rate** that includes students who pass state assessments divided by total number of test takers.

### Rate for Academic Achievement-English and Achievement Gap-English Indicators

- State assessment scores in reading and writing are used to calculate the performance rates for the *Academic Achievement-English* and *Achievement Gap-English* indicators.
- For students in grades 3 through 8, both the *Academic Achievement-English* and *Achievement Gap-English* indicators are measured using a **combined rate** that includes students who (1) passed the reading and/or writing state assessments, (2) failed the reading state assessment but showed growth, or (3) failed the reading state assessment and did not show growth but showed progress towards proficiency in English as an English Learner (EL) as measured by the English language proficiency assessment (ACCESS for ELLS 2.0).
- For students taking the EOC English assessments, the *Academic Achievement-English* indicator is measured using a combined rate that includes students who (1) passed EOC Reading, or failed the EOC Reading assessment but showed progress towards English proficiency as an EL and/or (2) passed EOC Writing.
- A student who takes both reading and writing assessments will be counted twice in the denominator. The student will be counted up to two times in the numerator.
- The progress table found on page 12 of this document should be used to determine whether a student who takes grades 3 through 8 reading has demonstrated growth.

## Rate for Academic Achievement-Mathematics and Achievement Gap-Mathematics Indicators

- Both *Academic Achievement-Mathematics* and *Achievement Gap-Mathematics* is measured using a **combined rate** in elementary and middle school (grades 3 through 8), and a **pass rate** in high school (grades 9 through 12).
- The combined rate includes students who (1) pass state assessments or (2) fail state assessments but show growth.
- The progress table found on page 12 of this document should be used to determine whether a student who takes grades 3 through 8 mathematics or Algebra I in middle school has demonstrated growth.

### Recovery: Included in the Rates for Academic Achievement-English, Achievement Gap-English, Academic Achievement-Mathematics and Achievement Gap-Mathematics

For *Recovery*\* tests, the following applies:

- Passing mathematics and reading recovery tests scores count as two tests instead of one (twice in the numerator and twice in the denominator).

\*A test record is marked with *Recovery* if a student is:

- Retaking an EOC Reading/Mathematics test for verified credit, and participated in a remediation recovery program;
- Taking the Algebra I test for the first time and failed the grade 7 or 8 mathematics SOL test the previous school year and participated in a remediation recovery program;
- Promoted to grade 9 and failed the grade 8 reading/mathematics SOL test in the previous school year, and retaking the grade 8 reading/mathematics SOL test, and participated in a remediation recovery program; or
- Promoted to grade 4,5,6,7 or 8 and failed the previous grade's reading/mathematics SOL test and participated in a remediation recovery program and is taking or retaking the current grade level reading/mathematics test.

## Student Growth

Student growth is a component of the combined rates for grades 3-8 reading and mathematics, and Algebra I through grade 8. This section provides details regarding how growth was calculated for accreditation year 2022-2023 (based on data from the 2021-2022 school year).

### Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP)

- The Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP) tests included in the calculation of growth are:
  - Grades 3-8 reading; and
  - Grades 3-8 mathematics

There will be no growth component in the combined rate for VAAP students in accreditation year 2022-2023 due to the new assessment being administered in school year 2021-2022.

## Standards of Learning Tests

- Standards of Learning (SOL) tests included in the calculation of growth are:
  - Grades 3-8 reading; and
  - Grades 3-8 mathematics and Algebra I administered through grade 8.

For students who failed the reading or mathematics SOL assessment, but showed growth, their growth is included in the combined rate for *Academic Achievement-English*, *Academic Achievement-Mathematics*, *Achievement Gap-English*, and *Achievement Gap-Mathematics*.

## Growth Assessment and SOL Tests Used to Determine Growth for Grades 3-8

- Tests used to determine growth for the 2021-2022 school year are the:
  - spring 2021 SOL test,
  - fall 2021 growth assessment, and
  - spring 2022 SOL test.

The spring 2021 SOL test and the fall 2021 growth assessment each measured the same grade level content.

- Example: In 2021-2022, a grade 5 student took the spring 2021 SOL test the year prior, which assessed grade 4 content, a fall 2021 growth assessment which assessed grade 4 content, and a spring 2022 SOL test which assessed grade 5 content.

**For 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR ONLY:** Growth on SOL tests is determined by first comparing the failing Spring 2022 SOL test vertical scaled score to the Spring 2021 SOL test vertical scaled score. If this does not show growth, then the failing Spring 2022 SOL test vertical scaled score is compared to the Fall 2021 Growth Assessment vertical scaled score.

The ranges used in the comparison(s) must follow these rules:

The Spring 2022 SOL test vertical scaled score **must be** in Ranges I, II, III or IV.

AND

The Spring 2021 SOL test vertical scaled score **must be** in Ranges I, II, III or IV  
OR  
the Fall 2021 Growth Assessment vertical scaled score must be in Ranges I, II, III or IV.

AND

The Spring 2022 SOL test vertical scaled score must be at least one range level greater than the vertical scaled score used in the comparison.

## Progress Tables

A progress table methodology is used to determine whether there a student shows growth. Progress tables are organized by content level and range.

- The content level of an SOL test corresponds with the test name. For example, a Grade 8 Mathematics SOL test assesses grade 8 content and therefore, the content level is an “8.”
- For grades 4 through 8, the content level for the Fall 2021 Growth Assessment is one less than grade level in the test name. For example, the Fall 2021 Grade 8 Growth Assessment assessed grade 7 content, and therefore the content level is “7.” This is an important distinction to understand when looking at the range associated with a vertical scaled score on a grade 4 through 8 Fall 2021 Growth Assessment.
- The content level for both the Grade 3 Fall 2021 Growth Assessment and the Grade 3 Spring 2022 SOL test is “3.”

