

Attachment B

Information and Guidelines for School Divisions

2022-2023 School Year

Alternative Accreditation Plan

Submission, Approval, and Implementation Process

- A Superintendent’s Memorandum is sent out to school divisions to provide information regarding the Alternative Accreditation application process (memo includes the application as an attachment),
- VDOE staff meets with school leaders who have applied to explain the process, timeline, and guidelines.
- The school submits an Alternative Accreditation Plan to the Office of Accountability for feedback regarding clarity, completeness, and alignment to the guidelines.
- A VDOE committee reviews the plans in order to provide the feedback. The committee consists of staff members from the Offices of Student Assessment; Data Services; Instructional Services; Career, Technical and Adult Education; and School Quality.
- The Office of Accountability provides feedback to the school and meets with school leaders to answer questions that specifically relate to their school.
- The school submits their final Alternative Accreditation Plan to the Office of Accountability so it can be brought before the Virginia Board of Education. The plan contains alternative measures for one or more indicators.
- The Board will receive the plans for first review and approve or deny the plans upon final review. Schools may be asked to be present for Board questions at the final review.
- The Office of Accountability notifies the school of the Board’s decision.

For those schools whose Alternative Accreditation Plan was approved:

- During the state accreditation process, rates for all school indicators are calculated using the same methodology that is used for all other schools in the Commonwealth.
- The Office of Accountability reviews the state accreditation data and confers with the schools who have an Alternative Accreditation Plan.
- If an indicator the school included in their Alternative Accreditation Plan has a Level 3 rating using the state calculation, the school will calculate the rate using the alternative measure.
- If the alternative measure indicates a level other than a Level 3, the school presents the alternative calculations and corresponding data to the Office of Accountability. The accuracy of the calculations are verified.
 - School staff should use SSWS reports as the basis for the data that is submitted to support the alternative accreditation calculations (i.e., Cohort Reports, Student Performance Rosters, Accreditation Detail Report), in addition to the complete

calculations used to determine the new rate.

- The Office of Accountability communicates with the Office of Data Services to ensure the indicators which have an alternative measure are accurately reported.
- Performance Levels for all indicators are used to determine the school's Accreditation status using the same methodology that is used for all schools in the Commonwealth.

Alternative Accreditation Plan Guidelines

Current guidelines, along with their flexibilities are:

- Include all students to the greatest extent possible in the alternate model, rather than excluding students, to meet established criteria. Flexibilities are provided for students who are enrolled in school after compulsory attendance age and for students who are incarcerated;
 - Compulsory attendance age: any child who will have reached the fifth birthday on or before September 30 of any school year and who has not passed the eighteenth birthday.
- Keep the established performance benchmarks consistent with the state model (i.e., The Level 1 performance benchmark for English is 75%.);
- Maintain “sufficient improvement” as a criteria for determination of the Level 1 and Level 2 performance levels, but allow modified sufficient improvement percentages to be used (i.e., use 5% to demonstrate sufficient improvement rather than 10%);
- Keep an established minimum pass rate when using the “sufficient improvement” criteria to earn a Level 2 performance rating in the achievement indicators, but allow the rate to be amended from the State rate of 50% (i.e., the minimum pass rate could be 45% rather than 50%);
- Calculate the consecutive multi-year rate without excluding any years, but allow additional years to be added (i.e., a cumulative 4-year rate could be used instead of the standard cumulative 3-year rate);
- Track chronic absenteeism per division policy, but allow the use of “meaningful engagement” definitions in local policies to guide the determination of absenteeism;
- Use statewide assessment results to calculate student achievement indicator rates. Passing scores and approved substitute tests are to be used in the results, as per the State guidelines. Flexibility to use test scores in the [locally awarded verified credit range](#) (375-399 scaled scores) in the achievement rate is permissible and can be weighted up to 75%;
- Calculate the College Career and Civic Readiness Indicator (CCCRI) consistent with state rules but allow flexibility to use broader definitions for the criteria. For example, definitions of work-based learning and service-learning can be expanded to match their population's current life experiences; and
- Optionally, to include other indicators, in addition to the state's established indicators, if the measure showcases high quality foundational educational programs, demonstrates the school is raising student achievement, and is preparing students for real-life, authentic experiences.

