

Three schools, warned for the fourth consecutive year, are requesting a rating of conditional accreditation. A history of the schools requesting a rating of Conditionally Accredited for the first year follows:

Division	School Name	Subjects Warned in 2006	Subjects Warned in 2007	Preliminary Data In Subjects Warned in
Danville City Public Schools	Westwood Middle School	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
Portsmouth City Public Schools	Brighton Manor Elementary School	Mathematics, History, Science	Mathematics, Science	English
Roanoke City Public Schools	William Ruffner Middle School	Mathematics	English, Mathematics, History	English, Mathematics, H

Summary of Major Elements

Danville City Public Schools, Portsmouth City Public Schools, and Roanoke City Public Schools are requesting ratings of Conditionally Accredited for Westwood Middle School, Brighton Elementary, and William Ruffner Middle School indicating that reconstitution efforts have changed the governance in the three schools. New principals have been employed at Westwood Middle School and William Ruffner Middle School.

School Division	School Name	Governance	Staff	Student Population	Instructional Program
Danville City Public Schools	Westwood Middle School	Primary	Additional		
Portsmouth City Public Schools	Brighton Elementary School	Primary			
Roanoke City Public Schools	William Ruffner Middle School	Primary	Additional		

Data indicating these schools' performance over the last three years is included in Attachment A.

Two of these schools house a sixth- and seventh-grade and continue to be warned in mathematics. Pass rates have demonstrated some improvement as indicated below:

School Division	School Name	Change in Percent Passing Mathematics in 2008 from 2007 (Example: 5 would indicated a pass rate change from 50% to 55%)	
		6th Grade	7th Grade
Danville City Public Schools	Westwood Middle School	16	6
Roanoke City Public Schools	William Ruffner Middle School	-4	6

The Office of School Improvement has worked closely with these schools to design and implement an oversight committee as a formal mechanism to focus on and improve instruction in the area(s) of warning. These oversight committees share the governance of instruction in the area(s) of warning. Westwood Middle School began implementation of this committee in the 2007-2008 school year. The purpose of the oversight or shared governance committee is to:

1. Serve as a formal mechanism to guide instructional decisions based on data including, but not limited to, formative assessment data, classroom observations and review of lesson plans.
2. Monitor and adjust the school's improvement plan frequently.
3. Provide outside expertise and knowledge in the content area of warning and/or in research-based instructional practices that foster improved student achievement.
4. Align district resources with the needs of the school, including additional help and support from the central office.
5. Share the governance in the instructional area(s) of warning through a formal decision-making process. In these committees, the principal is not the sole instructional decision-maker.

The following table indicates the composition of the committees for each school indicated in the letters requesting ratings of Conditionally Accredited:

School Division	School Name	Outside expertise in area of warning	District curriculum or instructional leader	Principal	Teacher	Outside monitor or facilitator (PASS, ARC*, or University)
Danville City Public Schools	Westwood Middle School	VDOE contractor	Asst. Supt. for Instruction	Principal	Lead Teacher	ARC
Portsmouth City Public Schools	Brighton Manor Elementary School	PASS Coach	Asst. Supt. for Curriculum and Instruction	Principal	Lead Teachers	PASS School
Roanoke City Public Schools	William Ruffner Middle School	PASS Coach	Director of Instruction	Principal	Lead Teachers	PASS School

*ARC- Academic Review Coordinator or Team Leader

**PASS – Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools

The following table provides an overview of the alternative governance efforts presented in the letters requesting ratings of Conditionally Accredited:

Division	School Name	Overview of Request
Danville City Public Schools	Westwood Middle School	The role of the committee is to monitor the school improvement plan, review data, and make adjustments as needed. The committee meets at least monthly. Decision-making is by consensus with majority vote. A new principal was appointed this school year. Continue alternative governance committee from 2007-2008.

Division	School Name	Overview of Request
Portsmouth City Public Schools	Brighton Manor Elementary School	The role of the committee is to monitor the school improvement plan, review data, and make adjustments as needed. The committee meets at least monthly. Decision-making is by consensus with majority vote. A timeline was provided.
Roanoke City Public Schools	William Ruffner Middle School	The role of the committee is to monitor the school improvement plan, review data, and make adjustments as needed. The committee meets at least monthly. Decision-making is by consensus with majority vote. Continue alternative governance committee from 2007-2008.