## Mathematics Progress Table

Mathematics Content Level	Range I	Range II	Range III	Range IV
3	900-1271	1272-1307	1308-1366	1367-1400
4	990-1313	1314-1340	1341-1396	1397-1430
5	1060-1360	1361-1387	1388-1456	1457-1493
6	1130-1407	1408-1432	1433-1495	1496-1532
7	1191-1458	1459-1487	1488-1550	1551-1581
8	1192-1482	1483-1507	1508-1574	1575-1609

Mathematics Content Level			Range III	Range IV
Algebra I (through grade 8)			1229-1620	1621-1656

## Reading Progress Tables

Reading Content Level	Range I	Range II	Range III	Range IV
3	900-1281	1282-1318	1319-1406	1407-1453
4	981-1331	1332-1377	1378-1453	1454-1495
5	991-1354	1355-1390	1391-1497	1498-1544
6	1104-1382	1383-1416	1417-1521	1522-1572
7	1136-1436	1437-1476	1477-1565	1566-1608
8	1155-1439	1440-1479	1480-1578	1579-1623

Example of a student demonstrating growth using the progress table methodology:

Reading Content Level	Range I	Range II	Range III	Range IV
3	900-1281	1282-1318	1319-1406	1407-1453
4	981-1331	1332-1377	1378-1453	1454-1495
5	991-1354	1355-1390	1391-1497	1498-1544
6	1104-1382	1383-1416	1417-1521	1522-1572
7	1136-1436	1437-1476	1477-1565	1566-1608
8	1155-1439	1440-1479	1480-1578	1579-1623

- In **spring 2022**, a student took a grade 7 SOL test and scored a 1477. The cell outlined in **blue** represents the content level and the student's score.
- In **spring 2021**, the student took the grade 6 reading SOL test and scored a 1383. The cell outlined in **red** represents the content level and the student's score.
- The blue box is in a column/range to the right of the red box and is at least one range level greater, therefore, the student has shown growth.
- Since the student showed growth with the first comparison, it is not necessary to compare the spring 2022 vertical scaled score to the fall 2021 growth assessment vertical scaled score.

## English Learner Progress

EL progress is included in the *Academic Achievement-English* and *Achievement Gap-English* combined rates for students who failed the reading SOL, did not demonstrate growth (grades 3 through 8 only), but showed progress towards English proficiency on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment.

- EL progress is assessed for students tested beginning in grade 3 (compared to ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 results in grade 2) through grade 12, or until the student reaches proficiency.

## English Learner Progress Table

This table shows the composite proficiency level gains required for students to demonstrate progress on the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment by grade and previous year proficiency level:

Previous Year Proficiency Level	Grades K-2 – Current Year	Grades 3-5 – Current Year	Grades 6-12 – Current Year
1.0-2.4	1.0	0.7	0.4
2.5-3.4	0.4	0.4	0.2
3.5-4.4	0.2	0.2	0.1

Example: A current grade 5 student had an overall proficiency level of 2.8 the previous year when he was in grade 4. In order to show progress, the student must increase his proficiency level by at least 0.4 points. Therefore, the student’s overall proficiency on the current year’s ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 assessment must be at least 3.2 (2.8 + 0.4).

Previous Year Proficiency Level	Grades K-2 – Current Year	Grades 3-5 – Current Year	Grades 6-12 – Current Year
1.0-2.4	1.0	0.7	0.4
2.5-3.4	0.4	0.4	0.2
3.5-4.4	0.2	0.2	0.1

## Chronic Absenteeism Indicator

This section describes the performance levels and calculations for the *Chronic Absenteeism* indicator.

### Performance Level Descriptions for the *Chronic Absenteeism* Indicator

<p><b>LEVEL ONE</b></p> <p>Meets or exceeds state standard or sufficient improvement</p>	<p>Current or cumulative three-year rate is less than or equal to <b>15%</b> <u>OR</u></p> <p>Current year rate is in the Level Two range (greater than 15% but less than or equal to 25%) and the school decreased the chronic absenteeism rate by at least 10% (R10) from the previous year.</p>
<p><b>LEVEL TWO</b></p> <p>Near state standard or sufficient improvement</p>	<p>Current year or cumulative three-year rate is greater than 15% but less than or equal to 25% <u>OR</u></p> <p>Current year rate is greater than 25% and the school decreased the failure rate by at least 10% (R10) from the previous year.</p>
<p><b>LEVEL THREE</b></p> <p>School demonstrated performance below the benchmarks for Level One and Level Two.</p>	<p>Current year or cumulative three-year rate is greater than 25% <u>OR</u></p> <p>School has stayed at a Level Two or Three through four consecutive years. (Level Three - 4 Years Rating)</p>

### Calculation to Determine the *Chronic Absenteeism* Rate

- Students who are absent for 10 percent or more of the school year are considered to be chronically absent, regardless of whether absences are excused or unexcused.
- Students receiving homebound instruction for medical illness at any point in the year are excluded from the chronic absenteeism calculations.
- Students receiving homebased instruction for discipline issues are excluded from the chronic absenteeism calculations on the day(s) they are receiving homebased instruction.
- Chronic absenteeism is calculated using a three-step process.
  - First, a student’s end-of-year membership is determined by dividing the student’s total days present, absent, and unscheduled by the total days in session for a given school. If the student’s average daily membership is greater than or equal to 0.5 in a given school, the student is included in the chronic absenteeism calculation.
  - Next, a student is determined to be chronically absent if the rate of their days absent divided by their total days in membership is greater than or equal to 10%. Transfer students are counted in a school’s chronic absenteeism rate if they are enrolled in the school for greater than or equal to 50% of the school year.
  - Lastly, to determine the school absentee rate, the number of students who are absent 10 percent or more is divided by the total number of students (with membership greater than or equal to 0.5) in a school’s end-of-year membership.

## Graduation and Completion Index

This section describes the performance levels and calculations for the *Graduation and Completion Index (GCI)*. The *Graduation and Completion Index* is calculated for schools that have a 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

### Performance Level Descriptions for the *Graduation and Completion Index*

Determination of the performance level is based on the performance of the most recent graduating student cohort.

<p><b>LEVEL ONE</b></p> <p>Meets or exceeds state standard or sufficient improvement</p>	<p>Current or cumulative three-year rate is greater than or equal to <b>88% <u>OR</u></b></p> <p>Current year rate is in the Level Two range (greater than 80% but less than 88%) and the school increases the GCI rate by at least 2.5% (I2) from the previous year.</p>
<p><b>LEVEL TWO</b></p> <p>Near state standard or sufficient improvement</p>	<p>Current year or cumulative three-year rate is greater than 80% but less than 88% <u>OR</u></p> <p>Current year rate is less than or equal to 80% and the school increases the GCI rate by at least 2.5% (I2) from the previous year.</p>
<p><b>LEVEL THREE</b></p> <p>School demonstrated performance below the benchmarks for Level One and Level Two.</p>	<p>Current year or cumulative three-year rate is less than or equal to 80% <u>OR</u></p> <p>School has stayed at a Level Two or Three through four consecutive years. (Level Three - 4 Years Rating)</p>

### Calculation to Determine the Graduation and Completion Index

- The *Graduation Completion Index* is calculated for an adjusted cohort of students. The adjusted cohort consists of students in the on-time graduation cohort (OGR cohort) plus, students carried over from previous cohorts who did not earn a diploma by their cohort year.
  - The OGR cohort is the cohort of expected on-time graduates: students who were first-time ninth graders four years ago, plus transfers in, and minus transfers out and deceased students.
  - Carry-over students are students who were members of a previous cohort and remained in school after their on-time graduation year to complete high school.
  - The OGR Cohort takes into account “sliders.” Sliders are special education or EL students who have educational plans in place that allow them more time to graduate. Sliders take longer than four years to graduate and do not graduate with their original OGR cohort. These students “slide” into the next cohort as long as they are still enrolled at the end of each school year. Sliding essentially allows these students to be counted as “on-time” graduates because their educational plans allowed for more time.

