

**DRAFT MINUTES**  
**Virginia Board of Education**  
**Standing Committee on School and Division Accountability**  
**Wednesday, March 21, 2018**  
**2:00 p.m.**  
**Jefferson Conference Room, James Monroe Building**  
**101 North 14th Street, Richmond, Virginia**

**Welcome and Opening Comments**

The following Board of Education (Board) members were present for the March 21, 2018 meeting of the Committee on School and Division Accountability: Kim Adkins; Diane Atkinson; James Dillard; Daniel Gecker; Anne Holton; Elizabeth Lodal; and Dr. Tamara Wallace. Dr. Steven Constantino, Acting Superintendent of Public Instruction, was also present. Sal Romero, Jr. and Dr. Jamelle Wilson were absent.

Ms. Atkinson, chair of this committee, convened the meeting at 2:00 p.m.

**Approval of the Minutes from the January 24, 2018 Committee Meeting**

Ms. Lodal made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 24, 2018 committee meeting. Ms. Adkins seconded the motion, and the draft minutes were approved unanimously.

**Public Comment**

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

**Presentation: Review of Proposed Emergency Amendments to the Standards of Accreditation**

Link to presentation: [Proposed Revision to Standards of Accreditation Regarding Locally Awarded Verified Credits](#) (PPT)

Dr. Cynthia Cave, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications for the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), presented a review of proposed emergency amendments to the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (i.e. the *Standards of Accreditation* or SOA) regarding locally awarded verified credits. The proposed amendments would provide the opportunity for students entering the ninth grade prior to 2018-2019 to receive locally awarded verified credit in not only history and social science, but also mathematics and English.

Locally awarded verified credit is available to students seeking a Standard Diploma who have failed to pass a Standards of Learning (SOL) test twice, where at least one attempt resulted in a

score between 375 and 399. For students entering ninth grade prior to 2018-2019, up to three locally awarded verified credits may be earned: one each in history/social science, science, or the student selected test. For students entering the ninth grade in 2018-2019 or later, a locally awarded verified credit may be earned in history/social science, science, mathematics, or English (reading/writing). Students are limited to one locally awarded verified credit. The proposed emergency amendments to the SOA would extend the ability to earn a locally awarded verified credit in mathematics and English to students entering ninth grade prior to 2018-2019. This would allow for parity among high school cohorts attending school simultaneously.

Dr. Cave explained that emergency regulations are necessary in this instance so that the locally awarded verified credit could be used in time for 2018 graduation. These emergency regulations must be followed with permanent regulations within 180 days of the effective date.

### **Presentation: Review of Board of Education’s Guidelines on Exemplar School Recognition**

Link to presentation: [Board of Education Guidelines on Exemplar School Recognition](#) (PPT)

Dr. Jennifer Piver-Renna, Senior Executive Director of Research for VDOE, presented proposed guidelines for exemplar school recognition. The Board previously discussed the intent and goals of the exemplar recognition at the November 2017 and January 2018 meetings of the Committee on School and Division Accountability. Dr. Piver-Renna’s presentation incorporated changes resulting from those discussions.

Dr. Piver-Renna’s presentation proposed three areas for recognition.

- Highest Achievement – eligibility includes schools with success across all school quality indicators (including achievement gaps), which are rated “Accredited,” and that meet each of the following:
  - State benchmark on pass rates in English reading, mathematics, and science for all students
  - State benchmark on pass rates in English reading and mathematics for all student groups, and no more than a specified gap between the pass rate of the lowest performing group and all other students (five percent for schools with two student groups, ten percent for schools with three or more student groups)
  - Benchmark for Level One performance for chronic absenteeism and the graduation and completion index (GCI) and dropout (for schools with a graduating class)
- Continuous Improvement – eligibility includes schools with consistent and meaningful improvement across multiple years, rated “Accredited” or “Accredited with Conditions,” that meet one of the following:

- Reduction in the failure rate for all students in English reading, mathematics, and science for three years of at least 15 percent
- Reduction in the failure rate for two or more student groups in English reading and mathematics for three years of at least 15 percent
- Decrease in the chronic absenteeism rate for three years of at least 15 percent
- Increase in the GCI for three years of at least four percent and decrease in the dropout rate for three years of at least 15 percent
- Innovative Practice – eligibility via application to VDOE includes schools, school divisions, and school boards that have implemented an innovative practice with demonstrated impact addressing a priority area for at least two years, which includes:
  - Closing achievement gaps
  - Developing an integrated STEM approach to learning
  - Building relationships with families
  - Enhancing technology infrastructure
  - Elevating the quality of the school environment
  - Retaining quality teachers

Exemplar recognition for the Highest Achievement and Continuous Improvement areas would begin in the fall of 2018. The exemplar recognition for Innovative Practice would not be awarded until the fall of 2020.

Currently, applying the proposed guidelines to existing data, 86 schools in 35 school divisions would be identified for Highest Achievement recognition, with 24 of those schools having 60 percent or more students eligible for free and reduced price lunch; 196 schools in 82 divisions would be identified for Continuous Improvement recognition, with 59 of those schools having 60 percent or more students eligible for free and reduced price lunch.

In response to an inquiry from Board members, Dr. Piver-Renna explained that growth was not included in the proposed guidelines, as the guidelines currently measure pass rates and pass rates do not include growth. Board members noted that encouraging growth is important, particularly for the Continuous Improvement recognition area, and that the combined rate aligns with the new accreditation system. Dr. Piver-Renna stated that staff would consider how best to incorporate growth into the exemplar recognition.