Recommendations

The department will provide technical assistance to the schools and divisions through a partnership with the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC), the Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership (VFEL), and the Center for Innovation and Improvement (CII). Portsmouth City Public Schools and Roanoke City Public Schools were provided a series of technical assistance opportunities via WebEx last year. Danville City Public Schools will participate in this same series this year. A copy of the evaluation for this project is included as Attachment B. The technical assistance will provide staff with information regarding the district-level indicators that support the rapid improvement of low-performing schools. These indicators are as follows:

1. Community. The district includes civic leaders, community organizations, and churches in the district and school improvement planning and maintains regular communication with them.
2. Achievement Targets. The district sets district, school, and student subgroup achievement targets.
3. Data System. The district ensures that key pieces of user-friendly data are available in a timely fashion at the district, school, and classroom levels.
4. Program Evaluation. The district examines existing school improvement strategies being implemented across the district and determines their value, expanding, modifying, and culling as evidence suggests.
5. Curriculum. The district provides a cohesive district curriculum guide aligned with state standards or otherwise places curricular expectations on the school.
6. Data Training. The district provides the technology, training, and support to facilitate the school’s data management needs.
7. Staff Incentives. The district provides incentives for staff who work effectively in hard-to-staff and restructured schools
8. Resource Reallocation. The district regularly reallocates resources to support school, staff, and instructional improvement.
9. Quality Staff. The district recruits, trains, supports, and places personnel to competently address the problems of schools in need of improvement.
10. District Intervention. The district intervenes early when a school is not making adequate progress.
11. Progress Monitoring. The school reports and documents its progress monthly to the superintendent, and the superintendent reports the school’s progress to the school board.
12. District Contact. The district designates a central office contact person for the school, and that person maintains close communication with the school and an interest in its progress.

13. District-School Communication. District and school decision makers meet at least twice a month to discuss the school's progress.
14. Professional Development. Professional development is built into the school schedule by the district, but the school is allowed discretion in selecting, training, and consulting that fit the requirements of its improvement/restructuring plan and its evolving needs.
15. Programs and Practices. The improvement/restructuring plan includes research-based, field-proven programs, practices, and models.
16. Vision. The improvement/restructuring plan includes a clear vision of what the school will look like when restructured or substantially improved.
17. Quick Wins. The improvement/restructuring plan focuses on "quick wins," early successes in improvement.
18. School Teams. A team structure is officially incorporated into the school improvement plan and school governance policy.
19. Student Support. The district works with the school to provide early and intensive intervention for students not making progress.
20. Instruction and Performance. The school's Leadership Team regularly looks at school performance data and aggregated classroom observation data and uses that data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs.

It is imperative to emphasize not only the shared leadership between the central office and the school, but the importance of shared instructional leadership within the school. In the 2008-2009 school year, the partnership will continue to provide technical assistance with a concentration on continued division-level support and school-level support with a focus on shared instructional leadership. Division staff, principals, school improvement teams, and lead teachers from the three divisions and schools will receive research-based technical assistance throughout the school year prepared by the Center for Innovation and Improvement and delivered by Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership faculty and VDOE staff on the following rapid improvement leadership indicators. Rapid improvement leaders:

1. Make an action plan so that everyone involved knows specifically what they need to do differently.
2. First concentrate on a very limited number of changes to achieve early, visible wins for the school.
3. Make changes that deviate from organization's norms and rules if necessary to gain visible wins.
4. Implement an action plan in which change is mandatory for all staff, not optional.
5. Replace or redeploy some staff as necessary based on careful examination of skills and readiness for change.
6. Quickly discard tactics that don't work and spend more resources and time on tactics that work.
7. Report progress but keep school's focus on high goals.
8. Motivate others inside and outside the school to contribute to success.
9. Use various tactics to help staff empathize with those they serve and be motivated for change.
10. Work hard to gain the support of trusted influencers among staff and community.
11. Silence critics with speedy success on "quick win" objectives.
12. Personally analyze data about the organization's performance to identify high-priority problems that can be fixed quickly.
13. Set up systems to measure and report interim results often.
14. Share results in open-air meetings to hold all staff accountable for results and to focus on solving problems.

Systems and processes are also necessary for improvement. For this reason, additional technical assistance will be provided by the Center for Innovation and Improvement and delivered by Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership faculty and VDOE staff to focus on the following systems and processes:

1. Establishing a team structure with specific duties and time for instructional planning.
2. Focusing the principal's role on building leadership capacity, achieving learning goals, and improving instruction.
3. Aligning classroom observations with evaluation criteria and professional development.
4. Engaging teachers in aligning instruction with standards and benchmarks.
5. Engaging teachers in assessing and monitoring student mastery.
6. Engaging teachers in differentiating and aligning learning activities.
7. Assessing student learning frequently with standards-based assessments.
8. Expecting and monitoring sound instruction in a variety of modes.
9. Expecting and monitoring sound homework practices and communication with parents.
10. Expecting and monitoring sound classroom management.