- The GCI calculation excludes any student who fails to graduate because the student is in the custody of the Department of Corrections, the Department of Juvenile Justice, or local law enforcement.
- Dropouts, unconfirmed, and long-term absent students remain in the cohort for GCI calculations.
  - A dropout is a student who discontinued schooling (Exit Code W880), and has not earned a diploma, GED, or certificate of completion. The student is not enrolled in another public school, private school, or approved education program; is not temporarily absent due to suspension or illness; and is not deceased.
  - An unconfirmed student is a student whose records were properly reported to the state but whose status is inconclusive. The state does not have evidence that the student graduated, earned a GED, transferred to another public school, private school, or approved education program; or dropped out of school.
  - A long-term absent student is a student who is on a long-term medical absence, emergency family absence, or suspension. These students have not earned a diploma or certificate and are not enrolled in school at the time the rate is calculated.

This table shows the calculations for GCI:

Numerator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of adjusted and carry-over diplomas earned multiplied by 100 <b>plus</b></li> <li>• # of adjusted and carry-over GEDs earned multiplied by 75 <b>plus</b></li> <li>• # of adjusted and carry-over Certificates of Completion earned multiplied by 25 <b>plus</b></li> <li>• # of adjusted and carry-over students that remain active in school membership on the last day of school in the expected graduation year multiplied by 70 <b>plus</b></li> <li>• # of dropouts, unconfirmed, and long-term absent students multiplied by 0</li> </ul>
Denominator
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of students in the adjusted graduation cohort plus carry-over students, multiplied by 100.</li> </ul>

### **Dropout Rate Indicator**

This section describes the performance levels and calculations for the *Dropout Rate* indicator. The *Dropout Rate* indicator is calculated for schools that have a 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

#### **Performance Level Descriptions for the *Dropout Rate* Indicator**

Determination of the performance level is based on the performance of the most recent graduating student cohort.

<b>LEVEL ONE</b>  Meets or exceeds state standard or sufficient improvement	Current or cumulative three-year rate is less than or equal to <b>6%</b> <u>OR</u>  Current year rate is in the Level Two range (greater than 6% but less than or equal to 9%) and the school decreases the Dropout rate by at least 10% (R10) from the previous year.
<b>LEVEL TWO</b>  Near state standard or sufficient improvement	Current year or cumulative three-year rate is greater than 6% but less than or equal to 9% <u>OR</u>  Current year rate is greater than 9% and the school decreases the Dropout rate by at least 10% (R10) from the previous year.
<b>LEVEL THREE</b>  School demonstrated performance below the benchmarks for Level One and Level Two.	Current year or cumulative three-year rate is greater than 9% <u>OR</u>  School has stayed at a Level Two or Three through four consecutive years. (Level Three - 4 Years Rating)

**Calculation to Determine the Dropout Rate**

The dropout rate includes any student whose latest status is “**Dropout**” or “**Unconfirmed**” in the on-time graduation cohort (OGR).

The table below shows the code specifications for calculating dropout rate:

Numerator
<p># of students whose latest status is “Dropout”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PLUS</b></p> <p># of students whose latest status is “Unconfirmed”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">An unconfirmed student is a student whose status is inconclusive. The state does not have evidence that the student graduated, earned a GED, transferred to another public school, private school, or approved education program; or dropped out of school.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">An unconfirmed student may be a student who transferred to another LEA and was assigned a new STI, or reported as transferred to another school but discontinued public schooling instead.</p>
Denominator
<p># of students in the on-time graduation cohort (OGR) minus incarcerated students</p>

## College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index

This section describes the performance levels and calculations for the *College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index*. The *CCCRI* is calculated for schools that have a 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

The current year CCCRI will be calculated for schools but will not be used to determine accreditation until the 2023-2024 accreditation year.

### Performance Level Descriptions for the *CCCRI*

Determination of the performance level is based on the performance of the most recent graduating student cohort.

<b>LEVEL ONE</b>  Meets or exceeds state standard or sufficient improvement	Current or cumulative three-year rate is less greater than or equal to <b>85%</b>
<b>LEVEL TWO</b>  Near state standard or sufficient improvement	Current year or cumulative three-year rate is greater than 70% but less than 85%
<b>LEVEL THREE</b>  School demonstrated performance below the benchmarks for Level One and Level Two.	Current year or cumulative three-year rate is less than or equal to 70% <u>OR</u> school has stayed at criteria for Level Two or Three through four consecutive years (Level Three - 4 Years Rating)

### Calculation to Determine the *CCCRI*

*The College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index* is a cohort-based calculation of students receiving credit for advanced coursework, earning CTE credentials, or participating in work-based or service learning experiences , or JROTC.

The table below shows the criteria that counts towards CCCRI:

CCCRI Elements	Description
Advanced Coursework (AP, IB, Cambridge, or Dual Enrollment)	Total unduplicated count of students who successfully completed AP, IB Cambridge, or Dual Enrollment Courses
CTE finishers also having a CTE credential	Total unduplicated count of students who earned two or more standard credits for a state-approved sequence in a CTE Program (CTE Finisher) <b>and</b> also earned a CTE credential;

CCCRI Elements	Description
Completion of Work-Based Learning experience	Total unduplicated count of students who successfully completed a work-based learning experience;
Completion of Service Learning experience	Total unduplicated count of students who successfully completed a service learning experience
Completion of JROTC Sequence and Exam	Total unduplicated count of students who successfully complete three years of JROTC Coursework <b>and</b> also earn a credentialing exam.

