

## Glossary of Education Terms

### General Terms

**Accountability** — measurable proof, usually in the form of student results on various tests, that teachers, schools, divisions and states are teaching students efficiently and well, usually in the form of student success rates on various tests; Virginia's accountability programs is known as the Standards of Learning which includes curriculum standards approved by the Board of Education and required state tests based on the standards.

**Accreditation** — a process used by the Virginia Department of Education to evaluate the educational performance of public schools in accordance regulations

**Achievement gap** — the difference between the performance of subgroups of students, especially those defined by gender, race/ethnicity, disability and socioeconomic status

**ACT** — one of the two commonly used tests designed to assess high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work in four skill areas: English, mathematics, reading, and science reasoning

**Adequate yearly progress (AYP)** — a measurement indicating whether a school, division or the state met federally approved academic goals required by the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act/No Child Left Behind Act (ESEA/NCLB)

**Adult/Continuing education** — a program of instruction provided by an adult/continuing education instructional organization for adults and youth beyond the age of compulsory school attendance including basic education and English literacy, English for speakers of other languages, civics education, GED testing services, adult secondary education and Individualized Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP) programs

**Advanced Placement (AP)** — college-level courses available to high school students which may allow a student to earn college credit provided through the College Board

**Alignment** — effort to ensure that what teachers teach is in accord with what the curriculum says will be taught and what is assessed on official tests

**Alternative assessment** — a method to measure student educational attainment other than the typical multiple-choice test which may include portfolios, constructed response items and other performance-measurement tools

**Alternative education** — a school or center organized for alternative programs of instruction

**Assessment** — method of measuring the learning and performance of students; examples include achievement tests, minimum competency tests, developmental screening tests, aptitude tests, observation instruments, performance tasks, etc.

**At-risk students** — students who have a higher than average probability of dropping out or failing school.

**Average daily membership (ADM)** — the K-12 enrollment figure used to distribute state per pupil funding that includes students with disabilities ages 5-21, and students for whom English is a second language who entered school for the first time after reaching their 12th birthday, and who have not reached their 22nd birthday; preschool and post-graduate students are not included in ADM

**Benchmark** — a standard for judging performance

**Block scheduling** — a way of organizing the school day into blocks of time longer than the typical 50-minute class period; with the 4X4 block students take four 90-minute classes each day allowing for completion of an entire course in one semester instead of a full year; with an A/B or rotating block students take six to eight classes for an entire year but classes in each subject meet on alternate days for 90 minutes

**Charter school** — a school controlled by a local school board that provides free public elementary and/or secondary education to eligible students under a specific charter granted by the state legislature or other appropriate authority, and designated by such authority to be a charter school

**Class period** — a segment of time in the school day that is approximately 1/6 of the instructional day.

**Cohort** — a particular group of people with something in common

**College Board** — the organization that administers SAT, AP and other standardized tests to high school students planning on continuing their educations at a post-secondary level

**Combined school** — a public school that contains any combination of or all K-12 grade levels that are not considered an elementary, middle or secondary school

**Composite index of local ability to pay** — a formula to determine the state and local government shares of K-12 education program costs, which is expressed as a ratio, indicating the local percentage share of the cost of education programs; for example, a locality with a composite index of 0.3000 would pay 30 percent and the state would pay 70 percent of the costs

**Confined** — due to physical, medical or emotional impairments based on certification of need, a student is restricted or limited from attendance at a regular public school during the regular school hours; this does not apply to situations where a student is restricted for discipline or non-medically based situations

**Core curriculum** — the body of knowledge that all students are expected to learn in the subjects of English, mathematics, history/social science and science

**Curriculum** — a plan or document that a school or school division uses to define what will be taught and the methods that will be used to educate and assess students

**Curriculum alignment** — occurs when what is taught includes or exceeds the content defined by the Standards of Learning (SOL)

**Data-based decision making (also referred to as “research-based decision making”)** — organizing, analyzing and interpreting existing sources of information and other data to make decisions

**Direct aid to public education** — funding appropriated for the operation of public schools including funding for school employee benefits, Standards of Quality, incentive-based programs, allotment of sales tax and lottery revenues and specific appropriations for programs such as Governor’s Schools and adult literacy initiatives

**Disaggregated data** — presentation of data broken into subgroups of students instead of the entire student body which allows parents and teachers to measure how each student group is performing; typical subgroups include students who are economically disadvantaged, from different racial or ethnic groups, those who have disabilities or have limited English fluency.