Flexibilities Specific to Accreditation Indicators

Academic and GAP Group Achievement

Allowable Modifications:

- May count test scores in the locally awarded verified credit range (i.e., 375-399) in the achievement rates (may be weighted up to 75%);
- May change the minimum pass rate (“the floor”) when using the “sufficient improvement” criteria to earn a Level 2 performance rating;
 - Example: Use the reduction of the failure rate (R10) when the pass rate is 45% rather than 50%
- May use additional years to calculate a multi-year rate;
 - Example: Use a cumulative 4-year rate rather than a cumulative 3-year rate
- May modify the reduction of the failure rate (R10) to another value.
 - Example: Use 5% instead of 10%

Non-allowable Modifications:

- Using a weighted value for any test outcome other than scores in the locally awarded verified credit range;
- Using scenarios to earn bonus points;
- Amending definitions and calculations of standard terms/concepts (i.e., recovery, transfers);
- Changing the performance level benchmarks for academic achievement indicators;
 - Example: The Level 1 performance benchmark for English must remain 75%.
- Using “best of” when using additional years to calculate a cumulative multi-year rate.
 - Example: Using the best 3 out of 4 years to calculate the 3-year rate

Chronic Absenteeism

Allowable Modifications:

- May exclude students who enrolled in a Virginia Public School for the first time after compulsory attendance age;
- May use additional years to calculate a multi-year rate;
 - Example: Use a cumulative 4-year rate rather than a cumulative 3-year rate
- May modify the reduction of the chronic absenteeism rate (R10) to another value.
 - Example: Use 5% instead of 10%
- May amend the student-level thresholds for chronic absenteeism;
 - Example: A student must be absent 15% or more of the school year, rather than 10%, to be included in the calculation.
- May explicitly define or redefine “meaningful engagement” and “meaningful interactions” to guide absenteeism policies or procedures (as referenced in [Superintendent’s Memorandum 230-21](#)).
 - Ensure meaningful engagement is rigorous enough to meet the intent of the

indicator.

Non-Allowable Modifications:

- Excluding any students from the calculation except students who enrolled in a Virginia Public School for the first time after compulsory attendance age;
- Using “best of” when using additional years to calculate a cumulative multi-year rate.
 - Example: Using the best 3 out of 4 years to calculate the 3-year rate
- Applying weighted values for students meeting certain criteria;
- Using any scenario to earn bonus points; and
- Changing the performance level benchmarks for Chronic Absenteeism
 - Example: The Level 1 performance benchmark must remain 15%.

Graduation Completion Index (GCI)

Allowable Modifications:

- May exclude students who-
 - enrolled in a Virginia Public School for the first time after compulsory attendance age and did not graduate;
 - enrolled in the school for the first time over compulsory attendance age and did not complete n semester/months. Length of time depends on school data but should not exceed two semesters;
 - are over compulsory attendance age and transfer out of state where there is not a program for them;
 - fail to complete the school year due to incarceration;
- May use additional years to calculate a multi-year rate;
 - Example: Use a cumulative 4-year rate rather than a cumulative 3-year rate
- May modify the increase of the GCI rate (I2) to show improvement to another value.
 - Example: Use 2% instead of 2.5%

Non-Allowable Modifications:

- Excluding student groups other than those indicated under *Allowable Modifications*;
- Using “best of” when using additional years to calculate a cumulative multi-year rate.
 - Example: Using the best 3 out of 4 years to calculate the 3-year rate
- Applying weighted values for students meeting certain criteria;
- Using any scenario to earn bonus points;
 - The exception is when a school has a graduating cohort size less than or equal to 50. (See paragraph below for information.)
- Changing the performance level benchmarks for GCI.
 - Example: The Level 1 performance benchmark must remain 88%.

Graduating Cohort Sizes Less Than or Equal to 50:

A school with a graduating cohort size of less than or equal to 50 can submit in their plan this flexibility:

If the school does not earn a Level One for the GCI, these additional bonus points can be

added to the index score:

- No bonus points assigned for 0-14 students.*
- Maximum of five points for cohorts of 15-20 students.
- Maximum of four points for cohorts of 21-40 students.
- Maximum of three points for cohorts of 41-50 students.

*A school with 14 or fewer students in their graduating cohort can file a written appeal of the GCI indicator with the Board of Education per 8VAC20-131-380 F. 6 of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (SOA). Alternately, prior to submitting this appeal, a school can add 5 points to the GCI as part of their alternative accreditation plan to determine whether they will earn a Level One or Level Two with the 5 bonus points.

Dropout Rate

Allowable Modifications:

- May exclude students who-
 - enrolled in a Virginia Public School for the first time after compulsory attendance age and did not graduate;
 - enrolled in the school for the first time over compulsory attendance age and did not complete n semester/months. Length of time depends on school data but should not exceed two semesters;
 - are over compulsory attendance age and transfer out of state where there is not a program for them;
 - fail to complete the school year due to incarceration;
- May use additional years to calculate a multi-year rate;
 - Example: Use a cumulative 4-year rate rather than a cumulative 3-year rate
- May modify the reduction of the dropout rate (R10) to another value.
 - Example: Use 5% instead of 10%

Non-Allowable Modifications:

- Excluding student groups other than those indicated under *Allowable Modifications*;
- Using “best of” when using additional years to calculate a multi-year rate;
 - Example: Use the best 3 out of 4 years to calculate the 3-year rate
- Applying weighted values for students meeting certain criteria;
- Using any scenario to earn bonus points; and
- Changing the performance level benchmarks for dropout rate.
 - Example: The Level 1 performance benchmark must remain 6%.