Numerator	Denominator
Total <b>unduplicated</b> count of students in each element	Number of students in the on-time graduation cohort (OGR)

**APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND INFORMATION  
ON STANDARDS OF LEARNING (“SOLs”),  
CURRICULUMS, ASSESSMENTS, AND  
PROFICIENCY DEFINITIONS (“CUT SCORES”)**  
Background Information on SOLs, Standards, Curriculums, Assessments, and  
Proficiency Definitions (“Cut Scores”)

## Overview of Curriculum and Assessment Creation

The Board of Education approves *Standards of Learning (SOL)* for Virginia Public Schools establish minimum expectations for what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade or course in English, mathematics, science, history/social science and other subjects. Standards outline what should be taught in curriculum and assessed in examinations.

The Department then publishes model curriculums that inform public school divisions in the creation of their own “aligned” **local curriculum** that guides the day to day instruction of the approved Standards. Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) have the authority to make local decisions regarding curriculum, but must ensure alignment to the state *Standards of Learning*.

SOL assessments in reading, writing, mathematics, science and history/social science measure the success of students in meeting the Board of Education’s expectations for learning and achievement. All items on SOL tests are reviewed by Virginia classroom teachers for accuracy and fairness and teachers also assist the state Board of Education in setting proficiency standards for the tests.

The Virginia Department of Education develops instructional resources aligned to the *Standards of Learning* to support local school divisions. The VDOE also provides professional learning opportunities regarding instructional practice on an ongoing basis.

Standards, for each content area, are revised by the Board Every [7] years. Upon the creation of new standards, and new curriculum, new state-wide examinations are curated, and cut-scores, that define the level of proficiency, are defined for the new assessment.

## Overview of Draft Standards Revision Process for All Content Areas

A draft version of a common Standards of Learning (SOL) Revision Process has been created in order to ensure consistency in the process across all disciplines. The process includes the following steps:

1. *Development of a Standing Content Advisory Committee* - an advisory committee is formed which is ongoing and informs all decision making in and around the development of the content area standards.
2. *VBOE Approval of New and Revised Standards Adoption Timeline* - a timeline outlining the month-by-month schedule of the revision process that will occur is presented to the Board of Education (BOE).
3. *Initial Public Open Feedback* - public feedback is collected via email and through public survey to allow the public to submit reflections on the existing standards.
4. *Stakeholder Community Engagement Sessions* - targeted stakeholder hearings are held to solicit aspects on the current standards which should be changed or not changed.
5. *Curriculum Teams Prepare Revisions to Existing Curriculum Documents* - a team of K-12 educators is selected and convened by VDOE staff to draft proposed revised standards; written drafts of revised curriculum documents are reviewed by the advisory committee during a meeting with VDOE staff and approval is sought to send the drafts to the BOE.
6. *VBOE Receives for First Review the Proposed Revised Standards* - the BOE receives from VDOE staff, for first reading, proposed revisions to curriculum documents to the BOE.
7. *Public Feedback Received on the Proposed Revisions to the Standards* - public feedback via email and through public survey is collected to allow the public to submit reflections on the proposed revised standards.
8. *Advisory Committee Reviews Final Edits* - revisions, based on final public feedback, are made by VDOE staff; VDOE staff meets with the Advisory Committee to present revisions to all curriculum documents and prepare final documents based on committee feedback.
9. *Revised Standards Presented to the Virginia Board of Education* - the VDOE team, with support from the Advisory Committee, to present the final revisions to the BOE.

## Background Information on Standard Setting (Cut Scores)

### Background of Standards

#### *Definition of Standard Setting*

Standard setting is a systematic way of making a professional judgment on the level of achievement required to signify that a student's performance is at a particular performance level (e.g., *proficient* or *advanced*). In the case of the grades 3-8 *Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments* in reading and mathematics, four performance level categories have been established:

*Advanced Attainment of the Standards (Pass)*

*Proficient in the Standards (Pass)*

*Basic (Fail)*

*Below Basic (Fail)*

For the remaining *SOL* tests, three performance level categories have been established:

*Advanced Attainment of the Standards (Pass)*

*Proficient in the Standards (Pass)*

*Does Not Meet the Standard (Fail)*

#### *Historical Context of Standard Setting in Virginia*

With the exception of the standard setting for the *SOL* writing tests that occurred in 1998 where the Bookmark method was employed, a variation of the Angoff method has been used to recommend proficiency standards, or cut scores, on the *SOL* tests since the inception of the *SOL* testing program. Generally standard setting for all the *SOL* tests in a content areas (e.g., reading) is conducted at the same time, and Virginia educators with experience in teaching the content measured by the test on which cut scores are being recommended comprise the committees. One committee is convened for each test. Committee members representing each region of the state are selected based on their experience in teaching the content to students with different characteristics including students with disabilities and English Learners. Steps used in the Angoff procedure as implemented in Virginia are described below.

1. Committee members receive training in the standard-setting process.
2. Committee members discuss the performance level descriptor for each achievement level (i.e., Below Basic, Basic, Proficient, and Advanced for grades 3-8 reading and mathematics). The performance level descriptors are based on the *SOL* content standards and are reviewed by Virginia educators prior to standard setting. An example of a performance level descriptor for the "proficient" achievement level for the Grade 3 reading test is shown below.

A student performing at the proficient level should be able to:

- Read with accuracy.
- Identify homophones.
- Use roots or affixes to expand vocabulary.
- Identify synonyms and antonyms.
- Use context to choose correct meaning of vocabulary.
- Apply information from word-reference materials.
- Make and confirm predictions based on textual evidence.

- Identify literary elements.
- Retell plot events in a logical sequence.
- Locate information from texts to ask and answer questions.
- Draw conclusions and make inferences based on textual evidence.
- Explain the characteristics of fiction and nonfiction.
- Identify the author’s purpose for including specific information.
- Use text features to aid in comprehension.
- Summarize information.
- Identify main idea or supporting details.

Committee members then discuss the characteristics of students who just make it into an achievement level: those who are “just proficient” and “just advanced,” to further define the particular knowledge and skills that separate those students in one achievement level from those in the others. These “threshold” descriptors are used by committee members as they review the items on each test and make a judgment as to whether a “just proficient” student, for example, would answer the item correctly.