The importance of data cannot be underscored for schools that are chronically underachieving. Using research-based indicators that lead to increased student achievement is imperative for improvement. The department has designed a quarterly reporting instrument that will help divisions and schools monitor critical indicators that are related not only to immediate increases in student achievement, but also to those indicators that are attributed to students not graduating on time.

The following are recommendations for each of the three schools requesting a rating of Conditionally Accredited:

1. The department will appoint an auditor through the academic review process or the PASS program to monitor the implementation of the school's reconstitution efforts monthly.
2. LEA staff assigned to work with the school throughout the year will attend technical assistance provided by the department regarding district support and the district framework needed to restructure and support low-performing schools. In addition, school staff, including the principal, will attend similar technical assistance regarding rapid improvement leadership indicators and systems and processes that support increased student achievement. This technical assistance will be provided by the Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership, the Appalachian Regional Comprehensive Center, and the Center for Innovation and Improvement and will be monitored by a monthly online reporting system.
3. If warned in mathematics in the middle school grades, the Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test (ARDT) will be given to all sixth- and seventh-grade students throughout the year. The Office of School Improvement and the LEA representative will set a schedule for this testing based on recommendations from the department's middle school mathematics specialist.
4. The division and school will submit the required data profile as specified by the department at least quarterly. This report may be found at <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/SchoolImprovement/>.
5. The division will adhere to any additional recommendations indicated in the Conditional Request and Recommendations form or by the auditor throughout the year and will comply with any reporting requirements requested (submission of ARDT data on a regular basis, monthly reporting to the superintendent and Office of School Improvement). Specific recommendations for each school are as follows:

Division	School Name	Recommendations
Danville City Public Schools	Westwood Middle School	Division staff, VDOE contractor, and school staff must meet monthly to discuss the progress in the school's implementation of the school improvement plan and the alignment of state and LEA resources.

Division	School Name	Recommendations
Portsmouth City Public Schools	Brighton Elementary School	Division staff, PASS coach, and school staff must meet monthly to discuss the progress in the school's implementation of the school improvement plan and the alignment of state and LEA resources.
Roanoke City Public Schools	William Ruffner Middle School	Division staff, OSI staff, PASS coach, and school staff must meet monthly to discuss the progress in the school's implementation of the school improvement plan and the alignment of state and LEA resources.

Attachment A provides a summary of each school's present and past SOL pass rates, area(s) of warning, overview of the reconstitution efforts, the department's recommendations, and projected follow-up.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education waive first review and approve the recommendations and ratings of Conditionally Accredited for the three schools.

Impact on Resources:

The Office of School Improvement will be required to use the academic review budget to fund auditors assigned to schools that are not PASS schools.

Timetable for Further Review/Action:

Virginia Department of Education
Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement

Name of Division: Danville City		Name of School: Westwood Middle School	
Title I: N	School Improvement Status: N/A		Grades: 6-8
Subjects Warned in 2006: Mathematics		Subjects Warned in 2007: Mathematics	
Subjects Warned in 2008: Mathematics			
Overview of 2008-2009 Request			

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Pass Rates	2006	2007	2008 (Preliminary Rates)
English Performance	71.89	67.63	69.08
Mathematics Performance	42.86	45.77	60.33
Science Performance	74.6	75.42	89.63
Writing Performance		84.03	76.69
History Performance		65.65	73.28

Recommendations

The department recommends the following for each school requesting a rating of Conditionally Accredited:

1. The department will appoint an auditor through the academic review process or the PASS program to monitor the implementation of the school's reconstitution efforts monthly.
2. LEA staff assigned to work with the school throughout the year will attend technical assistance provided by the department regarding district support and the district framework needed to restructure and support low-performing schools. In addition, school staff, including the principal, will attend similar technical assistance regarding rapid improvement leadership indicators and systems and processes that support increased student achievement. This technical assistance will be provided by the Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership, the Appalachian Regional Comprehensive Center, and the Center for Innovation and Improvement and will be monitored by a monthly online reporting system.
3. If warned in mathematics in the middle school grades, the Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test (ARDT) will be given to all sixth- and seventh-grade students throughout the year. The Office of School Improvement and the LEA representative will set a schedule for this testing based on recommendations from the department's middle school mathematics specialist.
4. The division and school will submit the required data profile as specified by the department at least quarterly.
5. The division will adhere to any additional recommendations indicated in the Conditional Request and Recommendations form or by the auditor throughout the year and will comply with any reporting requirements requested (submission of ARDT data on a regular basis, monthly reporting to the superintendent and Office of School Improvement).

