

September 16, 2014 – New Assessments Impact State and Federal Accountability Ratings

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NEW ASSESSMENTS IMPACT STATE AND FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY RATINGS

Each school system is responsible for exceeding a certain percentage of pass rates per school in order to meet state and federal benchmarks and avoid sanctions from each. The two accountability systems measure accountability in two different ways:

- **State:** This system is calculated by the percentage of all students receiving passing scores on the SOL assessments (75% is the required benchmark on reading/writing; 70% is the benchmark for mathematics, science, and history) and the average of students meeting the state graduation index.
- **Federal:** This system is calculated by the percentage of students meeting benchmarks in reading and mathematics performance and participation (plus the federal graduation indicator at the high school and division level). Nine subgroups are included in calculations (all; gap group 1 - economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient, and students with disabilities; gap group 2 - Black; gap group 3 - Hispanic; white; Asian; students with disabilities; economically disadvantaged students; and limited English). In total, elementary and middle schools must meet 36 federal benchmarks, and high schools and divisions must meet 45 benchmarks.

In 2011-2012, the state introduced the NEW Mathematics Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments, requiring more multi-step problem-solving and introducing more open-ended responses than any mathematics assessment previously administered through this annual state assessment. In 2012-2013, the state introduced the NEW Reading, Writing, and Science SOL assessments, which mirrored a similar level of difficulty for students with increased reading expectations and higher level of text analysis for Reading, and a higher level of complexity of questions and more open-ended responses for each subject area.

The state and federal accreditation ratings for schools across Virginia have been impacted by the new assessments. Based on 2011 testing (prior to assessment revisions), only 36 schools across the commonwealth did not meet state benchmarks, approximately 2% of all public schools. Based on preliminary 2014 testing (after 2-3 years of new assessments), about 600 schools across the

commonwealth will not meet state benchmarks, approximately 1/3 or 33% of all public schools. Superintendent of Public Education Steven R. Staples said in a recent press release, "The increase that we will see . . . in the number of schools that fall short of the state's accreditation standards must be viewed in the context of the higher standards and changing assessments. Students are not learning less; the state has raised the bar."

Based on the 2013-2014 SOL testing scores and the graduation information from the Class of 2014, Staunton City Schools had the following results:

<u>School</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Federal</u>	<u>Highlights</u>
<i>Bessie Weller Elementary</i>	Accredited with Warning	Met 31 of 36 reading and mathematics benchmarks (86%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased school mathematics performance by 21% in past 3 years
<i>McSwain Elementary</i>	Fully Accredited	Met 36 of 36 reading and mathematics benchmarks (100%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased pass advanced rate for Reading by 10%, with 26% of students performing at advanced level
<i>Ware Elementary</i>	Fully Accredited	Met 35 of 36 reading and mathematics benchmarks (97%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School mathematics pass rate of 80% with every subgroup showing progress
<i>Shelburne Middle</i>	Accredited with Warning	Met 31 of 36 reading and mathematics benchmarks (86%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintained an overall science pass rate within 80% range, even with the new assessment
<i>Lee High</i>	Fully Accredited	Met 43 of 45 reading, mathematics, and graduation benchmarks (96%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased reading achievement in every subgroup with the greatest gains in Gap Group 1 and Economically disadvantaged
<i>Staunton City Schools</i>	N/A (Applies only to individual schools)	Met 40 of 45 reading, mathematics, and graduation benchmarks (89%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highest percentage of graduates to date - 90% of the 2014 cohort graduating in 4 years, 58% receiving an Advanced Studies Diploma

Bessie Weller will continue its school improvement plan implementation from the previous year and will also provide focused feedback to teachers in order to improve instruction. Although Bessie Weller met the benchmarks for which it was originally targeted for two consecutive years (Reading - black subgroup), it will remain a focus school, based on performance in the Reading gap group 1 subgroup (combination of economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and limited English proficient). "We are pleased to have met the requirements for the Reading Black subgroup, which originally got us into focus school category. We are now focusing on improving achievement in the subgroup of gap group 1. The Bessie Weller Elementary School staff are focused on maximizing learning. We will concentrate our efforts to meet student learning goals by implementing research-based strategies in the areas of responsive instruction, student engagement, and fostering strong

relationships. Our dedicated teachers have spent extra time this summer in training and a book study to prepare for the year ahead. We will utilize the support provided by our school division and the state to increase student achievement," comments Linda Mahler, Principal of Bessie Weller Elementary School.

This is Shelburne Middle School's first year of not meeting state benchmarks. All Staunton City Schools annually create School Improvement Plans that include student achievement goals and strategies to meet these goals. All of our schools will review their School Improvement Plans from last year and make modifications based on the test scores from last year.

Dr. Jelisa Wolfe, Executive Director of Student Services comments, "We've looked at the data, particularly for students with disabilities, and have already responded by securing more training in intensive reading program supports and exploring additional resources for mathematics. For all special needs students, we are responding to the increased rigor (set by VDOE) by closely monitoring class schedules and instructional support."

Staunton City Schools will continue to provide strong instructional programs for all students. The increased challenge in both the content of the new Standards of Learning assessments and the format of the test questions has impacted schools here as well as across the state. We will continue to work with families to determine other points of data that are helpful in indicating student progress and achievement throughout the school year.

School and division report cards with updated state and federal information may be accessed on the homepage of the Staunton City Schools website: <http://www.staunton.k12.va.us>. They may also be accessed by going directly to the Virginia Department of Education website.