

**Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE)
Assessment and Accountability in the Fifty States: 1999-2000**

VIRGINIA

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All information was current as of that date.*

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State Assessment System (1999-2000 school year)

1. Provide a brief overview and history of the assessment system as the context.

In 1995, the new Standards of Learning (SOL) were adopted by the Virginia State Board of Education; following the adoption of these curricular guidelines, the **Standards of Learning Assessments** were developed. They are linked to the accountability system in Virginia, the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting the Public Schools in Virginia*, more commonly known as the Standards of Accreditation (SOA).

2. What are the characteristics of the state assessment system, including:

- *Name of Assessment Instrument(s) or Program(s)* Virginia administers the **Standards of Learning Assessments (SOL Tests)** and the **Stanford Achievement Test – Ninth Series (Stanford 9)**.
- *Grade Levels and Subjects Tested*
 - Grade 3: SOL tests in English, mathematics, history & social science, science.

- Grade 4: Stanford 9 in reading vocabulary, reading comprehension, mathematics problem solving, mathematics procedures, prewriting, composing, editing.
 - Grade 5: SOL tests in English: reading, literature, and research; English: writing; mathematics; history & social science; computer/technology.
 - Grade 6: Stanford 9 in reading vocabulary, reading comprehension, mathematics problem solving, mathematics procedures, writing, composing, editing.
 - Grade 8: SOL tests in English: reading, literature, and research; English: writing; mathematics; history & social science; computer/technology.
 - Grade 9: Stanford 9 in reading vocabulary, reading comprehension, mathematics problem solving, mathematics procedures, writing, composing, editing.
 - High School: SOL tests in English: reading, literature, and research; English: writing; Algebra I; Algebra II; Geometry; Earth Science; Biology; Chemistry; World History to 1000 A.D. + World Geography; World History from 1000 A.D. to the Present + World Geography; U.S. History; World Geography.
- *Norm or Criterion Referenced* The Stanford 9 is norm-referenced, and the SOL tests are criterion-referenced.
 - *Matrix or Census Testing* Census
 - *Item Types (including proportions if available via Internet or interview) such as: traditional or enhanced multiple choice, performance tasks, open-ended questions, portfolios, essays, etc.* SOL tests are primarily multiple choice test items. However, English writing tests at grades 5, 8, and high school contain a direct writing component. The Stanford 9 is multiple choice.
 - *Time of Testing (specific month(s) or testing window)*
 - SOL Testing: Fall – grade 8, high school, retests; Spring – all; Summer – high school
 - Stanford 9 – Fall Testing
 - *High School Exit Exam (date of implementation and/or phase-in timeline)*

Virginia offers several high school diploma options, depending on a student's course of study and assessments. Beginning with students who will be in the ninth grade in school year 2000-2001, Virginia students must earn a combination of "standard credits" or "verified credits" for graduation. A standard unit is awarded after a student completes a course with 140 clock hours of instruction. A verified unit is awarded when, in addition to the successful completion of 140 hours for a course, the student passes a specific high school course test developed to assess Standards of Learning achievement.

For the Standard Diploma

Content Area	Total Units of Credit	Number Required to be Verified
English	4	2
Mathematics	3	1
History and Social Science	3	1
Laboratory Science	3	1
Fine Arts or Practical Arts	1	
Health and Physical Educ.	2	
Electives	6	
Student-Selected Test	--	1
TOTAL	22	6

For the Advanced Studies Diploma

Content Area	Total Units of Credit	Number Required to be Verified
English	4	2
Mathematics	4	2
History and Social Science	4	2
Laboratory Science	4	2
Foreign Language	3	
Fine Arts or Practical Arts	1	
Health and Physical Educ.	2	
Electives	2	
Student-Selected Test	--	1
TOTAL	24	9

For the Basic Diploma: This diploma, designed for students who cannot meet the requirements for the Standard Diploma, has recently been proposed, and may be approved (perhaps with modification) in August 2000. Additional details are provided in question 8, below.

For the Special Diploma: Students who complete the requirements of their IEP will be awarded a Special Diploma.

For all other cases: Students who do not meet the requirements for a diploma but complete prescribed programs of studies defined by local school boards shall be awarded certificates of program completion.

In addition, students may earn the following “seals” on their diplomas (some of these have been proposed and are not yet fully approved, others have been legislated, but not yet fully implemented):

- The Governor’s Seal: For students who complete the requirements for an advanced studies diploma with an average grade of B or better and successfully complete at least one AP course or one college level course for credit.
- The Board of Education Seal: For students who complete the requirements for a standard diploma with an average grade of A.

- The Board of Education’s Career and Technical Seal: For students who complete requirements for the Standard or Advanced Diploma and complete a prescribed sequence of courses in a career and technical education concentration or specialization and maintain a B average in those courses, or pass an examination for certification or acquire a professional license.
 - Board of Education’s Seal of Advanced Mathematics and Technology: For students who meet all of the mathematics requirements of the Advanced Diploma with an average of B or better, and either pass an examination for certification from an industry, or trade or professional organization; or acquire a professional license in a career and technical education area from the Commonwealth; or pass an examination approved by the Board that confers college level credit.
- *Other Assessments* NAEP, SAT, and Literacy Testing Program. This latter testing program, which has been in place since the early 1990s, is a sixth grade test in reading, writing, and math that students must take in order to graduate. This program is being phased out as the SOL assessments are implemented.
 - *Transitional or Final Assessment System* Phasing in final assessment system.
3. *Who designed and produced the assessment(s) used by the state?*
- *State Department of Education*
 - *Commercial Testing Organization*
 - *State teachers and administrators*
 - *Assessment Committee*

Each SOL test was developed through a process which involved extensive review, field testing, and additional review of individual test items and item statistics. Harcourt Brace Educational Measurement, the test contractor, proposed test items to match the SOLs. The tests were also developed with heavy involvement of classroom teachers, curriculum specialists, and local educators from throughout Virginia.

4. *What are the state requirements for local assessment, including the types of assessments and their use in areas such as reporting and accountability, as well as Title I adequate yearly progress? What grade levels and subjects are tested?*

Divisions (districts) may administer their own assessments, or they may choose to administer the Stanford-9 at all grade levels, but there are no state requirements for local assessment.

5. *Is the state assessment system aligned with the state standards? Are there plans for alignment, and if so, how will the assessment and standards become aligned?*

Yes, the SOL assessments are aligned with the state standards. See below.