Specific recommendations for each school are as follows: Division staff, VDOE contractor, and school staff must meet monthly to discuss the progress in the school's implementation of the school improvement plan and the alignment of state and LEA resources.

Virginia Department of Education
Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement

Name of Division: Portsmouth City		Name of School: Brighton Elementary	
Title I: Yes	School Improvement Status: Year 1 – School choice		Grades: K-6
Subjects Warned in 2006: Mathematics, History, Science		Subjects Warned in 2007: Mathematics, Science	Subjects Warned in 2008: English
Overview of 2008-2009 Request			

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Pass Rates	2006	2007	2008 (Preliminary Rates)
English Performance	70.1	72.28	69.34
Mathematics Performance	63.76	60.76	68.62
Science Performance	68.26	69.54	71.98
Writing Performance		82.19	62.5
History Performance		74.56	78.73

Recommendations

The department recommends the following for each school requesting a rating of Conditionally Accredited:

1. The department will appoint an auditor through the academic review process or the PASS program to monitor the implementation of the school's reconstitution efforts monthly.
2. LEA staff assigned to work with the school throughout the year will attend technical assistance provided by the department regarding district support and the district framework needed to restructure and support low-performing schools. In addition, school staff, including the principal, will attend similar technical assistance regarding rapid improvement leadership indicators and systems and processes that support increased student achievement. This technical assistance will be provided by the Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership, the Appalachian Regional Comprehensive Center, and the Center for Innovation and Improvement and will be monitored by a monthly online reporting system.
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5. The division will adhere to any additional recommendations indicated in the Conditional Request and Recommendations form or by the auditor throughout the year and will comply with any reporting requirements requested (submission of ARDT data on a regular basis, monthly reporting to the superintendent and Office of School Improvement).

Specific recommendations for each school are as follows: Division staff, PASS coach, and school staff must meet monthly to discuss the progress in the school's implementation of the school improvement plan and the alignment of state and LEA resources.

Virginia Department of Education
Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement

Name of Division: Roanoke City		Name of School: Ruffner Middle School	
Title I: N	School Improvement Status: N/A		Grades: 6-8
Subjects Warned in 2006: Mathematics		Subjects Warned in 2007: Mathematics	
Subjects Warned in 2008: Mathematics			
Overview of 2008-2009 Request			

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Pass Rates	2006	2007	2008 (Preliminary Rates)
English Performance	70.47	68.85	77.67
Mathematics Performance	51.21	50.84	59.2
Science Performance	81.14	77.74	86.2
Writing Performance	No available AYP Data – SOA only	70.07	74.26
History Performance	No available AYP Data – SOA only	64.57	85.16

Recommendations
<p>The department recommends the following for each school requesting a rating of Conditionally Accredited:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The department will appoint an auditor through the academic review process or the PASS program to monitor the implementation of the school's reconstitution efforts monthly. 2. LEA staff assigned to work with the school throughout the year will attend technical assistance provided by the department regarding district support and the district framework needed to restructure and support low-performing schools. In addition, school staff, including the principal, will attend similar technical assistance regarding rapid improvement leadership indicators and systems and processes that support increased student achievement. This technical assistance will be provided by the Virginia Foundation of Educational Leadership, the Appalachian Regional Comprehensive Center, and the Center for Innovation and Improvement and will be monitored by a monthly online reporting system. 3. If warned in mathematics in the middle school grades, the Algebra Readiness Diagnostic Test (ARDT) will be given to all sixth- and seventh-grade students throughout the year. The Office of School Improvement and the LEA representative will set a schedule for this testing based on recommendations from the department's middle school mathematics specialist. 4. The division and school will submit the required data profile as specified by the department at least quarterly. 5. The division will adhere to any additional recommendations indicated in the Conditional Request and Recommendations form or by the auditor throughout the year and will comply with any reporting requirements requested (submission of ARDT data on a regular basis, monthly reporting to the superintendent and Office of School Improvement). <p>Specific recommendations for each school are as follows: Division staff, OSI staff, PASS coach, and school staff must meet monthly to discuss the progress in the school's implementation of the school improvement plan and the alignment of state and LEA resources.</p>



Summary of Data from Closeout Meeting for Divisions with Schools Conditionally Accredited

On June 20, 2008, a closeout meeting was held in Roanoke for Virginia divisions that participated in the Virginia WebEx District Improvement Initiative and that have schools that were conditionally accredited. This closeout meeting completed a series of technical assistance sessions that were held during this past year.