### 3. **Round 1 Ratings:**

Committee members independently examine each question on the test, thinking of students who are “just” *proficient* and estimating whether MOST (2/3) of these students would answer each item correctly. Committee members use the same procedure for the *advanced* and *basic* category for tests that have this performance level. When Round 1 is completed, each panelist has recorded “yes” or “no” for each question on the test for “proficient,” “advanced,” and “basic.” Each panelist’s ratings on the questions are converted to a cut score. A cut score is defined as the number of questions that a student must answer correctly to be classified in a particular performance category.

### 4. **Round 2 Ratings:**

Committee members are provided with a table of each committee member’s rating from Round 1. Committee members discuss the results and then discuss items where committee members disagreed as to whether a “just proficient” or “just advanced” student would answer the question correctly. Following this discussion, the threshold descriptors are revised as needed, and committee members repeat the process used in Round 1.

### 5. **Round 3 Ratings:**

Committee members are provided with a table of each committee member’s ratings from Round 2. They discuss the results as well as any items where committee members disagree as to whether a “just proficient” or “just advanced” student would answer the question correctly. Following this discussion, committee members may make changes to their recommended cut scores.

### **Articulation Committee:**

After the work of the standard setting committees for each test has been completed, a smaller group of educators composed of two or three members from each of the standard setting committees is convened to review the results of round 3 for each test. In the case of the reading tests, the purpose of this “articulation committee” was to review the round 3 results for the tests to determine the reasonableness of the recommended cut scores in light of the performance level descriptors and estimated impact data. The impact data reviewed by the articulation committee provided estimates of the number of students who would fall into each achievement level if the recommended cut scores were adopted. Based on their review, the articulation committee may recommend adjustments to the cut scores for some of the tests.

### **Recommendation Presented to the Board of Education:**

The results of the standard setting committees and the articulation committee are presented as recommendations to the Board of Education. For each test and each achievement level, the Board is provided with background information, including the cut score on the previous version of the test and an estimate of what the cut score on the new test would be if the same level of rigor required on the old test were maintained. In addition, the “round 3” median cut score for the standard setting committee is provided as well as the recommendation from the articulation committee. Finally, the superintendent’s recommendation for the cut score for each level is provided. The Board of Education is asked to consider this information and to adopt cut scores. An example of the type of information that is provided to the Virginia Board of Education is displayed below for the grades 3- and 4-SOL mathematics tests administered for the first time in 2019.

### *Pass/Proficient*

Test Name	Background Information		Standard Setting Summary		
	Pass/Proficient Cut Score for Previous Mathematics Test*	Pass/Proficient Cut Score for New Test to Maintain Previous Level of Rigor	Round 3 Median for Proficient*	Articulation Committee Rec.	Supt.’s Rec.
Grade 3	26 out of 40	26 out of 40	20 out of 40	20 out of 40	23 out of 40
Grade 4	31 out of 50	29 out of 50	20 out of 50	25 out of 50	27 out of 50

### *Pass/Advanced*

Test Name	Background Information		Standard Setting Summary		
	Pass/Advanced Cut Score for Previous Mathematics Test*	Pass/Advanced Cut Score for New Test to Maintain Previous Level of Rigor	Round 3 Median for Advanced	Articulation Committee Rec.	Supt.’s Rec.
Grade 3	36 out of 40	36 out of 40	35 out of 40	36 out of 40	36 out of 40
Grade 4	45 out of 50	44 out of 50	45 out of 50	45 out of 50	45 out of 50

### **Timing of Standard Setting:**

With a few exceptions, standard setting in Virginia has occurred prior to the tests being administered so that scores can be reported as soon as possible after the test administration. It should be noted that this strategy is unusual as most states conduct standard setting after the first administration of the test. However, Virginia’s practice of establishing the “cut scores” on the tests prior to their first administration has been particularly important in recent years since the adoption of a policy that allows students who fail the tests within a certain score range to immediately retake the tests. While standard setting in other states typically occurs after the first administration of the new tests, waiting to conduct standard setting until after the first administration of the tests would significantly impact the implementation of this policy.

### **Content Based Focus**

Historically, standard setting has been primarily content-based with committee members making judgments based on the “threshold” descriptors for students and the content of the items. Information about the difficulty of the items based on students’ responses has not been given to committee members nor has estimated impact data been provided. Estimated impact data has been provided to the articulation committees and to the state superintendent. However, the board has not received impact data based on their decision early in the testing

program to adopt cut scores based on the content judgments of the standard setting committees rather than on the number of students who would pass or fail the tests.

### **Recommended Changes to the Standard Setting Methodology**

Provide Standard Setting Committee members with Item Difficulty Information: In the past, the Department has not provided the educator committees with information about the statistical difficulty of the test items they review as part of the standard setting process. Round 1 should be reformed so that information about the difficulty of the items informs their judgments about the rigor of the assessment, and how that should inform where cut scores are set.

Provide Standard Setting Committee members with Impact Data: Currently only the articulation committee is provided with estimated impact data. Committee members could be provided with impact data following their round 2 judgments.

Provide Articulation Committee with Additional Data: As described above, when the Board of Education adopts cut scores on new SOL tests, VDOE staff provides the board with a statistical estimate of what the cut score on the new test would be to maintain the same level of proficiency as required by the previous test. Since the board does not receive impact data, VDOE staff began providing this information as context during a time when the rigor of the tests increased considerably. This contextual information was provided as a way of demonstrating that a lower raw cut score on the new test might not represent a lower level of proficiency. Previously this contextual information has not been provided to the individual standard setting committees or to the articulation committee.

### **Other Potential Changes**

Use of NAEP Data to Determine Cut Scores: Historically, external data such as results from NAEP, the SAT, or the ACT have not been considered in setting cut scores on the SOL tests. However, this Administration's *Our Commitment to Virginians* report conveys the need to establish more rigorous cut scores on the SOL tests so that the percent of students who are proficient on the SOL tests more closely matches the percent of Virginia students proficient on NAEP.

Expansion of Stakeholders in the Standard Setting Process: Recently VDOE staff have been asked to consider expanding the persons involved in the standard setting process to include individuals beyond classroom educators and content specialists, like local school division superintendents, school administrators, business representatives, legislators, local school board members, members of the Virginia Board of Education, and parents. Additionally, standard setting committee to include some of these stakeholders. Another option is to establish a separate "policy" committee that would include these stakeholders and their role would be to review the work of the educator group.