6. *What is the state’s approach for ensuring alignment and what evidence of that alignment is provided?*

A Content Review Committee was convened for each SOL test to review items for field testing, and to review and revise test blueprints, which guide test construction and use. Test items were analyzed by the Content Review Committee against four criteria:

- ✓ SOL-Item Match: Does this item measure the SOL it was designed to measure?
- ✓ Appropriateness: Does this item appropriately measure content or skills that students in Virginia should be required to have by spring of the designated grade level or near the end of the course?
- ✓ Difficulty: Is the difficulty of this item appropriate for the grade or course?
- ✓ Bias: Is the item free from any content that would offend or unfairly penalize students on the basis of personal characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, religion or socioeconomic status?

The Content Review and Bias Committees continue to meet throughout the life of the testing program to apply this process to every item before it is placed on a test.

7. How is the data included in the state assessment system used?

- *Student Grade Promotion/Retention, Graduation, Diploma Certification*
- *Teacher, School and/or District accountability*
- *Program Evaluation (Identify federal, state programs)*
- *Identification of students for programs like Title I, state CompEd, Bilingual, etc.*
- *Instructional guidance to local administrators and/or teachers*
- *School improvement (e.g., preparing a school improvement plan)*

Statewide assessments in Virginia fulfil a number of functions and uses, including: student accountability (graduation, remediation, diploma certification), school accreditation and accountability, the development of school improvement plans, Title I accountability and evaluation, the planning of effective staff development, and instructional guidance.

8. Are there changes planned for the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

The most recent proposals to the Virginia regulations include provisions for a Basic Diploma. The Basic Diploma is intended for certain students who are unlikely to meet the requirements for a Standard Diploma. If a student is not an IEP student, the determination will be made after the completion of the ninth grade by the principal, the student, and the student's parents, provided the student meets certain criteria. The student must have taken all SOL test(s) through the ninth grade. The student must have failed the 8th grade English and math SOL test(s) twice, or failed once and not taken a retest but failed to achieve an acceptable score on the Stanford 9. After a full review of the student's academic record and disclosure of the students options the parents must consent for the student to participate in this Basic Diploma. The Basic Diploma will require:

- 3 credits in English and mathematics. The math must be at or above the general math, applications of math, or consumer math levels.

- 2 credits will be required in history and civics and 2 credits in health and physical education.
- 1 credit will be required in science and computer technology
- Students will have to earn 4 electives
- 2 to 6 units are required in career/occupational courses. The career/occupational credits shall meet requirements for entry-level occupational skills as adopted by the local school board.
- Some literacy and numeracy assessment requirements, yet to be determined.

9. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of state assessment? Explain.*

At the moment, the primary issue in the area of state assessment is history and social studies assessment and the standards that are measured. The Board of Education will be reviewing the History and Social Studies standards as a result of concerns expressed by the public and the education community; revision of these standards would involve a revision of the assessment as well.

In addition, there is some concern about the timing of high school assessments in Virginia. About half of the high schools operate on a four-by-four semester block schedule, and students in those schools do not receive as much instruction before the assessment as do students in schools with year-long schedules. Virginia is hoping to develop a system of on-line testing, which would allow the administration of high school end-of-course tests to be pushed closer to the end of the school year, and still have the scoring process complete in a timely manner. Getting the scores back quickly is critical, as they are used in a number of student accountability measures.

Finally, officials note that in Virginia, as elsewhere, there is opposition to assessment, particularly when there are high stakes attached, and when much of the assessment is multiple choice.

Inclusion Policies for Assessment

1. What exclusions are made in the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP? Who makes the decision about exclusion of a particular child? Does the state collect data or in other ways monitor the number and types of students excluded? Does that vary by test?

It is expected that all students who are in grades 3, 5, 8, and specific high school courses in the Commonwealth of Virginia will participate in the SOL assessments. This expectation includes students with disabilities and LEP students at these grade levels/courses unless participation in the field test is clearly not in the best interest of the student. LEP students in grades 3, 5, or 8 may exercise a one time exemption from SOL assessments at any one of these grade levels. Students with disabilities may be exempted as documented in the student's individualized educational program (IEP) or Section 504 management tool .

Policies regarding students with Limited English Proficiency: Virginia policy recommends that a committee which includes 1) a person responsible for the education of LEP students in the school or school division, 2) the student's content teacher(s), and 3) an administrator or designee

(e.g., guidance counselor or reading specialist) be formed to determine how the student will participate in the SOL assessments and which, if any, accommodations are required. The student's parent or guardian should also be invited to serve on the committee, if possible. For each student the committee should specify the student's participation in each of the SOL assessments:

- with no accommodations
- with accommodations which maintain standard conditions (listing specific accommodations)
- with accommodations which are permissible but do not maintain standard conditions (listing specific accommodations)
- exemption from testing with an explanation for the exemption

Decisions about how an LEP student will be tested on the SOL assessments should be made for each individual content area to be assessed. Consideration should be given to the student's level of English proficiency, the level of previous schooling in the home language, and the amount of schooling the student has received in the United States. In determining how the student is to be tested on each test the committee should consider the following questions:

1) Has the student already used the one-time exemption from SOL assessments in an earlier grade level?

- If YES, go to question 3.
- If NO, should the student be exempted from this test, recognizing that this will be the student's one-time exemption?

2) Is the student's level of proficiency in English sufficient for the student to take the test?

Information on the student's English language proficiency may be derived from school division assessments designed to determine English language proficiency, reading inventories, writing samples, teacher observations, and teacher-made tests.

- If YES, the committee should consider question 2 in determining the student's need for testing accommodations.
- If NO, the student should not be tested on this test.

3) Does the student typically receive accommodations during instruction or during classroom assessments in the content area covered by the test?

- If YES, the committee should review Section VI, Selection of Testing Accommodations for LEP Students to determine the LEP student's need for testing accommodations.
- If NO, the student should take the test without any accommodations.

Policies regarding students with disabilities: Decisions as to the participation in each of the SOL assessments, the need for and selection of accommodations, or the exemption from participating in the SOL assessments are the responsibility of the IEP committee or 504 committee. These decisions should be made during the IEP committee meeting which precedes the SOL assessment administration. The ramifications of these decisions made by the IEP committee must be clearly explained to the student's parent, legal guardian, or surrogate parent and the student if appropriate. A student's IEP must specify the student's participation in each of the SOL assessments

- with no accommodations

- with accommodations which maintain standard conditions (listing specific accommodations)
- with accommodations which are permissible but do not maintain standard conditions (listing specific accommodations)
- exemption from testing with an explanation for the exemption, a statement of the ramifications of the decision, and a description of how the student will be assessed.