Background

During this past year, the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC) at Edvantia delivered research-based technical assistance to the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) Office of School Improvement via the Virginia WebEx District Improvement Initiative (Virginia WebEx work). In early September 2007, staff from the VDOE approached the director of the Center on Innovation and Improvement (CII) about using the *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement*, a resource CII developed. VDOE staff were extremely interested in utilizing the research-based indicators from the handbook to improve the effectiveness of LEAs working with schools designated as conditionally accredited.

Following a series of conference calls, staff from VDOE, ARCC, CII, and the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership (VFEL) met in late September 2007 to develop a plan to carry out this work. The outcome of the planning meeting was the Virginia WebEx work and its primary objective was to help VDOE increase its capacity to build and sustain a system of statewide support for low-performing school divisions and schools. Specifically, Virginia wanted technical assistance that would help it (1) assist divisions to assess and strengthen their support for school improvement; and (2) assist divisions to develop and monitor school-level plans for improvement, especially in schools under restructuring or in need of substantial improvement.

The Virginia WebEx work's signature design included seven WebEx sessions for 20 Virginia division teams. The 20 division teams were divided into four groups for a total of 28 WebEx sessions. Each WebEx division team was staffed by three to five members who participated in the program. To kick off this collaborative effort, ARCC, CII, VDOE, and VFEL held a training in November 2007 for the eight Virginia Distinguished Educators (DEs) who were tasked with leading the WebEx sessions. Content of the sessions was based on the research-based CII handbook. The introductory meeting with the 20 participating Virginia division teams was held in December 2007; there, the division teams learned that they were expected to participate in the WebEx sessions between January 2008 and June 2008. WebEx participants also learned that the Virginia DEs (or WebEx faculty) would focus on three to four research-based indicators per session. Between WebEx sessions, division teams were required to use the Web-based District Support for School Improvement tool to assess their current level of functioning

relative to the indicators and to develop a detailed plan for improvement. If the division team found indicators that were in need of improvement, the team developed an objective with tasks, responsibilities, timelines, and measures of success. As the division team completed the tasks, progress was entered into the system through a monitoring component. The seven WebEx sessions focused on the following content:

- School improvement (two sessions dedicated to this topic)
- Allocation of resources and staff
- Division/school relationship
- Division impact on school improvement planning
- Division influence on instructional improvement
- School-level improvement processes

Closeout Meeting Data

Approximately 74 attendees participated in the closeout meeting held in Roanoke. Participants included staff from VDOE, VFEL, ARCC, and CII; Virginia division team members; WebEx faculty; and Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools (PASS) coaches and/or auditors. Of the 74 attendees, approximately 88% (65) were division team members, WebEx faculty, and PASS coaches and/or auditors. The purpose of this meeting was for participating divisions to share information about the technical assistance they were involved in this year as part of their intervention to support conditionally accredited schools.

During the closeout meeting, three different types of data were collected: (1) meeting participants completed a comprehensive ARCC survey; (2) division teams completed a brief CII feedback form; and (3) divisions teams shared information they had prepared regarding the successes of the Virginia WebEx initiative, barriers that had been overcome during the past 6 months, and unanswered questions they might still have. A summary of findings from those three data sources follows.

Findings

This section of the report presents findings by data type: survey, feedback form, and shared information.

ARCC Virginia WebEx Initiative Survey

At the June 20 meeting, WebEx Program participants were asked to complete an evaluation form. The purpose of this survey was to gather participants' assessments of the content of the WebEx sessions, WebEx processes, and the value of each session to their divisions. The evaluation form included 38 forced-choice items and 5 open-ended items.

The survey was completed by 58 participants; 77% of respondents were members of division teams, 11% were PASS coaches and/or auditors, 9% were WebEx faculty, and 4% indicated other. A summary of their responses follows.

The first section included 18 forced-choice items, which asked participants to rate their satisfaction with the content of the WebEx sessions using a scale of *to a great extent* (4) to *not at all* (1). Most participants were moderately to greatly satisfied with the content of the WebEx sessions. Two thirds (66%) of participants rated the session objectives as clearly identified to a great extent. More than 70% of participants indicated that the WebEx materials were authoritative (71%) and based on best practices (72%) to a great extent. See Table 1 for more information.