**Distance learning** — method of instruction in locations other than the classroom or places where teachers present the lessons, which uses various forms of technology to provide educational materials and experiences to students

**Dropouts** — students who leave high school before receiving a diploma.

**Early childhood education** — the education of young children, especially under the age of 5

**Economically disadvantaged** — a student who is a member of a household that meets the income eligibility guidelines for free or reduced-price school meals (less than or equal to 185% of Federal Poverty Guidelines)

**Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA)** — the primary federal law affecting K-12 education; the most recent reauthorization of the law is also known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)

**Elementary school** — a public school with grades kindergarten through five

**Eligible students** — the total number of students of school age enrolled in the school at a grade or course with a Standards of Learning test; does not include students who are allowed an exclusion such as limited English proficient (LEP) students or some students with disabilities

**English as a second language (ESL)** — a program of instruction and services for non-English-speaking or limited-English-proficient students to help them learn and succeed in schools

**English-language learners (ELL)** — a student whose first language is other than English and who is in a special program for learning English

**Enrollment** — the act of complying with state and local requirements for registration or admission of a child for attendance in a school within a local school division; also refers to registration for courses within the student's home school or within related schools or programs

**Even Start** — a federally funded program that provides family-centered education projects to help parents become full partners in the education of their children

**First time** — the student has not been enrolled in the school at any time during the current school year

**Four core subject/academic areas** — English, mathematics, science and history/social science for purposes of SOL testing

**Free and appropriate public education (FAPE)** — requirement through the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that education of students with disabilities (between the ages of 3 and 22) must be provided at public expense, under public supervision, at no charge to the parents and based on the child's unique needs and not on the child's disability

**General education** — K-12 instruction that meets the commonwealth's Standards of Learning and prepares children for elementary, secondary and postsecondary success

**Gifted** — programs that provide advanced educational opportunities including accelerated promotion through grades and classes and an enriched curriculum for students who are endowed with a high degree of mental ability

**Governor's school** — a school serving gifted high school students who meet specific admissions criteria for advanced educational opportunities in areas including the arts, government and international studies, mathematics, science, and technology; both academic-year and summer governor's schools are offered

**Graduate** — a student who has earned a Board of Education recognized diploma: advanced studies, advanced technical, standard, standard technical, modified standard, special or general achievement.

**Head Start** — a federally funded child-development program that provides health, educational, nutritional, social and other services to pre-school children from economically disadvantaged families

**Home-based instruction** — non-reimbursable educational services provided in the home setting (or other agreed upon setting) in accordance with the student’s individual education program who were removed from school for disciplinary or other reasons, but not the result of a medical referral

**Homebound instruction** — academic instruction provided to students who are confined at home or in a health-care facility for periods that would prevent normal school attendance based upon certification of need by a licensed physician or licensed clinical psychologist. For a student with a disability, the Individual Education Program (IEP) team must determine the delivery of services, including the number of hours of services.

**Home instruction (also referred to as “home schooling”)** — instruction of a student or students by a parent or parents, guardian or other person having control or charge of such student or students as an alternative to attendance in a public or private school in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Virginia provisions (§22.1-254.1)

**Home tutoring** — instruction by a tutor or teacher with qualifications prescribed by the Virginia Board of Education, as an alternative to attendance in a public or private school and approved by the division superintendent in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Virginia §22.1-254; often used as an alternative form of home schooling

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** — federal law guiding the delivery of special education services for students with disabilities which includes the guarantee of “free and appropriate public education” for every school-age child with a disability and allows parental involvement in the educational planning process, encourages access to the general curriculum and delineates how school disciplinary rules and the obligation to provide a free appropriate public education for disabled children mesh

**Individualized education program (IEP)** — a written plan created for a student with disabilities by the student’s teachers, parents or guardians, the school administrator, and other interested parties. The plan is tailored to the student’s specific needs and abilities, and outlines attainable goals.

**Individualized education program team (IEP Team)** — team charged with developing, reviewing and revising a student’s IEP and consisting of the parent(s), the child (if appropriate), a regular education teacher, a special education teacher, an administrator qualified to supervise the provision of services and an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results

**Individualized family service plan (IFSP)** — a written plan outlining the procedure necessary to transition a child with disabilities to preschool or other appropriate services

**International Baccalaureate (IB)** — a program established to provide an internationally recognized; interdisciplinary; pre-collegiate course of study offered through the International Baccalaureate Organization, headquartered in Switzerland, and examination results are accepted by more than 100 countries for university admission.