It is expected that all students with disabilities in grades 3, 5, 8, and selected high school courses will participate in the SOL assessments unless the student's IEP or 504 management tool indicates that the student is exempted from taking part in the SOL assessments. For those students whose IEP or 504 management does not exempt the student from participation, then they will participate either with accommodations or without accommodations. The accommodations for the SOL assessments are those the student generally uses during classroom instruction and assessment as identified on the student's current IEP or 504 management tool.

Decisions about participation in and how a student with a disability will be tested on the SOL assessments should be made independently for each content area. In determining how the student is to be tested on each of the SOL assessments, the IEP or 504 committee should consider the following questions:

- 1) Does the student receive instruction in areas covered by the SOL assessments?
 - If YES, the committee should consider question 2 in determining the student's need for testing accommodations.
 - If NO, the student should not be tested on this assessment
- 2) Does the student typically receive accommodations during instruction or classroom assessments in the content covered by the test?
 - If NO, the student should take the assessment without any accommodations.
 - If YES, the committee should determine the accommodations needed by the student.

(NOTE: The provisions that allow exemptions based on 504 plans are being deleted from the revision of the standards currently being studied.)

2. What accommodations and/or modifications are made on the current state assessment for students with disabilities? LEP?

Accommodations for students with Limited English proficiency: Accommodations for the SOL assessments should be selected from those the LEP student uses routinely in classroom instruction and assessment. The purpose of accommodations is to ensure, insofar as possible, that LEP students receive accommodations on the SOL assessments which allow them equal opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do; however, students should not be provided with unnecessary or inappropriate accommodations. Furthermore, use of an unfamiliar accommodation during testing may have a negative impact on the student's performance. Students must take the test in English; translations of the test into a different language are not permitted.

A. Accommodations Which Maintain Standard Conditions (Standard Accommodations)

Some accommodations allow a student to take the test in a different way without changing what the test is measuring. For the purposes of this document, these are referred to as accommodations which maintain standard conditions or standard accommodations. Examples of standard accommodations are listed below.

Timing/Scheduling

- time of day
- breaks during test
- multiple test sessions
- order of tests administered

Setting

- preferential seating (at the front of the room or in a study carrel)
- small group testing
- individual testing
- location with minimal distractions

Presentation

- reading the test items in English to the student (except on the English: Reading/Literature, and Research test)
- reading the directions in English to the student
- simplifying oral directions
- place markers to maintain place

Response

- student responds verbally/teacher or proctor marks answer document

B. Accommodations Which Are Permissible But Do Not Maintain Standard Conditions

(Nonstandard Accommodation) Accommodations which significantly change what a test is measuring and do not maintain standard conditions of the test are referred to as nonstandard accommodations. This type of accommodation should be used only if the committee agrees that the student requires such an accommodation(s) in order to participate in the SOL Assessments. Scores resulting from a nonstandard accommodation must be accompanied by an explanation that these scores resulted from a nonstandard administration. Examples of accommodations which are permissible but do not maintain standard conditions include:

Presentation

- reading test items in English on the English: Reading/Literature, and Research test bilingual dictionary

Response

- dictation in English to a scribe (writing sample component of the writing test only)

If a student utilizes a non-standard accommodation, the record of that score will be accompanied by a notation explaining that the score resulted from a non-standard administration. A student, identified as limited English proficient, who has passed an SOL assessment utilizing any accommodation including a non-standard accommodation has passed for all purposes.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: Accommodations should be those the student generally needs and uses during classroom instruction and assessment as identified on the student's IEP or management tool. Accommodations shall not be used only for participating in the SOL assessments. The use of an unfamiliar accommodation during testing may have a negative impact on the student's performance. Finally, an accommodation based solely on its potential to enhance performance beyond providing equal opportunity to perform is inappropriate.

A. Accommodations Which Maintain Standard Conditions (Standard Accommodations)

Some accommodations allow a student to take the test in a different way without changing what the test is measuring. These are referred to as accommodations which maintain standard conditions or standard accommodations. Examples of standard accommodations are listed below.

Timing/Scheduling

- time of day
- breaks during test
- multiple test sessions
- order of tests administered

Setting

- preferential seating (at the front of the room or in a study carrel)
- small group testing
- individual testing
- special lighting
- adaptive or special furniture
- test administered in locations with minimal distractions
- noise buffers
- hospital/home

Presentation

- Braille
- large print
- increase size of answer bubbles
- increase spacing between items or reduce items per page
- reading directions to students
- simplifying directions
- interpreting directions (e.g. signing, cued speech)
- written directions
- clarify directions
- reading of test items (except on the English: Reading/Literature, and Research test)
- audio-tape version of test items (except on the English: Reading/Literature, and Research test)
- interpreting (e.g. signing, cued speech) test items (except on English: Reading/Literature, and Research)
- using a communication board/pictorial presentation
- magnifying glass
- amplification equipment (e.g., hearing aid or auditory trainer)

- templates
- masks or markers to maintain place

Response

- student marks booklet and teacher/proctor transfer answers to answer sheet
- student responds verbally and teacher/proctor marks answer sheet
- Braille answer sheet
- abacus
- arithmetic tables (standard accommodation only if subtest allows a calculator)
- braille
- large diameter/ special grip pencil
- pencil grip
- word processor
- typewriter
- augmentative communication device
- spell check
- spelling dictionary
- tape recorder (pre-writing activity)

B. Accommodations Which Are Permissible But Do Not Maintain Standard Conditions

(Nonstandard Accommodation): Accommodations which significantly change what a test is measuring and do not maintain standard conditions of the test are referred to in this document as nonstandard accommodations. This type of accommodation should be used only if the IEP or 504 committee agrees that the student requires such an accommodation(s) in order to participate in the SOL assessments. Scores resulting from a nonstandard accommodation must be accompanied by an explanation that these scores resulted from a nonstandard administration. Examples of accommodations which are permissible but do not maintain standard conditions include:

Presentation

- reading test items on the reading/literature and research test to a student
- using audio-cassette version of the reading/literature and research test
- interpreting (signing, cued speech) test items on the reading/literature and research test to a student

Response

- dictation to a scribe (writing sample component of the writing test only)
- use of a calculator on mathematics tests in which calculators are not routinely supplied to all students (grade 3 math and the computation section of the grade 5 mathematics test)
- use of arithmetic tables on mathematics tests in which calculators are not routinely supplied to all students (grade 3 math and the computation section of the grade 5 mathematics test)

3. *Does the state provide assessments in languages other than English? If so, describe. In what grades and subjects?*

No, Virginia does not offer assessments in languages other than English.

4. Does the state provide alternative assessments for students with disabilities? If so, describe. For which students and in which subjects and at what ages?

