



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: I

Date: March 28, 2024

Title: First Review of Applications for Alternative Accreditation Plans from Special Purpose Schools

Presenter: Katie Carroll, Deputy Superintendent, Division of School Performance and Support

Purpose of Presentation

Action required by state or federal law or regulation

Executive Summary

Eleven special purpose schools in Virginia are requesting approval of alternative accreditation plans from the Virginia Board of Education ("Board") for the 2024-2025 accountability year (based on 2023-2024 school year data). The schools submitting applications are:

- Arlington County Public Schools: Arlington Community High School;
- Chesterfield County Public Schools: Carver College and Career Academy;
- Fairfax County Public Schools: Bryant High School, Fairfax County Adult High School, Key Center School, Kilmer Center School, and Mountain View High School;
- Loudoun County Public Schools: William Obediah Robey High School;
- Richmond City Public Schools: Amelia Street School and Richmond Alternative School;
- and
- York County Public Schools: York River Academy.

Such schools are allowed to request this flexibility under [8 VAC 20-131-420.D](#) of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia ("SOA").

The plans (Attachment A) adhere to new guidelines that were created by the Virginia Department of Education ("Department") in 2022 to align with the 2017 SOA, included below in the background section. The guidelines allow flexibilities when determining an accreditation

status for these special purpose schools while still maintaining an alignment to the state's accreditation model. The guidelines, which are detailed in Attachment B, include these guiding principles:

- 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;
- Keep the established performance benchmarks consistent with the state model (i.e., The Level 1 performance benchmarks for English is 75%.);
- Maintain "sufficient improvement" as a criteria for the 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 included 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 (scaled scores of 375-399) 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, allow the inclusion of other indicators, in addition to the state's established indicators, if the measure showcases high quality educational programs, demonstrates the school is raising student achievement, and is preparing students for real-life, authentic experiences.

Alternative Accreditation Plan submission, approval, and implementation includes:

- communication between VDOE staff and school leaders regarding the process, timeline, and established guidelines;
- individualized assistance to answer school-specific questions;
- a review of the applications by a multi-office VDOE working committee for alignment to the guidelines;
- a presentation of the proposed plans to the Board for review and approval; and
- verification of the accuracy of alternative calculations that are used for accreditation, and verification that the assigned accreditation status of the school is accurate, based on the state measures and/or alternative measures.

Attachment B details the process for the submission, approval, and implementation of an Alternative Accreditation Plan.

Should any Board actions taken throughout the remainder of 2024 impact the accreditation model for the 2024-2025 accreditation year, using data from the 2023-2024 school year, the Department requests that the Board allow staff to exercise professional judgment and permit related flexibilities in the approved alternative accreditation plans as appropriate.

Action Requested

First review. Action requested at the April 25, 2024 meeting.

Superintendent’s Recommendation

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board receive for First Review applications for alternative accreditation plans from eleven special purpose schools.

Previous Review or Action

No previous review or action.

Background Information and Statutory Authority

Eleven special purpose schools in Virginia are requesting approval of alternative accreditation plans from the Board. Such schools are allowed to request this flexibility under [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 January 2020, based on the Board's request, a working committee of Department staff members from the Offices of Student Assessment, Data Services, Research, Instructional Services, Career, Technical and Adult Education, and School Quality convened to outline new guidelines for alternative accreditation plans that aligned with the 2017 SOA (Attachment B). At the [November 2021 Board work session](#), VDOE staff discussed a realignment of the alternative accreditation plans and sought the Board's guidance to ensure that the realignment efforts met their expectations.

[In April 2022](#), the Board approved the first alternative accreditation plans that aligned with the new guidelines for the 2022-2023 accreditation year. On October 12, 2023, the [Virginia Education Update](#) was sent to school divisions with information regarding the application and timeline for the alternative accreditation plan proposals for the 2024-2025 accreditation year. On October 24, 2023, the Office of Accountability held a meeting with all school leaders to provide guidance and support. Additional meetings with individual schools took place to answer questions and ensure that the plan captured the unique needs and attributes of each school. The schools then submitted a draft plan. A multi-office internal VDOE committee reviewed the plans to ensure that they met the guidelines. Feedback on clarity, completeness, and alignment with the guidance was provided if necessary. Schools then submitted a final plan to be brought before the Board.

The alternative accreditation plans are included as Attachment A. A detailed outline of the submission, approval, and implementation process, along with the guidelines for plan development are included as Attachment B.

Timetable for Further Review/Action

Final review is anticipated at the April 25, 2024, meeting of the Board. Following Board approval, schools will be notified of the Board’s decision.

Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources

There is no impact of the action on VDOE resources (fiscal or staff), and the impact on local school divisions’ resources is indeterminate.