**Licensed clinical psychologist** — a psychologist licensed by the Virginia Board of Psychology who must either be in a treatment relationship or establishing a treatment relationship with the student to meet eligibility requirements for requesting homebound services

**Licensed physician** — an individual who has been licensed by the Virginia Board of Medicine to practice medicine who can certify medical conditions for requesting homebound services

**Licensed teacher** — an individual who has met all the current requirements for a teacher in the Virginia and holds a license from the Virginia State Board of Education, or, if teaching on-line, a license from Virginia or another state

**Limited-English proficient (LEP)** —see English-language learners

**Linear weighted average** — a calculation, approximating what most school divisions spend to operate their schools, used to establish the funded cost of many components of the Standards of Quality (SOQ), such as instructional salaries.

**Literary fund** — established in the Constitution of Virginia (Article VIII, § 8) as a permanent and perpetual school fund that provides low-interest loans to school divisions for capital expenditures, such as construction of new buildings or remodeling of existing buildings.

**Locally awarded verified credit** — a verified unit of credit awarded by a local school board in accordance with the SOA

**Magnet school/center (also referred to as “specialty school/center”)** — a public school that focuses on a particular area of study, such as performing arts or science and technology but also offer regular school subjects

**Middle school** — a public school with grades 6 through 8

**Migrant Education** — a program of instruction and services for children who move periodically with their families from one school to another in a different geographical area to secure seasonal employment

**National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (also referred to as “the Nation's Report Card”)** — the only nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas including mathematics, reading, science, writing, U.S. history, geography, civics and the arts; the federally funded program (currently contracted to Educational Testing Service in Princeton, N.J.) tests a representative sample of students in grades 4, 8 and 12 and provides information about the achievement of students nationally and state-by-state

**National Blue Ribbon Award** — honors public and private K-12 schools that are either academically superior in their states or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement; awarded annually by the U.S. Department of Education through the Blue Ribbon Schools Program

**Nation’s Report Card** — see “National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)”

**No Child Left behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)** — see “Elementary & Secondary Education Act”

**Norm-referenced tests** — standardized tests designed to measure how a student's performance compares with that of other students

**Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS)** — state-provided K-3 screening tool to help reduce the number of children with reading problems by detecting those problems early and providing research-based, small-group intervention

**Pedagogy** — the art of teaching

**Planning period** — one class period per day (or the equivalent) unencumbered of any teaching or supervisory duties

**Portfolio** — a collection of student work chosen to exemplify and document a student's learning progress over time

**Pre-school child care** — a school-operated program that provides custodial care of pre-school students enrolled in a school or system before school day starts and/or after a school day ends.

**Proficient** — test results indicating that the student demonstrated the skills and knowledge outlined in the Standards of Learning (SOL)

**Professional/staff development** — training for teachers, principals, superintendents, administrative staff, local school board members and Board of Education members designed to enhance student achievement and is required by the Standards of Quality (SOQ)

**Psychiatrist** — an medical doctor who has been licensed by the Virginia Board of Medicine and trained to practice in the science of treating mental diseases

**Reading First** — federal program focuses on putting proven methods of early reading instruction into classrooms to ensure all children learn to read well by the end of third grade

**Recess** — a segment of free time during the standard school day in which students are given a break from instruction

**Reconstitution** — for a school rated accreditation denied, it is a process to initiate a range of accountability actions to improve pupil performance and to address deficiencies in curriculum and instruction; may include, but is not limited to, restructuring a school's governance, instructional program staff or student population

**Regular school year** — the period of time between the opening day of school in the fall and the closing day of school for that school term that is at minimum 180 teaching days or 990 teaching hours

**Remedial program** — a program designed to remedy, strengthen and improve the academic achievement of students who demonstrate substandard performance

**Research-based decision making** — see “data-based decision making”

**Response to intervention (RTI)** — a method designed to identify and provide early, effective assistance to children who are having difficulty learning: Tier 1 students need extra help understanding the core curriculum, Tier 2 students consistently showing a discrepancy between their current level of performance and the expected level of performance, and Tier 3 students need even more support

**Restructuring** — the implementation of a new organizational pattern or style of leadership and management to bring about renewed, more effective schools. It can mean reorganizing the school day or year and changing conventional practices, such as grouping students by age for an entire school year or giving competitive grades. Or it may refer to changing the roles of teachers and administrators, allocating more decision-making power to teachers, and involving parents in decisions

**Sampling** — a way of estimating how a whole group would perform on a test by testing representative members of the group or giving different portions of the test to various subgroups

**SAT** — one of the two commonly used tests designed to assess high school students' general educational development and required for college entrance by many institutions of higher education; administered by The College Board

**School** — a publicly funded institution where students are enrolled for all or a majority of the instructional day; those students are reported in fall membership at the institution and the institution, at minimum, meets requirements adopted by the Board of Education.