Virginia is in the process of developing an alternate assessment which will be in place for the administration of assessment during the 2000-2001 academic year. This assessment will be designed for the most disabled students and will focus on areas such as life skills.

5. Does the state have a goal for the inclusion of students with disabilities and/or LEP students on the statewide tests? Does the state use any strategies to encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities? LEP students?

Yes, Virginia has the goal of full inclusion of students with disabilities and low English proficiency on state assessments.

6. Are changes planned in the for the inclusion of SWD and LEP students in the state assessment system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

Other than the implementation of the alternate assessment, no changes are anticipated.

Performance Standards

1. How many and what performance levels has the state established for its assessments?

Virginia has established three levels of student achievement on the SOL tests: Does not meet standards (fail), proficient in the standards (pass), advanced attainment of the standards (pass).

SOL Test	Pass (proficient)	Pass (advanced)
Grade 3		
English	32 out of 45 items (71%)	42 out of 45 items (93%)
Mathematics	36 out of 50 items (72%)	45 out of 50 items (90%)
History & Social Science	24 out of 40 items (60%)	36 out of 40 items (90%)
Science	27 out of 40 items (68%)	36 out of 40 items (90%)
Grade 5		
English: Reading, Literature & Research	28 out of 42 items (67%)	39 out of 42 items (93%)
English: Writing	32 out of 44 items (73%)	41 out of 44 items (93%)
Mathematics	34 out of 50 items (68%)	46 out of 50 items (92%)
History & Social Science	26 out of 40 items (65%)	37 out of 40 items (93%)
Science	26 out of 40 items (65%)	37 out of 40 items (93%)
Computer/Technology	17 out of 30 items (57%)	27 out of 30 items (90%)
Grade 8		
English: Reading, Literature & Research	27 out of 42 items (64%)	37 out of 42 items (88%)
English: Writing	30 out of 44 items (68%)	41 out of 44 items (93%)

Mathematics	37 out of 60 items (62%)	55 out of 60 items (92%)
History & Social Science	33 out of 50 items (66%)	45 out of 50 items (90%)
Science	29 out of 50 items (58%)	45 out of 50 items (90%)
Computer/Technology	26 out of 40 items (65%)	36 out of 40 items (90%)
High School		
English: Reading, Literature & Research	24 out of 42 items (57%)	37 out of 42 items (88%)
English: Writing	37 out of 54 items (69%)	49 out of 54 items (91%)
Algebra I	27 out of 50 items (54%)	45 out of 50 items (90%)
Algebra II	31 out of 50 items (54%)	45 out of 50 items (90%)
Geometry	27 out of 45 items (60%)	41 out of 45 items (91%)
Earth Science	30 out of 50 items (60%)	45 out of 50 items (90%)
Biology	26 out of 50 items (52%)	45 out of 50 items (90%)
Chemistry	27 out of 50 items (54%)	45 out of 50 items (90%)
World History to 1000 AD + World Geography	36 out of 63 items (57%)	57 out of 63 items (90%)
World History from 1000 AD to the Present + World Geography	36 out of 63 items (57%)	57 out of 63 items (90%)
US History	40 out of 61 items (66%)	55 out of 61 items (90%)

2. Has the state set acceptable levels or targets for schools, districts or the state on tests, drop-out rates or other measures?

- Target level
- Percentage of students expected to attain target level
- Time period in which to attain level
- Annual increase required

Through its accreditation system, Virginia has set targets for the passing rate of students within each school. The accreditation targets are indicated below:

Provisionally Accredited: less than 70 percent passing rate, but scores have improved over the previous year

Accredited with Warning: No improvement or the scores have dropped from the previous year

Fully Accredited:

- For elementary and middle schools. Grade 3: 70 percent passing rate in English and math. Grades 5 and 8: 70 percent passing rate in English, math, science, and History/Social Studies.
- For high schools: 70 percent passing rate in English, math, science, and History/Social Studies.

However, these targets are being phased in; no school will be denied accreditation until 2006. The following chart indicates the levels at which each school will have to achieve in order to receive Provisional Accreditation/Meets State Standards (the Provisional Accreditation rating will cease to exist after school year 2002-2003).

Grade and Year	English	Math	Science	Hist./Soc. Stud.
Grade 3				
1999-00	60%	55%*		
2000-01	63%	60%*		
2001-02	66%	65%*		
2002-03	70%	70%*		
Grade 5				
1999-00	60%	55%*	60%	40%*
2000-01	63%	60%*	63%	45%*
2001-02	66%	65%*	66%	50%*
2002-03	70%	70%	70%	55%*
Middle grades				
1999-00	60%	55%	60%	40%*
2000-01	63%	60%	63%	45%*
2001-02	66%	65%	66%	50%*
2002-03	70%	70%	70%	55%*
High School				
1999-00	60%	55%	55%	40%*
2000-01	63%	60%	60%	45%*
2001-02	66%	65%	65%	50%*
2002-03	70%	70%	70%	55%*

* These pass rates are proposed, and will be approved in August 2000. The currently approved pass rates are one to five percentage points above the proposed pass rates.

3. How are these performance standards calculated? What data are included in the calculations, and at what proportions (e.g. assessment results 60%, dropout and attendance rates 40%). How are the calculations made? What is the final unit of analysis for reporting school and district achievement levels (e.g. performance index, grade, category)?

These performance standards are based entirely on the SOL assessments, and do not include measures such as dropout or attendance rates. The final unit of analysis in Virginia is an accreditation rating. The performance standards for all SOL tests except the English: Writing test were set using the Modified-Angoff method. The standards for the English: Writing assessment were set through a Bookmarking process.

4. Are all students, schools and districts included in these performance calculations? If not, who is excluded?

Students that are eligible for inclusion in performance calculations are all those who are enrolled in the school, with exception of those excluded by an IEP, 504 plan, or Limited English Proficient Committee. However, the percentage of students who pass the literacy and numeracy tests required for the Basic Diploma will figure into the accreditation rating of the school.

5. Are changes planned for the state performance standards (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what

is the timeline? Are there implications for the state reporting or accountability systems (Title I or in general)?

Several changes have been proposed for the system of performance standards. Among these:

- The pass rate for History/Social Studies will drop from 70% to 55% for grades 5, 8, and high school for the provisional accreditation benchmarks. (However, the passing rate required for full accreditation by 2006 will remain at 70%.)
- The Science and History/Social Studies requirements will be dropped for grade 3.
- The designation of Provisionally Accredited will become Provisionally Accredited/Meets State Standards and Provisionally Accredited/Needs Improvement.

6. What proportion of schools and/or districts fail to meet acceptable levels on performance targets?

During the 1999-2000 academic school year, approximately 700 schools out of 1800 were at the warning level. Virginia anticipates this number to drop to around 400 in the near future; however not all of the most recent test data is available.