Table 1. Participant Ratings of WebEx Session Content

Item	To a great extent	To a moderate extent	To some extent	Not at all
To what extent were the WebEx sessions' objectives clearly identified?	66%	33%	2%	0%
To what extent were the WebEx sessions' objectives accomplished?	39%	51%	11%	0%
To what extent were the WebEx sessions appropriately organized?	48%	36%	16%	0%
To what extent was the amount of information provided adequate?	38%	38%	24%	0%
To what extent was the information provided of high quality?	48%	31%	21%	0%
To what extent was the information provided relevant?	53%	35%	12%	0%
To what extent was the information provided useful?	43%	38%	17%	2%
To what extent were the WebEx materials authoritative (i.e., strong research base)?	71%	21%	9%	0%
To what extent were the WebEx materials based on best practices?	72%	25%	4%	0%
To what extent did the WebEx sessions provide participants with opportunities to practice new skills?	23%	39%	33%	5%
To what extent did the WebEx sessions include time for participant reflection?	41%	35%	21%	3%
To what extent did the WebEx sessions provide you with resources for information that you can access for future use?	43%	35%	22%	0%
To what extent did the WebEx sessions increase your knowledge relative to the topics presented?	33%	36%	26%	5%
To what extent has the knowledge you gained from the WebEx sessions been incorporated into your work?	40%	33%	26%	0%
To what extent did the series of WebEx sessions assist your division to support school improvement?	26%	47%	25%	2%
To what extent did your division benefit from networking with other divisions?	37%	39%	19%	5%
To what extent did the homework assignments assist your division to support school improvement?	30%	33%	33%	4%
To what extent did reporting out during the WebEx sessions increase your knowledge?	26%	33%	30%	11%

The second section included 12 forced-choice items about WebEx processes and asked participants to rate their agreement using a scale of *strongly agree* (4) to *strongly disagree* (1). At least 80% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with five of the eight items regarding WebEx processes. More than 90% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the WebEx faculty was knowledgeable about the subject matter (98%), their division team worked collaboratively to complete homework assignments (96%), and that division team members clearly communicated with one another to complete those assignments (94%). Only two of the items had disagreement ratings of 25% or higher. Participants disagreed that the WebEx presentation style was appropriate (25%), and 30% of participants felt the homework assignments were not useful. See Table 2 for more information.

Table 2. Participant Ratings of WebEx Processes

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The WebEx faculty was knowledgeable about the subject matter.	54%	44%	2%	0%
The WebEx faculty encouraged questions and participation.	65%	25%	4%	7%
The WebEx faculty related session material to real-life situations.	40%	49%	11%	0%
The WebEx faculty provided adequate support and feedback.	40%	42%	16%	2%
The presentation style of the WebEx sessions was appropriate.	23%	52%	25%	0%
The pace of the WebEx sessions was appropriate.	26%	60%	11%	4%
The length of the WebEx sessions was adequate.	31%	48%	14%	7%
The homework assignments between sessions were useful.	21%	49%	30%	0%
The time to complete homework assignments was sufficient.	29%	55%	16%	0%
Our division team worked collaboratively to complete the homework assignments.	50%	46%	2%	2%
Our division team members clearly communicated with one another to complete the homework assignments.	55%	39%	4%	2%
The Web-based system to plan, implement, and monitor strategies was helpful.	38%	52%	11%	0%

The second section also included two open-ended items about WebEx processes. The first open-ended item was preceded by a qualifying question that asked participants to indicate whether the Web-based tool supported their ongoing improvement efforts. If participants indicated yes, they were asked to provide an example. If participants indicated no, they were asked to provide suggestions for ways the program could have been structured to link Web-based tool activities and district improvement efforts.

Ninety-three percent (93%) of participants indicated the Web-based tool did support their ongoing improvement efforts; 42 participants provided examples. The majority of respondents

indicated the Web-based tool helped them to structure or focus their improvement plans. One respondent stated, “The WebEx supported our district’s ongoing improvement efforts by allowing us to map out strategies, make assignments, and establish timelines in a project management format.” Several respondents said the tool validated what their division was already doing. Others indicated it established a means of communication within and across divisions so that school improvement efforts could be shared.

Of the 7% who indicated the Web-based tool did not support their ongoing improvement efforts, only one suggestion was offered. One respondent simply stated, “Examples of what works.”