College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index (CCCRI)

Allowable Modifications:

- May exclude students who-

- enrolled in a Virginia Public School for the first time after compulsory attendance age and did not graduate;
- enrolled in the school for the first time over compulsory attendance age and did not complete n semester/months. Length of time depends on school data but should not exceed two semesters;
- are over compulsory attendance age and transfer out of state where there is not a program for them;
- fail to complete the school year due to incarceration;
- May broaden the definitions used for student activities that count in the calculations;
 - The criteria must be rigorous and meaningful regarding the intent of the indicator.
 - The activity must strengthen students' preparation for college and the workforce before leaving high school.
- May create a connection of existing work-based experiences or service-learning experiences to coursework in order to count towards CCCRI.

Non-Allowable Modifications:

- Excluding student groups other than those indicated under *Allowable Modifications*;
- Applying weighted values for students meeting certain criteria;
- Using any scenario to earn bonus points; and
- Changing the performance level benchmarks for CCCRI.
 - Example: The Level 1 performance benchmark must remain 85%.

Other Indicators

The alternative accreditation may identify other indicators on which the school can be measured. Indicators should showcase high quality foundational educational programs, demonstrate the school is raising student achievement and is preparing students for real-life, authentic experiences.

The indicator should be a meaningful way to determine the effectiveness of the school for the student population served. It should be sustainable so that growth may be calculated over multiple years. If other indicators are included in the plan, they should be in addition to the indicators that are part of regular state accreditation.

Additional Information

- The alternate accreditation plan is not an "all or nothing" document. For instance, if a plan is submitted that includes academic achievement for math and GCI and under regular accreditation the school made a Level one or Level two in math but not GCI, the school would only use the GCI portion of the plan.
- Supporting historical data should be a minimum of two years and can be retrieved from SSWS.
- Locally administered growth assessments cannot be used as a substitute growth measure in accreditation plans.
- Small n size rules should help with concerns regarding negative impacts of small

numbers on accreditation. These rules can be found in the *Calculating Accreditation* document in SSWS.

- Schools cannot use statewide data from the two waived accreditation years (2020-2021 and 2021-2022) in your justification for a modified indicator.

Requirements Based on Performance

Any school who has a Level two or Level three *after the alternative calculations have been applied* are subject to the requirements found in [8VAC20-131-400](#).

- A school earns a Level Two performance level based on “regular calculations”: requirements do not apply
- A school earns a Level Two or Level Three performance level after the alternative accreditation calculations have been applied: requirements do apply

Level Three (4 Yrs) rule does apply (began 2022-2023 accountability year).

Triennial Accreditation rule does apply.

Identification of Schools (federal status identification): Determined based on school-specific data.

Regulatory Authority

[8 VAC 20-131-420.D](#) of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* states, which states:

D. Alternative accreditation plans. Subject to the provisions of subsection B of this section, the governing school board of special purpose schools such as those provided for in § 22.1-26 of the Code of Virginia, Governor's schools, special education schools, alternative schools, or career and technical schools that serve as the student's school of principal enrollment may seek approval of an alternative accreditation plan from the board. Schools offering alternative education programs, schools with a graduation cohort of 50 or fewer students as defined by the graduation rate formula adopted by the board may request that the board approve an alternative accreditation plan to meet the graduation and completion index benchmark. Special purpose schools with alternative accreditation plans shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the programs offered in the school and approved by the board prior to August 1 of the school year for which approval is requested. Any student graduating from a special purpose school with a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma must meet the requirements prescribed in [8VAC20-131-50](#) or [8VAC20-131-51](#).

As set forth in the [Standards of Quality](#) and according to department procedures, any school board may request the board for release from state regulations or, on behalf of one or more of its schools, for approval of an Individual School Accreditation Plan for the evaluation of the performance of one or more of its schools as authorized for schools enumerated in this subsection, based on special circumstances.

In addition, the *Guidance Document: Governing Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* states:

In accordance with the provisions of [8VAC20-131-420\(B\)](#) of the standards, local school boards may seek waivers of provisions of the standards to address the unique needs of special purpose schools. Such requests may include an alternative accreditation plan. Applications must be submitted to the Board for consideration at least ninety days prior to August 1 of the school year. Requests for consideration must be accompanied by information that documents the need for approval of the request.

Examples

[Previous Plans approved by the Board](#) can be found on the VDOE website.