Reporting Performance Data

1. Describe the characteristics of the state performance data reporting system (by whom, what data, who is the audience) for each of the following levels:

- *Student Reports*

Student reports include performance data by performance category, composite score, and results on various parts of the test.

- *School Reports*

School report cards in Virginia contain the following information:

- ✓ Accreditation rating and brief explanation
- ✓ Percent of students passing the SOL tests by four core subjects, grade, division, and state.
- ✓ Students included and excluded from SOL testing by school, state, and reason for exclusion
- ✓ Percent of students passing High School SOL tests (all subjects)
- ✓ Graduate information, including number of advanced studies diplomas, standard diplomas, certificates of program completion, GED, did not graduate
- ✓ Advanced Academic Programs Offered: Students taking one or more AP courses; students scoring 3 or better in at least one AP course; students taking one or more courses for college credit; seniors passing at least one or more courses for college credit; seniors enrolled in IB program; seniors awarded IB diploma
- ✓ Enrollment/Fall membership
- ✓ Student attendance
- ✓ Safety information, number of incidents per year by school, division, and state
- ✓ Teacher training information

- *District reports*

Virginia does not produce division (district) level reports. However, division results on the SOL tests are available on the state education website, as well as the following:

- ✓ Percentages of school divisions with Stanford-9 national percentile ranks at or above 50
- ✓ Division results – Stanford-9 national percentile ranks

- *State reports*

Virginia produces several reports with data on student performance and other indicators.

The **Virginia State Assessment Program Detail Report** is available in print version and may be downloaded from the state website. This report contains the following data:

- ✓ Background information on the Stanford-9 testing program
- ✓ Percent of students not tested and reasons for which not tested
- ✓ Statewide percentile ranks Stanford-9
- ✓ Quartiles Stanford-9
- ✓ Subgroup performance by grade, subject, scaled scores and percentile rank for the following categories: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, White, Ethnicity Not Identified.
- ✓ Performance of students with Limited English Proficiency, by grade, subject, scaled score and percentile rank
- ✓ Performance of students with disabilities by grade, subject, scaled score and percentile rank for the following categories: mental retardation, severe and profound disabilities, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, visual impairment and all disabilities.
- ✓ Percentages of school divisions with Stanford-9 national percentile ranks at or above 50
- ✓ Division results – Stanford-9 national percentile ranks

State reports on the SOL tests consist of a list of pass rates by subject, grade, and school, for the entire state. More detailed information on SOL tests is found in each school report, including state and division averages.

Other state publications includes reports on: enrollment; LEP graduates and dropouts; special education student count; annual report on discipline, violence, and crime; report on dropouts.

- *Title I reports*

The Title I system is in transition, but the Virginia Title I office does report on Title I participation in targeted and schoolwide programs, and disaggregated assessment results. Only the SOL tests are used for Title I adequate yearly progress purposes.

2. How are the data distributed? When during the year (month or time period after assessment)? To whom (students, teachers, parents, the media, the community)?

The state provides each school with school level report cards in sufficient numbers to distribute to all parents in the community. Schools may either give them to parents, or send them, and the state will pay for the postage. Data is also reported to the media and included in the state Department of Education website.

3. At what level(s) are data disaggregated (state, district and school levels)? For what groups are disaggregated data reported (see Internet sites for state, district and school level report cards)?

Virginia disaggregates Stanford-9 assessment data at the state level by American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Hispanic, White, Ethnicity Not Identified, Limited English Proficiency, mental retardation, severe and profound disabilities, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, visual impairment and all disabilities.

4. Does trend data exist from the state assessments (example: Texas State Assessment data is available from “1996-97 on”)?

The SOLs have only recently been implemented, so trend data is only recently available (years 1998, 1999, and soon 2000). Two years of Stanford-9 data are accessible.

5. How are the results of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency reported? Are they included in the aggregate scores reported to the public, or disaggregated by group?

The results of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency are both disaggregated and aggregated with the rest of the student population.

6. What are the state’s requirements for the use of data in school and district improvement planning?

School principals in Virginia are required to analyze student performance in order to provide for remediation and staff development. In addition, most central offices have staff that is devoted to data analysis; these individuals are engaged in the division planning process as well. Additional details on school improvement plans are provided in the section on *Identifying and Assisting Low Performing Schools*, later in this profile.

7. Are changes planned for performance reporting (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline? Are there implications for the accountability system (Title I or in general)?

The implementation of an on-line assessment system, which officials hope to have in place by 2003, should allow for a more rapid scoring process and return of scores to schools and districts.

8. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of performance standards and reporting? Explain.

One of the challenges in the area of reporting relates to the quick processing of scores, and the timing of the administration of the assessment. This point was mentioned earlier, at the conclusion of the section on *Assessment*. No other issues or challenges in the area of reporting or of performance standards were evoked.

State Accountability System (1999-2000 school year)

1. *Provide a brief overview and history of the accountability system as the context.*

The accountability system in Virginia is based on the **Standards of Accreditation**, or SOA. These standards were adopted by the State Board of Education in 1997. The new SOA are based on both student and school level accountability; students must pass SOL tests to be passed on to the next grade and to graduate; schools must achieve state-determined pass rates on the SOL tests to retain their accreditation.

2. *What are the characteristics of the state accountability system?*

Who is held accountable (students, schools, districts)?

- *For what are they held accountable (adequate yearly progress, student achievement, processes, multiple non-cognitive indicators, etc)?*
 - *Using what criteria (state assessments, local assessments, both state and local criteria)?*
 - *To what targets or performance levels?*
 - *With what consequences (promotion or graduation, program improvement, additional planning, state takeover, rewards, assistance, etc.)?*
-
- *Student Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

High school students are required to pass the Standard of Learning Tests but the tests are not the only criteria for graduation. Graduation requirements are addressed in the regulations of the Board of Education known as the Standards of Accreditation (SOA). In 1997, the Board of Education revised these regulations and implemented substantial modifications to the high school graduation requirements.

As noted in an earlier section, the 1997 revision added another type of credit that must be completed in order to earn a high school diploma. Students must earn verified units of credit as well as the standard unit of credit. A verified unit of credit is awarded when, in addition to successfully completing a 140-hour course, the student passes a SOL test for certain courses in high school. Beginning with the graduating class of 2003-04 (ninth graders in 2000-01), a student must earn a specified number of verified credits in order to graduate. The number of tests a high school student must pass is dependent on the kind of diploma the student is pursuing. For the Standard diploma it is a total of six verified credits (which translates to six tests) and for the Advanced Studies diploma it is a total of nine verified credits (which translates to nine tests). The Board's regulations identify how many tests/verified credits a student must have in each subject area. In addition, the Board recently added the Basic Diploma, intended for certain students who are unlikely to meet the requirements for a Standard Diploma.