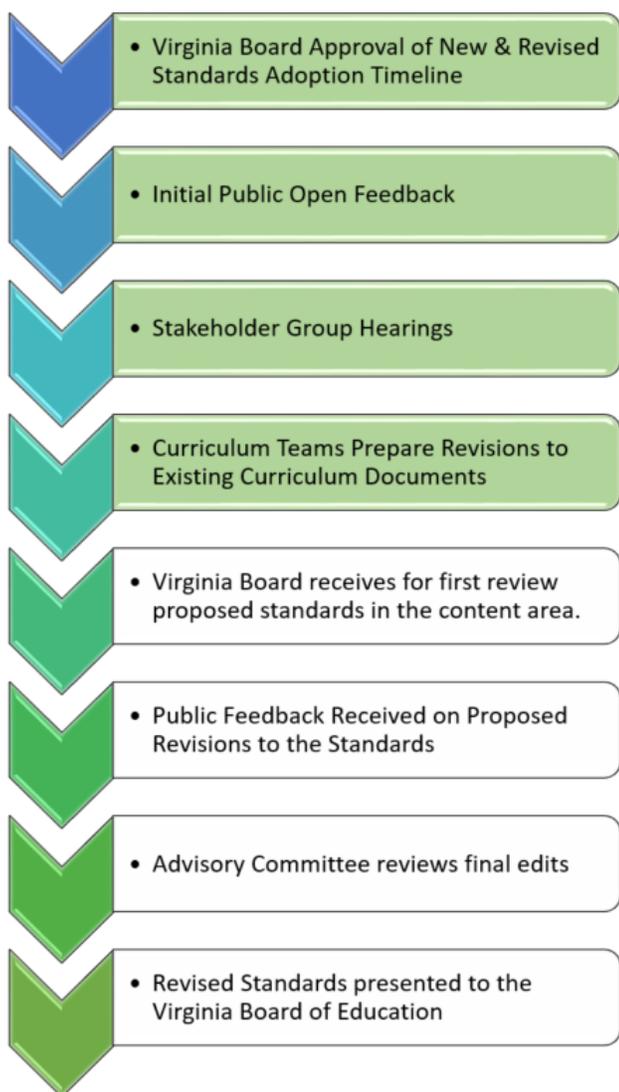
**Other Standard Setting Methodologies:** Another standard setting method used by many states is the Bookmark procedure. In this method, the test items are ordered from easiest to most difficult in an ordered item booklet, and the standard setting committee members place a "bookmark" at the location where they believe that students who are "just proficient" would get the items below the bookmark correct and the items above the bookmark wrong. Because this method requires ordering the items by difficulty based on student performance, it is typically used after first administration of the test. The bookmark method was originally developed to facilitate standard setting for tests that include multiple-choice test questions as well as items where the student must "construct" a response. In this case, the multiple-choice or technology-enhanced items appear once in the booklet and the constructed response items appear multiple times—once for each of the score points contained in the rubric used to score student responses.

# **APPENDIX C: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON MATHEMATICS STANDARDS OF LEARNING (“SOL”) 2023 REVISION**

# Background Information on Math Standards of Learning 2023 Revision

## Mathematics Standards of Learning Revision Process Update

### Revision Process - Steps Completed (highlighted in green)



The projected [Timeline for the Mathematics Standards of Learning Review and Revision Process](#) was approved by the Board of Education (BOE) on January 27, 2022. Public comment on the current 2016 *Mathematics Standards of Learning* and *Mathematics Standards of Learning Curriculum Framework* were solicited from January 27 - March 1, 2022.

In February and March 2022, the Virginia Department of Education accepted and reviewed applications from K-12 public school educators who were qualified and available to serve on a committee to review and revise the 2016 Mathematics Standards of Learning during the summer of 2022.

The VDOE hosted six public engagement sessions on May 18, 19, and 23 and June 8, 9, and 13, 2022 to allow parents, families and community members to participate in the review and revision of the 2016 *Mathematics Standards of Learning*. Five regional face-to-face sessions and one virtual session were held to allow participants to learn more about the Standards of Learning revision process and then meet with VDOE staff in small discussion groups to provide feedback and suggested revisions about the Commonwealth's current mathematics standards. There were 48 stakeholders who attended the face-to-face sessions and approximately 135 stakeholders who participated in the virtual session.

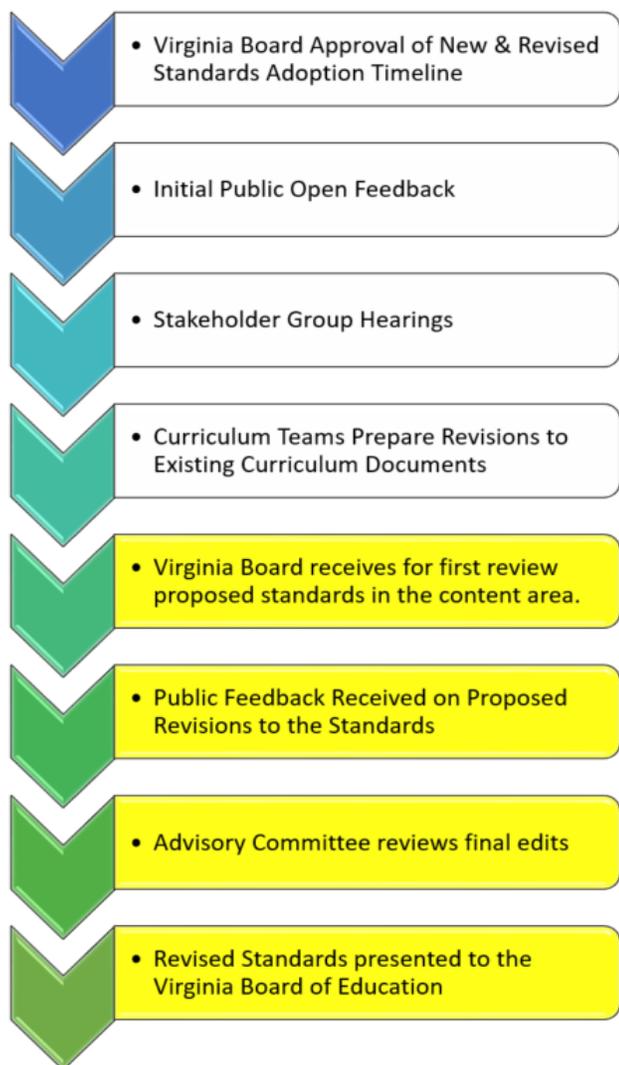
On June 14, 2022, the Mathematics Education Advisory Committee (MEAC) met for the first time to review public comment on the current 2016 *Mathematics Standards of Learning* and feedback from the Stakeholder Community Engagement Sessions held in May and June 2022. The committee is composed of parents, community members, business representatives, higher education faculty, and K-12 educators.

