



# NEWS RELEASE

Jillian Balow | Superintendent of Public Instruction

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## State Superintendent: 2022-2023 Ratings Show Current Accreditation Standards Unreliable Measure of School Performance

RICHMOND — Superintendent of Public Instruction Jillian Balow announced today that despite deep learning losses caused by the closure of most schools to in-person instruction from March 2020 to August 2021, the percentage of Virginia’s public schools meeting the state Board of Education’s accreditation standards dropped by only three points compared with pre-pandemic performance.

Eighty-nine percent of schools earned full accreditation for 2022-2023, compared with 92% in 2019-2020, the last year for which the Virginia Department of Education calculated school ratings before the coronavirus pandemic.

“These ratings call into question the effectiveness of our accreditation standards in identifying schools where students are struggling to achieve grade-level proficiency,” Balow said. “The number and percentage of schools earning accreditation is almost as high as three years ago, despite significant declines in achievement on Standards of Learning tests in reading, math and science — especially among minority and economically disadvantaged students. Accreditation is one of the primary drivers of state interventions and local efforts to improve outcomes for students, and frankly, the school ratings we are releasing today fail to capture the extent of the crisis facing our schools and students.”

### State School Accreditation Summary

| Accreditation Rating           | Number of Schools |           | Percentage of Schools |           |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|
|                                | 2022-2023         | 2019-2020 | 2022-2023             | 2019-2020 |
| Accredited                     | 1,628             | 1,682     | 89%                   | 92%       |
| Alternative Accreditation Plan | 3                 | 5         | <1%                   | <1%       |
| Accredited With Conditions     | 190               | 132       | 10%                   | 7%        |
| New School                     | 9                 | 6         | <1%                   | <1%       |
| Total                          | 1,830             | 1,825     | 100%                  | 100%      |

Under the accreditation system adopted by the state Board of Education in 2017 and implemented the following year, schools are evaluated on school quality indicators grouped in three categories: academic achievement, achievement gaps, and student engagement and outcomes. Performance on each indicator is rated at one of the following levels:

- Level 1: Meets or exceeds state standard or sufficient improvement.
- Level 2: Near state standard or sufficient improvement.
- Level 3: Below state standard.

The following tables summarize how Virginia schools performed on each applicable indicator.

*(more)*

### Academic Achievement Summary

| Indicator   | Schools at Level 1 |           | Schools at Level 2 |           | Schools at Level 3 |           |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|
|             | 2022-2023          | 2019-2020 | 2022-2023          | 2019-2020 | 2022-2023          | 2019-2020 |
| English     | 1,705              | 1,689     | 63                 | 81        | 52                 | 49        |
| Mathematics | 1,755              | 1,769     | 28                 | 23        | 38                 | 27        |
| Science     | 1,381              | 1,649     | 153                | 51        | 235                | 60        |

### Achievement Gaps Summary

| Indicator   | Schools at Level 1 |           | Schools at Level 2 |           | Schools at Level 3 |           |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|
|             | 2022-2023          | 2019-2020 | 2022-2023          | 2019-2020 | 2022-2023          | 2019-2020 |
| English     | 1,248              | 975       | 477                | 719       | 95                 | 125       |
| Mathematics | 1,341              | 1,406     | 375                | 352       | 105                | 61        |

### Student Engagement and Outcomes Summary

| Indicator             | Schools at Level 1 |           | Schools at Level 2 |           | Schools at Level 3 |           |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|
|                       | 2022-2023          | 2019-2020 | 2022-2023          | 2019-2020 | 2022-2023          | 2019-2020 |
| Chronic Absenteeism   | 1,195              | 1,663     | 505                | 133       | 121                | 23        |
| Dropout Rate          | 263                | 256       | 46                 | 43        | 21                 | 31        |
| Graduation/Completion | 296                | 302       | 29                 | 17        | 4                  | 9         |

“The school quality indicator data and the overall school ratings are skewed by several factors that obscure the impact of the pandemic and school closures,” Balow said. “For example, in English, lower expectations on the reading tests introduced in 2020-2021 and how growth is factored into accreditation resulted in more schools achieving at Level 1 in English than before the pandemic. This masks the catastrophic learning losses experienced by our most vulnerable students.”

Prior to the pandemic, the number of students statewide who failed an SOL reading test but showed growth — and therefore counted toward their school’s accreditation rating — ranged from 19,000-20,000. With this latest round of accreditation calculations, the number has more than tripled to 61,000.

Similarly, the number of students who failed a math SOL test before the pandemic but showed growth and counted toward their school’s rating was about 20,000. This year the number has quadrupled to more than 88,000.

| SOL Assessment | Students Showing Growth, Not Proficiency 2018-2019 | Students Showing Growth, Not Proficiency 2021-2022 |
|----------------|--|--|
| Reading        | 19,000-20,000                                      | 61,000   |
| Math           | 20,000   | 88,000   |

“Teachers and principals are working hard, and this is reflected in the growth we are seeing,” Balow said. “And in commending them for their efforts, I encourage educators in every school — regardless of accreditation rating — to look deeply into their data and chart sure paths to recovery and grade-level proficiency for all of their students.”

The following table illustrates how four schools are rated this year at the same performance level in reading and math under the current accreditation systems despite widely differing percentages of students demonstrating proficiency on state assessments.

(more)

| School and Indicator | Annual Pass Rate | Accreditation Combined Rate | Accreditation Performance Level |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| School A: Math       | 56%              | 88%                         | Level 1                         |
| School A: Reading    | 66%              | 86%                         | Level 1                         |
| School B: Math       | 40%              | 82%                         | Level 1                         |
| School B: Reading    | 58%              | 82%                         | Level 1                         |
| School C: Math       | 91%              | 97%                         | Level 1                         |
| School C: Reading    | 93%              | 98%                         | Level 1                         |

In addition, 136 schools that otherwise would have been accredited with conditions were automatically granted full accreditation due to waivers mandated by the General Assembly. Legislation approved in 2015 grants three-year waivers from annual review to schools previously accredited for three consecutive years.

Under the Board of Education's 2017 accreditation standards, schools earn one of the following three accreditation ratings based on performance on school quality indicators, as follows:

- Accredited – Schools with all school quality indicators at either Level 1 or Level 2. In addition, high-performing schools with waivers from annual accreditation authorized by the General Assembly are rated as Accredited.
- Accredited with Conditions – Schools with one or more school quality indicators at Level 3.
- Accreditation Denied – Schools that fail to adopt or fully implement required corrective actions to address Level 3 school quality indicators.

School-by-school accreditation ratings and school quality indicator data are available on updated online [School Quality Profile reports](#) and on [the VDOE website](#).

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