If a student does not pass an SOL test that is needed for the verified credit for a diploma, then the student would need to retake the test until he or she passes it. The first retesting is scheduled for the summer of 1999. In addition, the state has also provided specific funding for the schools to support remediation programs for students who are determined to require remediation based on their performance on the SOL tests. Students may utilize alternative measures for earning verified credit in computer science, technology, or other areas as prescribed by the Board.

Each student must take the SOL test for any course in which they are enrolled if that course has an associated SOL test, even if they do not need the test for a verified credit. This is required because the test data also serves as the primary means of determining the accreditation status of the school.

With regard to elementary and middle schools students, Virginia law requires that a child who does not pass an SOL test receive instructional help through programs of prevention, intervention, or remediation in grades 3, 5, and 8. (However, a current proposal states that in no case shall students in grades K-8 be required to attend summer school or weekend remediation classes solely based on failing an SOL test in science or history/social science.) Summer school is one option but a school division may choose other types of programs, as long as they are appropriate for a student's needs. All children do not have to receive the same type of remediation program, and may receive help through other special programs that emphasize prevention or intervention. For example, a parent may select a program that is conducted by an accredited private school or other source, if the division superintendent approves the program.

- *School Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

The Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting the Public Schools in Virginia, more commonly known as the Standards of Accreditation (SOA), outline the requirements that every public school in Virginia must meet to be considered "fully accredited." As part of its reform of Virginia's public education system, the Board of Education began an extensive revision of the Standards of Accreditation with a focus towards the increased accountability of each public school for individual student performance. In 1997, the Board adopted major revisions to the Standards of Accreditation that set out:

- To raise high school graduation requirements;
- To provide for increased instructional time in the core subject areas of English, Mathematics, History and Social Science and Science; and
- To primarily base school accreditation on student academic performance as measured by the Standards of Learning tests.

The SOA establish minimum instructional hours and courses which must be provided in elementary, middle, and secondary schools; staff/student ratios for certain support staff positions; required communication components for school and community relations; and standards for school facilities and safety. In addition, the regulations describe the role of the school's instructional staff, including principals and teachers. Overall, the Standards of Accreditation provide the philosophy, goals, and objectives for public education in Virginia.

A school's accreditation rating is based primarily on the achievement of student performance expectations. Schools are evaluated on the basis of the percentage of the school's students who achieve a passing score on the SOL tests. The accreditation of schools based on student performance on the SOL tests became effective during the 1998-99 school year. The implementation years for the accreditation requirements extend through 2002-03. To achieve a Fully Accredited rating, elementary schools will be expected to show a 70 percent student

passing rate in English and Math at grade 3; all other levels will be expected to show 70 percent pass rate in English, Math, Science, and History/Social Studies. However, during provisional accreditation, the pass rates for History/Social Studies have been lowered to 55% (proposed.) The 55% target will only apply to provisional accreditation which will end after 2002-2003.

The time schedule for implementing these new accreditation standards provides a transition period for schools to identify problem areas and deficiencies and to make improvements. All schools were rated Provisionally Accredited beginning with the 1997-98 school year. Through the 2003-04 school year, there will be three accreditation ratings:

Provisionally Accredited: less than 70 percent passing rate, but scores have improved over the previous year

Accredited with Warning: No improvement or the scores have dropped from the previous year

Fully Accredited:

- For elementary and middle schools. Grade 3: 70 percent passing rate in English and math. Grades 5 and 8: 70 percent passing rate in English, math, science, and History/Social Studies.
- For high schools: 70 percent passing rate in English, math, science and History/Social Studies.

As the system is being phased in, Virginia will use the Provisionally Accredited rating, which will cease to exist after 2002-2003. A proposal before the State Board of Education would divide the Provisionally Accredited rating into two categories:

- Schools that meet the interim benchmarks (see page 13) will be rated **Provisionally Accredited/Meets State Standards**
- Schools that do not meet the benchmarks (but are within 19 percentage points in each academic area) will be rated **Provisionally Accredited/Needs Improvement**

In addition, through the academic year 2002-2003:

- Schools that are 20 or more percentage points below the benchmarks in any academic area will be rated **Accredited with Warning in (academic area).**

Further proposed modifications to the accreditation ratings are detailed in question 8 of this section.

The earliest a school could lose its accreditation (**Accreditation Denied**) is the 2006-2007 school year. Few sanctions, other than the loss of accreditation, are planned. There is no plan to cut off funding; the state does not have the authority to close a school or to require a local school board to close a school. In fact, the state of Virginia does not have much authority to impose sanctions on schools: local school boards are constitutionally responsible for the operation of schools. However, in the Standards of Quality regulations, there is a provision that allows the State Board to ask the Attorney General's office for the authority to oblige schools boards comply with the standards.

- *District Accountability/Rewards and Sanctions*

The only accountability policies that apply to the district level are state Standards of Quality, which include regulations that pertain to the responsibilities of the local school board. The state monitors compliance with these regulations, as well as some financial accounting regulations. However, the main focus of the Virginia accountability system is on the school and student level.

3. *What methods of measuring progress are used in the state accountability system?*

- *Relative growth*
- *Absolute target*
- *Narrowing the Gap between high and low achievers*
- *Other*

Virginia has set an absolute target for the pass rate of students within a school on the SOL tests. Further details are provided in the response to the previous question.

4. *Are all students included in calculating the measures of progress? If not, who is excluded (probe on inclusion of SWD and LEP students)?*

Students that are eligible for inclusion in accountability measures are all those who are enrolled in the school, with exception of those excluded by an IEP, 504 plan, or Limited English Proficient Committee.

5. *How do the general state accountability system and the system of accountability for Title I schools compare? Are they the same, or different? How?*

The general state accountability system and the system of accountability for Title I are aligned: both are based on the Standards of Learning assessments and the Standards of Accreditation guidelines.

6. *Are subgroup performance results used as an indicator in the calculation of state accountability measures? If so, how? To identify schools or districts in need of improvement? For recognition and rewards?*

Subgroup performance results are not used as an indicator of progress.

7. *Are charter and/or non-public schools included in the accountability system? If so, how?*

Charter schools will be included in the accountability system, but non-public schools will not. Virginia does not regulate non-public schools.