A team of K-12 public school educators was convened on June 21-24, 2022, to review and revise the 2016 *Mathematics Standards of Learning*. The team created a draft of proposed revised *Mathematics Standards of Learning*.

### Revision Process - Steps Remaining (highlighted in yellow)

During July - September 2022, staff from the Virginia Department of Education are reviewing the draft versions of the revised standards to ensure consistency and clear vertical articulation of mathematics content across the K-12 continuum.

VDOE staff are continuously collaborating with the members of the K-12 summer writing team to ensure clarity



and rigor as the drafts are refined. VDOE staff will meet with members of the MEAC on September 13, 2022 to review the draft revisions and provide feedback.

In late fall 2022, the draft revised *Mathematics Standards of Learning* will be presented to select stakeholder groups composed of parents, K-12 educators, higher education faculty, business/industry representatives, and other community members to garner feedback.

Members of the MEAC will meet on December 13, 2022, to review this feedback and make recommendations to the VDOE regarding additional edits that may be needed to the draft standards.

In late winter or early spring 2023, the Proposed Revised *Mathematics SOL* will be presented to the Board of Education (BOE) for a first review.

If approved by the BOE, public feedback will be collected via public hearings, surveys, and email to allow the public to submit reflections on the proposed revised standards.

The MEAC will meet on March 14, 2023, to review public feedback and offer guidance to the VDOE in making additional revisions.

Final review of the Proposed Revised *Mathematics SOL* will be presented to the BOE in fall 2023.

The Virginia Department of Education will provide professional learning opportunities to teachers regarding

the revised 2023 *Mathematics Standards of Learning* and support alignment of existing resources and development of additional resources to support instruction.

### Comparing *Virginia Mathematics Standards of Learning* to Other State Standards

The Virginia *Mathematics Standards of Learning* were most recently revised in 2016. The structure of the standards is unique compared to many other states, as the documents include both a standards document and a curriculum framework document. The curriculum framework document expounds upon the standards in greater detail and provides specific knowledge and skills that students are expected to know and be able to do. The revision of the standards intends to collapse these two documents into one for the 2023 *Mathematics Standards of Learning*, as the standards are naturally subsumed in the curriculum framework documents. In addition, the 2016 *Mathematics Standards of Learning* include mathematical process goals for students that are intended to support the development of mathematical problem solving, communication, reasoning, connections, and representations in order to model and interpret real world contexts. The Mathematics CCSS include the Standards for Mathematical Practice which include statements similar to Virginia’s mathematical process goals. In the Texas mathematics standards, teachers are to focus on “computational thinking, mathematical fluency, and solid understanding” so that students can become “successful problem solvers.”

In preparing for the revisions of the 2016 *Mathematics Standards of Learning*, members of the K-12 writing team reviewed the national landscape of mathematics standards documents, comprehensively reviewing components of many other state mathematics standards, along with examining additional mathematics resources

and testing frameworks, including, but not limited to, the following:

- [2025 National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\) Mathematics Framework](#)
- [OECD's PISA \(Programme for International Student Assessment\) 2022 Mathematics Framework](#)
- [TIMSS \(Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study\) Assessment Frameworks](#) (2019)
- [Pre-K-12 Guidelines for Assessment and Instruction in Statistics Education II \(GAISE II\)](#) (2020)
- [SAT Suite of Assessments: Types of Math Tested](#) (2016)
- [ACT Mathematics College and Career Readiness Standards](#) (2015)
- [CCSS - Mathematics](#) (2010)
- [The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics \(NCTM\) Principles and Standards of School Mathematics](#) (2000)

# **APPENDIX D: BACKGROUND ON ADVANCED STUDIES DIPLOMAS**

# Background Information on Advanced Studies Diplomas

## Background briefing materials

Requirements for the Advanced Studies Diploma are set out in the Virginia Board of Education’s (Board) *Regulations Establishing the Accreditation of Public Schools in Virginia* (or Standards of Accreditation) at [8VAC20-131-51](#), which became effective with the 2018-2019 school year. To earn an Advanced Studies Diploma, a student must earn the required number of standard and verified credits in each of the discipline areas listed below.

Students earn standard unit of credits by successfully completing a course. Students earn verified credits by successfully completing a course and then passing the associated end-of-course Standards of Learning (SOL) tests or other assessments approved by Board.

## Advanced Studies Diploma Credit Requirements

Subject Area	Standard Units of Credit	Verified Units of Credit	Relevant Specifications and Flexibilities
English	4	2	
Mathematics	4	1	
Laboratory Science	4	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a science course credit.</li> <li>- Students who complete a CTE program sequence and pass a Board-approved examination or occupational competency assessment or acquires a professional license may substitute the certification, competency credential, or license for either a laboratory science verified credit when the certification, license, or credential confers more than one verified credit.</li> </ul>
History & Social Sciences*	4	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include Virginia and U.S. history, Virginia and U.S. government, and two courses in either world history or geography or both.</li> </ul>
World Language	3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include three years of one language or two years of two languages.</li> <li>- A student may substitute two standard units of credit in computer science for two standard units of credit in a world language if the student has an individualized education program (IEP) that specifies this type of accommodation.</li> <li>- Additional coursework flexibilities include modern or classical language courses, including American Sign Language, English as a Second Language, and course substitutions for English Learners.</li> </ul>
Health & PE	2		
Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education (CTE)*	1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a career and technical credit.</li> </ul>
Economics & Personal Finance*	1		
Electives*	3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Courses to satisfy this requirement shall include at least two sequential electives. The two sequential electives may be in any discipline as long as the courses are not specifically required. Temporary flexibility has been provided through 22-23 to allow a world language credit to partially satisfy the sequential elective requirement.</li> </ul>
Total	26	5	

In addition to the above course credit requirements, a student must also complete the following to earn an Advanced Studies Diploma:

- Complete an **AP, Honors, IB, Dual Enrollment, Work-Based Learning, or CTE Credential\***;
- **Complete a virtual course\***;
- **Complete First Aid, CPR, and AED Training\***; and
- **Demonstrate competency in the 5 Cs.**

\*Denotes which requirements have components required in the Code of Virginia and therefore, would require General Assembly action to amend.