The second item asked participants how their division teams had evolved since the first WebEx session in January 2008; 45 participants provided comments. Almost half of the respondents said their division teams had increased collaboration. One respondent said, “We have become more cohesive and open. We had evolved into a collaborative team that reviews the data and works to implement and monitor strategic plans.” Several of the participants said their division teams had a better focus on areas of needed improvement. Participants also indicated that increased communication among team members and division personnel had evolved since the beginning WebEx session. A few participants said their teams had evolved but did not indicate how, and two respondents indicated the team had not evolved.

The third section of the survey included seven forced-choice items and two open-ended items about the specific WebEx sessions. The first seven questions asked participants to rate each session on its helpfulness to their division using a scale of *very helpful* (4) to *not at all helpful* (1). At least 70% of participants found all of the sessions to be helpful or very helpful. See Table 3 for more information.

Table 3. Participant Ratings of WebEx Sessions

Session	Very helpful	Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not at all helpful
WebEx 1: Division Support for School Improvement, Part 1	35%	42%	20%	4%
WebEx 2: Division Support for School Improvement, Part 2	42%	44%	13%	2%
WebEx 3: Division Allocation of Resources and Staff	35%	47%	13%	6%
WebEx 4: Division-School Relationship	51%	29%	16%	4%
WebEx 5: Division Direction in School Improvement Planning	47%	42%	9%	2%
WebEx 6: Division Direction in Instruction Improvement	44%	31%	24%	2%
WebEx7: School-Level Improvement Processes	31%	40%	25%	4%

Participants were then asked to select the two sessions that were most helpful and to indicate why. Participants indicated WebEx Session 5: Division Direction in School

Improvement Planning was the most helpful and the reason most often reported was the focus on “quick wins.” Participants also felt WebEx Session 4: Division-School Relationship was helpful to ensure that divisions have participation at all levels, and WebEx Session 3: Division Allocation of Resources and Staff was helpful in reinforcing where the divisions were in their plans and providing resources that could be used to help them move forward.

Participants were also asked to select the one topic discussed during the WebEx sessions for which they still need additional information. The topic mentioned most often by participants was Resource Reallocation. Respondents also indicated they needed more information about Staff Incentives, Quality Staff, Quick Wins, and Progress Monitoring. Instead of selecting one specific topic, several participants indicated they needed more information about WebEx Session 7: School-Level Improvement Processes.

Section four of the survey asked participants to provide comments about the most and least helpful aspects, one thing they still need information about, and suggestions for the overall WebEx program. When asked to indicate the most helpful aspect, 43 individuals responded, and the majority of them found the networking across divisions to be the most helpful aspect of the program. Other helpful aspects included collaboration among teams and research-based resources.

Participants were asked to indicate the one least helpful aspect of the WebEx program; 36 participants responded to this item. Although no one clear hindrance to the program emerged, several of the comments focused on time. Participants felt the program should begin sooner in the year or possibly during the summer months. They also felt there was too much downtime during the sessions, and some sessions did not begin on time or extended longer than scheduled. Participants also saw the need for differentiated content. One respondent said, “It did not differentiate upon the current needs of each division.” Still other participants found the lack of face-to-face interaction difficult. “The WebEx sometimes left you disconnected due to the inability to see and respond to other participants,” indicated one respondent.

Other least helpful aspects mentioned by participants included too much talking on the part of some groups, homework assignments, technical difficulties, and the format of the WebEx sessions. Four participants indicated that the entire WebEx program was beneficial, and they found all aspects helpful.

Next, participants were asked if there was any information they still needed about the overall WebEx program, and 22 individuals responded to this item. Comments were varied and are listed below.

- How to move division away from “how we’ve always done it,” to effective quick change. It’s too easy for division to revert to its old practices.
- Mechanics of connections between central and school level.

- Next steps.
- Always need to learn more about school improvement and what works.
- Getting the best teachers on the bus.
- Systems for cataloging and sharing best practices across the district.
- Research based strategies for instruction.
- Increasing parental involvement in high poverty rural school.
- Interventions that are most successful.
- Incentives for hard to staff school personnel.
- Additional strategies to get us over the hump!
- Disconnect in curriculum between middle school math and elementary math.
- Data interpretation.
- Collection of evidence when doing walkthroughs and a system to have real time data and feedback.
- How to determine effectiveness of individual intervention when interventions are layered.
- Monitoring.
- Working with leadership; helping principals understand their role in monitoring and uniting staff.
- Finding and retaining teachers.
- I believe expanded version of all topics could be helpful. The “Division Direction of Improvement Planning” needs constant emphasis and support from VDOE.
- Fidelity.
- Did we lose sight of the conditional school during this year’s process? Do we need to focus in on one or two aspects rather than six?
- Review.