8. *Are changes planned for the state accountability system (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?*

In April 2000, several changes were proposed to the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia. Some elements of these proposed changes have been referenced earlier. Additional components of the proposed regulations include:

- Based on a school's academic performance during academic years ending in 2004 and 2005, a school will be Accredited with Warning in (specific academic area or areas) if it does not meet the pass-rate requirements to be Fully Accredited.
- Based on a school's academic performance during academic years ending 2006 and beyond, a school will be Accredited with Warning if it has achieved Fully Accredited status but has failed to meet the requirements to maintain that status in any one year. Following 2006, a school may remain in the Accredited with Warning status for no more than three consecutive years.
- Based on a school's academic performance during academic years ending in 2006 and beyond, a school shall be rated Accreditation Denied if it fails to meet the requirements to be rated Fully Accredited.
- A school that has never met the requirements to be rated Fully Accredited by end of the academic year ending in 2006 may apply to the Board for the accreditation designation of Accreditation Withheld/Improving School Near Accreditation. To retain this rating a school must continue to show annual improvement in each academic area in which the pass rate is below 70%. This rating will cease to exist after the academic year ending in 2009.
- New schools that are comprised of students from one or more existing schools in the division will be awarded the status of Conditionally Accredited for one year pending an evaluation of the school's performance on SOL tests or other alternative measures.
- In any school division in which one-third or more of the schools have been rated Accreditation Denied, the superintendent shall be evaluated by the local school board with a copy of such evaluation submitted to the Board no later than December 1st of each year in which such condition exists.

The proposed regulations also address Recognitions and Rewards for School Accountability Performance:

- Schools may be recognized by the Board in accordance with procedures it shall establish. Such recognition may include:
 - Public announcements recognizing individual schools
 - Tangible rewards
 - Waivers of certain Board Regulations
 - Exemptions from certain reporting requirements
 - Other commendations deemed appropriate to recognize high achievement.
- In addition to Board recognition, local school boards shall adopt policies to recognize individual schools through public announcements, media releases, participation in community activities for input purposes when setting policy relating to schools and budget development, as well as other appropriate recognition.
- Schools may be eligible to receive the Governor's Award for Outstanding Improvement. This award will be given to schools in each classification below Fully Accredited that exceed the improvement levels by 10 percentage points or more in one year. In addition, any school that raises its rating from Accredited with Warning to Fully Accredited in one year will receive this award when it was ten percentage points or more below the performance level to be rated Fully Accredited.

9. *What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of accountability? Explain.*

One of the major issues in the area of accountability that is typically highlighted by local school districts is that they (and the general public) perceive accountability to be based entirely on a single test. However, there is a pre-accreditation eligibility process during which the state monitors compliance with staffing, instructional processes, safety, and other regulations. If a school does not meet standards in this area, they are not eligible for accreditation, hence the accountability system is not, in fact, based on a single measure.

Identifying and Assisting Low Performing Schools and Districts

1. *How are schools and districts identified as low performing? Using what criteria? Do the identification processes and/or criteria differ for Title I and non-Title I schools?*

Low performing schools are those that are identified as Accredited with Warning, based on the criteria outlined in the *Accountability* section above. Essentially, these include a review of compliance with the state's Standards of Accreditation; the final accreditation rating is based on schoolwide results on the SOL assessments. The identification process is the same for Title I or non-Title I schools.

2. *Does the district or the state decide whether a school is low performing? If the district is involved in the process, how much discretion do they have?*

It is the responsibility of the state to identify schools that are Accredited with Warning.

3. *What types of assistance are provided to these schools and districts by the state?*

During the academic year 1999-2000, the system of assistance to low-performing schools was not well established; the Department of Education is in the process of developing this system. For more information, see question 4, below.

4. *Who provides the state assistance?*

During the academic year 1999-2000, the system of assistance to low-performing schools and districts was not fully developed. The accreditation system identified schools as Accredited with Warning and required them to develop a school improvement plan, but did not provide any assistance from the department. The current State Board of Education expressed concern that there was not enough assistance available for schools that were identified as Accredited with Warning and proposed changes to the accreditation regulations.

Virginia recently implemented eight regional "Governor's Best Practice Centers," the services of which are available to school divisions that are in need of assistance. Each one of those centers is staffed by a curriculum and instruction specialist, an assessment and accreditation specialist, a technology specialist, and a director, who is a generalist. They may assist schools with the

development of the improvement plan, as well as implementation and monitoring of the improvement plan.

At the moment, there is no designated monetary assistance for low-performing schools, but the Virginia Department of Education is available to provide technical or human resources that are necessary to address division or school needs. The Department has expertise in all areas and will assist divisions and schools to the extent that they can. Virginia does not operate on the “improvement team” approach; rather, staff of the Department provide assistance to the divisions and schools as necessary.

5. Does support to Title I and all low performing schools and districts differ? Is support generally provided for all schools and districts, or are services specifically designed to help those that are low performing?

The system of support for all low performing schools and districts and Title I schools and districts are both developing and will be implemented next year. There will be one system of assistance for all low-performing schools, be they Title I or non-Title I.

6. Has the state established a set of criteria and/or a process for getting schools and districts out of low performing status? If so, what do they include?

When a schools’ assessment results reach the provisional benchmark levels identified in the previous section, the school will no longer retain the status of Accredited with Warning, and will no longer be considered as low-performing.

7. Once a school or district is identified as low performing, what types of plans must it prepare? Who are they submitted to once completed? How do they differ from other planning documents?

The following planning requirements are outlined in the Virginia Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (some of these are revisions, but most is existing code):

- Any school that is rated Accredited with Warning in English or Mathematics is expected to adopt an instructional method that has a proven track record of success at raising student achievement in those areas as appropriate.
- The superintendent and principal shall certify in writing to the Board that such a method has been adopted and implemented.
- The Board shall publish a list of recommended instructional methods.
- Adoption of instructional methods referenced above shall be funded by eligible local, state and federal funds.
- Schools that are rated Accredited with Warning must undertake improvement planning targeted to increasing student achievement as measured by the SOL tests immediately upon receipt of the results of an academic review conducted in accordance with policies and operations adopted by the Board. The plan shall be developed collaboratively by the principal and teaching staff of the school. Parents shall be included in the planning process. The plan should be completed by the end of the first semester and, to the extent possible, implemented in the second semester.