**School age** — a child who is age 5 on or before September 30 and has not reached age 20; compulsory attendance school age is 5-18

**Secondary school** — a public school with any grades 9 through 12

**Special education (SPED)** — a service especially designed and at no cost to the parent/guardian that adapts the curriculum, materials or instruction for students identified as having educational or physical

disabilities and tailored to each student's needs and learning style and provided in a general education or special education classroom, home, hospital, separate school or other setting

**Specialty school** — see “magnet school/center”

**Standardized testing** — tests administered and scored under uniform (standardized) conditions. Because most machine-scored, multiple-choice tests are standardized, the term is sometimes used to refer to such tests, but other tests may also be standardized.

**Standard school day** — a calendar day that averages at least five and one-half instructional hours for students in grades 1-12, excluding breaks for meals and recess, and a minimum of three instructional hours for students in kindergarten

**Standard school year** — a school year of at least 180 teaching days or a total of at least 990 teaching hours per year.

**Standard unit of credit** — earned credit based on a minimum of 140-clock hours of instruction and successful completion of the requirements of the course

**Standards of Accreditation (SOA)** — the Board of Education's regulations establishing criteria for approving public schools in Virginia as authorized in the Standards of Quality (SOQ)

**Standards of Learning (SOL)** — the minimum grade level and subject matter educational objectives, described as the knowledge and skills “necessary for success in school and for preparation for life,” that students are expected to meet in Virginia public schools and specified by the Standards of Quality (SOQ)

**SOL curriculum frameworks** — teacher resource guides for mathematics, science, English and history/social sciences delineating essential knowledge, skills and processes required by the Standards of Learning (SOL)

**Standards of Quality (SOQ)** — the minimum program that every public school division in Virginia must meet; a major portion of state funding for direct air to public education is based on the SOQ; the standards are established in the Constitution of Virginia, defined in the Code of Virginia and prescribed by the Board of Education, subject to revision only by the General Assembly

**Student** — a child age 5 on or before September 30 up to age 18; a child with disabilities age 2-21; a child of limited English proficiency who entered a Virginia school after age 12 but not age 22

**Student periods** — means the number of students a teacher instructs per class period multiplied by the number of class periods taught

**Substitute tests** — tests approved by the Board of Education as substitutes for SOL end-of-course tests for awarding verified credit for high school; examples include Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), SAT II, as well as a number of certifications and licensing examinations in career and technical fields

**Title I** — federal funding program authorized by Title I of ESEA/NCLB to support instructional needs of students from low-income families to ensure that all children have a fair and equal opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach (at a minimum) proficiency on state academic achievement standards and assessments

**Title 1 school** — a school with a high rate of disadvantaged students making it eligible for participation in federal Title I programs

**Title 1 school-wide assistance** — Title 1 schools with 40 percent or greater high-poverty, student population may use federal funding to meet the needs of all students at the school

**Title 1 targeted assistance** — federal funding is used to meet the needs of the educationally disadvantaged students only and the poverty percentages must be at least 35% or above the district wide average

**Transition plan** — plan provided by the licensed physician or licensed clinical psychologist to explain the need for extended homebound instruction which includes the name of the student, justification for the extension of homebound instruction, additional time homebound instruction is anticipated and specific steps planned to return the student to classroom instruction

**Verified unit of credit** — earned credit based on a standard unit of credit, plus a passing score on the end-of-course SOL test or substitute test approved by the Board of Education

**Virginia assessment program** — means a system used to evaluate student achievement that includes SOL tests and additional tests which may be approved from time to time by the Board of Education.

**Virginia preschool initiative** — program providing state funds to schools and community organizations for quality preschool programs for at-risk four-year olds not served by federal programs such as Head Start or Title 1

**Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning** — a measurable range of skills and knowledge essential for four-year-olds to be successful in kindergarten.

**Vocational** — a school or center organized for a program that offers a sequence of courses that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for paid or unpaid employment in current or emerging occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced diploma

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