### **Existing Flexibilities**

In addition to the flexibilities provided in the chart above, there are a number of provisions that provide students alternative pathways or options for earning standard and verified units of credit, generally. These include:

- The 140-clock-hour waiver for a standard unit of credit when a student has demonstrated mastery in course content through other means, consistent with Board guidelines.
- In addition to passing the end-of-course SOL test, students may earn verified credits with:
  - o A passing score on a Board-approved substitute test as part of the Virginia Assessment Program;
  - o Meeting the criteria for the receipt of ONE locally awarded verified credit (LAVC) when the student has not passed a corresponding SOL test in the four core subject areas; or
  - o Meeting the criteria for the receipt of a verified credit for English (writing) by demonstrating mastery of the content of the associated course on an authentic performance assessment.

### **Diploma Seals**

Students who demonstrate academic excellence and outstanding achievement may be eligible for one or more diploma seals, each with individual criteria, including the Governor’s Seal as well as the following seals from the Board: The Board of Education Seal; Career and Technical Education Seal; Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Seal; Excellence in Civics Education; Seal of Biliteracy; Seal for Excellence in Science and the Environment. Other seals for exceptional academic, career and technical, citizenship, or other exemplary performance can be awarded in accordance with criteria defined by the local school board.

### **Considerations in the Design of the Advanced Studies Diploma**

When the Standards of Accreditation were last revised in 2017, Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff facilitated discussions with the Board on the criteria for both the Standard and Advanced Studies Diplomas. Staff reviewed research on the type and level of coursework students needed in order to be life-ready, successful in their post-secondary endeavors, and meaningful contributors to community and Virginia economy. Staff also consulted with educators, practitioners, institutions of higher education (IHEs), business leaders, and many others on the design Virginia’s diploma to ensure it was meeting the needs of students and stakeholders. The design of the Advanced Studies Diploma took the following into consideration:

- Both diploma types – Standard and Advanced Studies - serve as a measure of achievement for the student and sets expectations for schools in meeting their obligation to “provide a program of instruction to ensure that students (i) attain the knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences necessary to be successful in the evolving global economy whether immediately entering the world of work or pursuing a postsecondary education and (ii) acquire and be able to demonstrate foundational skills in critical thinking and creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship in accordance with [8VAC20-131-70](#) and the Profile of a Virginia Graduate.” ([8VAC20-131-100](#))
- In line with the [Profile of the Virginia Graduate](#), a diploma should indicate a student is “life-ready” which includes both college- and career-readiness.
- Not all advanced students perform as well on standardized assessments, so requiring fewer verified credits would remove a potential barrier to the Advanced Studies Diploma and allow students to demonstrate their content mastery in other ways.

- If college was one of the many paths an Advanced Studies Diploma recipient could pursue, diploma requirements should take into account standard admissions requirements of IHEs in Virginia. This includes participation in rigorous coursework and exposure to specific discipline areas, like advanced world languages.

### **Concerns with and Barriers to the Advanced Studies Diploma**

VDOE has received feedback from concerned stakeholders on design of the Advanced Studies Diploma, including observations on the barriers to and limitations of the Advanced Studies Diploma. Some of the items that have been raised:

- *The requirement to earn three credits in World Language is unnecessary and unfair to students who struggle with language acquisition:* The 2020 General Assembly provided some limited flexibility for certain students with an IEP, allowing them to substitute computer science course for world language credits. However, stakeholders have continued to debate the need for additional flexibility. The current World Language requirement has not been amended as it reflects an important part of Virginia’s efforts to provide challenging educational programs in its public schools and to prepare students to compete in global society. Knowledge and skills that students acquire in world language classes reinforce and expand learning in other subject areas. Research indicates that:

- o [Language learning supports academic achievement.](#)
- o [Language learning provides cognitive benefits.](#)
- o [Language learning affects attitudes and beliefs about other languages and cultures.](#)

Additionally, many IHEs require three years of World Language as an admission criteria.

- *The required course schedule prohibits CTE credentials:* Some parents have raised the concern that students seeking an Advanced Studies Diploma are left with little time in the schedule to pursue course sequences that lead to CTE credentials. However, data collected by VDOE indicates that many Advanced Studies Diploma recipients have also been able complete CTE credentials which indicates there are viable pathways to both.
- *The sequential elective requirement is redundant and burdensome:* The requirement to have sequential electives was added to the Advanced Studies Diploma in 2018-2019. Guidance on the sequential elections states that coursework in a required discipline area, like World Language, cannot also be used to meet the sequential elective requirement. Counselors have indicated that this creates a strain on scheduling to meet all of the course requirements. Currently, staff believes the primary issue is many divisions were unaware of this guidance and with the right information, counselors can account for this earlier in a student’s academic and career plan.
- *Some disciplines, like STEM, should be emphasized:* Some constituents believe that the Advanced Studies Diploma should emphasize STEM coursework as it better prepares students for an evolving global economy. This would likely result in fewer requirements in other discipline areas, like the fine arts. The current Advanced Studies Diploma has not been amended as one of the guiding principles is a well-rounded education for all Virginia graduates. Additionally, research indicates that those trained in the arts help to stimulate innovation, strengthen America’s competitiveness in the global marketplace, and play an essential role in building and sustaining economic vibrancy. Virginia is also home to near 17,000 arts-related businesses (3.9%) that employ over 76,000 Virginians. Further, the United States Military is a major employer of arts professionals and provides many resources on connections between the arts and military service. The U.S. Department of Defense requires a fine arts credit as high school graduation requirement.
- *Requiring courses in three different science disciplines may limit a student’s ability to specialize in certain science pathways or take a series of advanced courses in a single science discipline.* Requiring three different science disciplines ensures a student is exposed to a range of science content and their coursework extends beyond general science knowledge into applied sciences. This requirement also aligns with admissions requirements for some IHEs which stipulate two laboratory sciences beyond general science. VDOE does provide technical support and resources to divisions in identifying science

pathways that meet the Advanced Studies Diploma requirements while taking into account a student's interest and post-secondary plans.

### **Revising the Advanced Studies Diploma**

In considering what revisions need to be made to the Advanced Studies Diploma, if any, the stakeholder group should consider the following:

- What concerns and barriers are perceived versus material? For the former, barriers may be addressed through information sharing about coursework options, local authority, and existing flexibilities. Material barriers may require a policy adjustment through statutory, regulatory, or guidance changes.
- Which requirements are set out in the Code of Virginia versus the Standards of Accreditation? Some adjustments may require legislation via the General Assembly and others will require Board action.



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