# Agenda Item: F

## Date: September 14, 2023

## Title: First and Final Review of Accountability Rating System

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## Purpose of Presentation

Action required by state or federal law or regulation (i.e., a change in law requires a change in program requirements; this is part of a regulatory action).

## Executive Summary

The Board of Education (“Board”) began discussing a revision to Virginia’s current accreditation/accountability system in fall 2022 following the publication of [Our Commitment to Virginians](https://www.education.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/secretary-of-education/pdf/Our-Commitment-to-Virginians.pdf) and the release of the 2022 Nation’s Report Card. These reports illuminated for the Board that Virginia’s students are experiencing declines in both reading and mathematics performance. An accountability system is a key element in driving student outcomes because it sets performance targets and incentivizes school-level practices. By revising Virginia’s accountability system, the Board will take a necessary action to address declining student achievement. Additionally, the Board should regularly revise and update its regulations to reflect current priorities and to address the needs of all students.

Since the fall of 2022, the Board has held a series of work sessions where it explored Virginia’s current accountability system and its difficulties addressing the challenges experienced by students since the pandemic. Additionally, during the summer of 2023, Superintendent Coons conducted a series of meetings with stakeholder groups on revisions to the accountability system. During those sessions, three themes surfaced: achievement; growth, and career readiness.

At a special meeting in August 2023, the Board reviewed and discussed options for providing meaningful and transparent information to the public from the accountability system. The current accreditation systems labels schools as “accredited” or “accredited with conditions”, while the accountability system identifies schools for support.

During the special meeting, the Board heard from two national experts on how states have used different methods to communicate accountability results. Many states use a “rating” or summative method for communicating results, this includes A-F ratings, stars, or descriptive labels (i.e., “high performing school”). States using summative ratings include Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. Other states use a “dashboard” or “placemat” method where they don’t provide an overall rating for purposes of accountability. Rather, they provide information at the indicator or measure level, while identifying schools for support. States using a placemat or dashboard include Indiana (for Indiana Graduates initiative) and Idaho.

The decision around communicating accountability results to the public is a vital decision for ensuring transparency. A summative rating, like A-F or stars, is simple for everyone to understand. A placemat approach provides a different level of transparency, encouraging stakeholders to dig deeper into the data to understand the accountability measures.

On August 31, 2023, the Board approved a Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA) to revise [8VAC20-131](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter131/) in order to revise the accountability model and increase transparency on school performance. The Board must make a decision point on accountability rating system in order for staff to begin work on regulations for the proposed stage.

The following principles have guided the accountability work over the past year and will continue to inform the Board as it revises the accountability system.

1. **The North Star is high expectations for every student.**  Proficiency definitions will be set by benchmarking against the demands of Virginia employers and higher education, as well as against states who have the most rigorous definitions of proficiency in the nation.
2. **Transparency and access to actionable information** will be a hallmark of our approach and our new system.
3. Student academic growth and proficiency are both vital measures, but the **system must prioritize getting every student to proficiency/mastery**.
4. The purpose of accountability is **to build trust between schools, parents, and students through transparent, concrete, and easy to understand reporting.** We must provide necessary supports and work alongside schools in need of help.
5. **Stakeholder input is critical**. Teachers, parents, students, and education leaders will inform the Board’s process to build a best-in-class accreditation and accountability system.

This item supports Priority 3 of the Board’s Comprehensive Plan by ensuring the accountability system holds schools accountable for actual performance.

## Action Requested

Final review: Action requested at this meeting.

## Superintendent’s Recommendation

## Rationale for Action

The Board’s decision on the accountability rating methodology is essential to framing the new accountability system that the Board requested when it approved the NOIRA on August 31, 2023. VDOE staff will use this decision to begin drafting regulatory text to bring to the Board at the proposed stage of the current regulatory action.

## Previous Review or Action

No previous review or action.

Section [22.1-16](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter2/section22.1-16/) of *Code of Virginia* establishes the Board of Education’s authority to promulgate regulations that are necessary to fulfill its powers and responsibilities generally:

The Board of Education may adopt bylaws for its own government and promulgate such regulations as may be necessary to carry out its powers and duties and the provisions of this title.

The Board’s authority to promulgate regulations governing standards for accrediting public schools is found in § [22.1-253.13](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter13.2/section22.1-253.13:3/)(A) of the *Code of Virginia*:

The Board of Education shall promulgate regulations establishing standards for accreditation pursuant to the Administrative Process Act (§ 2.2-4000 et seq.), which shall include student outcome measures, requirements and guidelines for instructional programs and for the integration of educational technology into such instructional programs, administrative and instructional staffing levels and positions, including staff positions for supporting educational technology, student services, auxiliary education programs such as library and media services, requirements for graduation from high school, community relations, and the philosophy, goals, and objectives of public education in Virginia.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Between June and August 2023, Superintendent Coons conducted stakeholder engagement meetings across Virginia, including the following:

* Eight regional superintendents’ meetings in June;
* Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals (VAESP);
* Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals (VASSP) conferences; and
* Weekly superintendents meeting throughout during July and August

VDOE will continue to conduct stakeholder engagement as the accountability system and measures are finalized.

## Implementation and Communication

Following the Board’s approval of the accountability rating system, VDOE staff will work with the accountability consultants to build the accountability system components.

This decision is a step in the Board’s current regulatory action on [8VAC20-131](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter131/). As VDOE staff drafts regulatory text for the Board to consider at the proposed stage, VDOE will engage stakeholders to ensure that the final accountability system is transparent. VDOE staff will provide the Board with regular updates.

## Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

The revisions can be absorbed by the agency’s existing resources at this time. If the agency is required to absorb additional responsibilities related to this activity, other services may be impacted. Additional resources are being considered in order to support implementation.