One Board member asked if the Continuous Improvement recognition area could be reworded to measure growth in passing rates as opposed to measuring the reduction in failure rates. Dr. Piver-Renna explained that, for low-performing schools, the failure rate is more difficult to impact, which is why staff focused on the failure rate in the proposed guidelines. However, Dr. Piver-Renna noted that staff would examine how to reword the recognition area by looking at the pass rate.

One Board member voiced concerns about the pressure these measures exert on teachers, particularly pressure to raise graduation rates. One Board member raised concerns about the impact of school rankings and accreditation on education across income levels, noting that school recognition may unintentionally impact equity in schools, as residents with higher incomes may make home buying decisions based upon these rankings and recognitions.

### **Presentation: Update on Revisions to Student Eligibility Criteria for Expedited Retakes of Standards of Learning (SOL) Tests**

Link to presentation: [Update on Revisions to Expedited Retake Criteria](#) (PPT)

Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent for Student Assessment and School Improvement for VDOE, presented an update on the revisions to the criteria for expedited retakes of SOL tests.

An expedited retake of a SOL test provides a student an opportunity to immediately retake the test if certain criteria are met. Currently, to be eligible for expedited retake, the student must have passed the course associated with the test and meet one of the following conditions: (1) the student failed the test by a narrow margin with a scaled score of 375 to 399; (2) the student has extenuating circumstances that would warrant retesting; or (3) the student did not sit for the regularly scheduled test for a legitimate reason. The division superintendent is responsible for determining what constitutes an extenuating circumstance or a legitimate reason.

Expedited retakes were originally established by the Board in 2000 as an emergency means to aid students who required an end-of-course test to graduate. In 2015, the Board expanded the opportunity for expedited retakes to students taking grades three through eight SOL tests, with parental permission required.

Following the spring 2017 SOL test administration, there was concern regarding variation among divisions in the application of the extenuating circumstances criteria. VDOE conducted a survey requesting information from school divisions regarding how decisions were made for expedited retakes. The results of this survey were presented to the Board at the November 2017 meeting of the Committee on School and Division Accountability. Wide variances were found in how criteria for expedited retakes were being interpreted in different school divisions. In response, the Board requested revisions to the expedited retake criteria.

VDOE sought stakeholder engagement in these revisions through the Superintendent's Leadership Council, a conference call with superintendents, and discussion with Division Directors of Testing. Priorities for stakeholders included maintaining the superintendent's

authority to authorize retests, ensuring consistency across divisions, and the ability to allow a retake regardless of test score if the student's SOL score is not reflective of overall achievement.

The potential challenges with expedited retakes include minimizing the potential of increased testing, ensuring consistency, ensuring that retesting occurs for the student's benefit and not for school accreditation, minimizing students experiencing multiple failures, and managing costs of retesting.

The proposed revisions include separate criteria for two groups: (1) students taking the grades three through eight SOL tests and students taking end-of-course tests only to meet federal accountability requirements; and (2) students who need an end-of-course test for verified credit.

For students taking the grades three through eight tests and students taking end-of-course tests for federal accountability only, the proposed criteria for expedited retakes require passing the associated course and either: (1) failing the test by a narrow margin with a scaled score of 375 to 399; or (2) having an extenuating circumstance that prevented the student from performing at the expected level. For this group of students, "extenuating circumstances" is defined as an unusual and uncontrollable event that negatively impacted a student's test performance (e.g. the recent death of a family member, friend, or pet; a traumatic home situation; or other significant personal distress or disruption). Parental permission would be required for students retaking grade three through eight assessments. School divisions would be required to submit documentation regarding justification for retakes below 375, subject to review by VDOE.

Regarding proposed criteria for retakes in grades three through eight, Ms. Loving-Ryder stated that evidence that the student's SOL score may not be reflective of the student's typical achievement could be used to support an extenuating circumstance. Clarification was requested as to whether or not this would require school divisions to seek out information on extenuating circumstances without an initiative from the student.

For students needing an end-of-course test for verified credit, the proposed criteria for expedited retake includes passing the associated course and either: (1) failing the test by a narrow margin with a scaled score of 375 to 399; or (2) having an extenuating circumstance that prevented the student from performing at the expected level. For this group of students, extenuating circumstances would be defined by the local school division superintendent, but must be restricted to situations that specifically affect the student being retested.

One Board member asked if VDOE would be responsible for approving the submitted documentation for retake justification. Ms. Loving-Ryder clarified that having the documentation subject to VDOE review was not intended as an approval process, but to provide

school divisions with assistance, if needed. One Board member suggested local school divisions maintain the documentation without submitting it to VDOE.

Board members discussed combining the proposed groups so that only one set of expedited retake criteria is necessary. Board members voiced concerns regarding retesting of elementary school children, retests being school driven rather than student driven, and maintaining simplicity and ease of understanding in the guidelines.

Board members discussed whether uncharacteristically poor performance should be an extenuating circumstance, without another identifiable event having occurred. Some Board members were concerned that such flexibility would be too open to interpretation, and concerns were raised regarding how to define good and poor performance.

The Board members planned to continue the discussion regarding revisions to the criteria for expedited retakes as Agenda Item F in the Board meeting the following day, March 22, 2018.

### **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.