- A three-year School Improvement Plan must be developed and implemented, based on the results of an academic review of each school that is rated Accredited with Warning upon receipt of notification of the awarding of this rating and receipt of the results of the academic review.
- The plan shall address the provisional accreditation benchmarks set in accordance with the provisions of these regulations. In addition, the improvement plan shall include each of the following:
 - How the school will meet the provisional accreditation benchmarks for each of the years covered by the plan,
 - Specific measures for achieving and documenting student academic improvement,
 - Amount of time in the school day devoted to instruction in the core academic areas,
 - Instructional practices designed to remediate students who have not been successful on SOL tests
 - Intervention strategies designed to prevent further declines in student performance
 - Staff development
 - Strategies to involve and assist parents in raising their child's academic performance
 - Flexibility or waivers to state or local regulations necessary to meet the objectives of the plan
 - A description of the manner in which local, state and federal funds are used to support the implementation of the components of this plan.
- Schools rated Accredited with Warning shall assure their community that appropriate and effective instructional intervention and/or remediation and additional instruction time is being provided for those students.
- The school improvement plan and related annual reports submitted to the Board shall provide documentation of the continuous efforts of the school to achieve the requirements to become rated Fully Accredited and be sealed by clerk of board. The Board shall adopt and approve all policies and formats for the submission of annual reports under this section. The reports shall be due no later than October 1 of the school year.

8. Are changes planned for the state system of identifying and assisting low performing schools or districts (proposed or enacted and to be implemented)? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?

Yes; some of the planned changes to the system of assisting low performing schools were evoked above, including the development of the Governor's Best Practices Centers, and extended requirements for improvement planning. The new regulations with regard to the Accrediting of Public Schools should be approved during the summer of 2000. Much of the code is already in place; revisions should take effect immediately.

Title I and Adequate Yearly Progress

1. *What criteria are included in the definition of adequate yearly progress for schools and districts under Title I?*

- *What measures are used (relationship between cognitive/non-cognitive data)?*
- *What targets have been established?*
- *Are local assessment systems included as criteria? If so, does the state provide guidance? Monitor their use?*
- *Is subgroup performance included in the criteria?*

The Title I system of adequate yearly progress is entirely aligned with the state Standards of Learning and Standards of Accreditation. Hence, the measures on which adequate yearly progress is based are the SOL assessments. The targets for Title I schools are the same as those that have been established for all schools and have been outlined in previous sections. Local assessments are not included in the measures, nor is subgroup performance.

2. *What are the definitions of adequate yearly progress for the following:*

- *Title I schools and non-Title I schools*
- *Targeted vs. schoolwide programs, charter, non-public and small schools*
- *Districts*

Are these transitional or final definitions? If transitional, when will the final definitions be in place and what criteria and processes will they include?

Schools in Virginia are determined to have made adequate yearly progress if they have attained the state-determined standards – those that apply to all schools, and upon which the accreditation system is based. As a reminder, the accreditation ratings are as follows:

Provisionally Accredited: less than 70 percent passing rate, but scores have improved over the previous year

Accredited with Warning: No improvement or the scores have dropped from the previous year

Fully Accredited:

- For elementary and middle schools. Grade 3: 70 percent passing rate in English and math. Grades 5 and 8: 70 percent passing rate in English, math, science, and History/Social Studies.
- For high schools: 70 percent passing rate in English, math, science and History/Social Studies.

If a school receives Accreditation with Warning, it has not made adequate yearly progress. If it receives Provisional Accreditation, then it has made adequate yearly progress. This definition of adequate yearly progress applies to all schools, be they targeted assistance, schoolwide, or non-Title I.

However, there are still some gray areas in this definition. It is not entirely clear whether the definition will have nuances such as the subject areas in which Accreditation with Warning will be considered. Hence, schools have not been identified as making adequate yearly progress for the 1999-2000 testing data thus far. This identification should be completed in August, when

modifications to the accreditation system have been fully developed. The last list of schools that failed to make adequate yearly progress is several years old.

3. What is the process for identifying those schools and districts that are not making adequate yearly progress under Title I? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools? If the districts plays a role, does the state provide guidance on local criteria?

The process for identifying schools that are not making adequate yearly progress is the same as the accreditation process and is determined by the state.

4. What are the criteria and processes for identifying schools and districts in need of improvement under Title I? What plans must be prepared? How can a school or district get out of Program Improvement? Does the district or the state make this determination for schools?

A school that receives Accreditation with Warning is automatically identified as a school in need of improvement. Note that in Virginia, it takes only one year of not meeting state standards to be placed in school improvement. Virginia received a federal waiver to implement a one-year “in need of improvement” designation that would be fully aligned with the accreditation system. If a school meets state standards and receives an accreditation level above Warning, then it may exit program improvement. Virginia does not identify districts in need of improvement.

5. What types of assistance are provided to those in need of improvement under Title I?

- *Evaluation and Planning*
- *Financial*
- *Expert Assistance*

The state assistance that is provided to Title I schools in need of improvement is the same as that which is provided to all schools Accredited with Warning. For further details, please refer to the previous section.

6. Who provides the assistance?

The state assistance that is provided to Title I schools in need of improvement is the same as that which is provided to all schools Accredited with Warning. For further details, please refer to the previous section.

7. Have waivers played a role in this process?

Yes, waivers have played a role in Virginia. As noted above, the state received a waiver to put schools in program improvement after only one year of not meeting state definitions of adequate yearly progress.

8. Are there future plans for the state system for schools or districts receiving Title I funding (proposed or enacted and to be implemented) or for the definition of adequate yearly progress? If so, what do these plans include? Why are these changes being made and what is the timeline?

Substantial changes are anticipated for the Virginia system of Title I; because the Title I and non-Title I systems are aligned, these changes are the same as those anticipated for the accreditation and accountability systems. For further details, please refer to earlier sections of this profile that addressed accountability.

9. Is there alignment between Title I and non-Title I systems for adequate yearly progress?

Yes, the definition of adequate yearly progress for Title I and non-Title I schools is the same: both are held to the same state standards on the SOL tests.

10. What have been the major issues and challenges in the area of Title I? Explain.

The major challenge that Virginia officials identified is finding an adequate way of serving all schools that need the Title I assistance. They acknowledge the positive impact that Title I funds have in Virginia, but note that the funding level is insufficient. Moreover, the amount of Title I dollars has remained level or declined slightly over the past year, while the challenges for Virginia schools have persisted.

Contact Information

Assessment and Accountability

Charles Finley
Assistance Superintendent for Accountability
Virginia Department of Education
James Monroe Bldg.
101 North 14th Street
Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 786-9421
cfinley@pen.k12.va.us

Brenda Spenser
Virginia Department of Education
James Monroe Bldg.
101 North 14th Street
Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 371-6201
spenser8@pen.k12.va.us

Title I

George Irby
Director of Compensatory Programs
Virginia Department of Education
James Monroe Bldg.
101 North 14th Street
Richmond, VA 23219
(804) 225-2869
girby@pen.k12.va.us