Lastly, participants were asked if they had any suggestions about the overall WebEx program, and 37 participants offered suggestions. The majority of the comments related to collaboration among divisions. Several of the respondents felt there should be more time to share ideas and successes across divisions. One participant said, “Increase the amount of time for district to district conversations. Decrease the amount of time for faculty/VDOE discussion.” Other respondents suggested adding two to three face-to-face meetings throughout the year.

Other suggestions offered by participants included differentiating content based on division need, starting the program earlier in the year, creating online discussion boards, making it mandatory for principals and supervisors to participate, and offering more direct instructions for the process.

CII Feedback Form

WebEx initiative participants were asked to provide feedback to five open-ended items regarding the design and use of the online tool, looking ahead to an online tool for schools, and supporting effective school use of the tool. Participants completed one form per table. Nine completed forms were collected and used in this analysis.

Design and use of the online tool. The first question asked participants to describe any strengths of the online tool. Nine groups provided comments. Several of the groups indicated that the organization or structure of the online tool was a strength. One group said, “The structure of the tool enabled us to first determine the desired state of performance, self-assess where we are (environmental scan), and then develop strategies with accountability that move us from our current state to our desired state.” A few of the groups mentioned the clear and concise objectives. One group saw the opportunity to network with other districts about issues and concerns as a strength. Another group noted the ability to participate as a division, and see and hear the information at the same time. Other strengths mentioned were high-quality resources, the ability to print as you go, the ease to access and navigate, and the alignment with corrective action plans.

The next question asked participants to describe any weaknesses of the online tool. Nine groups responded. Several of the groups indicated weaknesses regarding technical aspects of the tool, such as the need for more flexibility in adding team member names, inability to print all information on a screen and cut and paste, system connection issues, and the difficulty of saving information. Other groups felt the format of the online tool needed improvements. One group said, “Initially, navigating through the tool was often frustrating—especially the need to work three different screens to complete the work for each indicator.” Other weaknesses cited were the inability to see all indicators at the beginning, the need for an in-depth definition of the indicator, confusion between required indicators and the full list, insufficient time, lack of professional development on how to use the system, and the objectives being numbered differently from the CII objectives.

Participants were then asked to provide suggested improvements for the design or use of the online tool. Nine groups provided suggestions. Several of the groups mentioned the need for a manual or help menu and acknowledged that the forthcoming manual would be very helpful. A few groups suggested an overview of the program. One group said, “We did not understand the big picture and often found that we had to provide data after we began to complete the form. We had to stop, regroup, then continue—so it took more time than it should have.” Two groups had comments regarding the coaching comments. One group felt that this feature would address many concerns, and the other group was interested in knowing who would enter those comments. Groups offered the following additional suggestions: include only a set number of objectives, develop a “save” button for all tasks, incorporate more videos, improve the print function, and use less lecture and more interaction.

Looking ahead to an online tool for schools. Participants were given the opportunity to look at version 1.0 of the online tool for schools and then share their reactions. Seven of the groups provided comments. Five of the groups provided positive comments and felt the tool would be useful with schools. One of those groups said, “The online tool for schools was user-friendly. The organization of the site allows users to quickly select items of their choice.” The other groups felt that the online tool still needed more explanation of the process and also needed to be more interactive for users.

Supporting effective school use of the tool. Last, participants were asked what supports still were needed to help their schools make effective use of the tool and the school improvement process it’s designed to encourage. All of the groups provided comments. Several of the groups indicated additional training and information about the program. Two groups mentioned time for implementation, and two groups indicated more communication would be beneficial. One group provided an idea, “A link to provide for interactive dialogue (e.g., opportunity to e-mail a specific individual to gain further insight in implementation challenges that those individuals already conquered).” One group felt inclusion of principals would be helpful, and another group said it should be mandatory for division teams to report out to the board.

3-2-1 Activity for Information Sharing

In preparation for the closeout meeting, division teams were asked to complete a task (a 3-2-1 Activity) and to share the resulting data during the June 20 meeting. Teams were asked to list three successes their division had accomplished this school year, two barriers their division had overcome, and one thing they had learned during a WebEx session that was especially helpful to them. Division teams were also asked to indicate a question that was still unanswered.

Common successes were found across many of the divisions. Each of the successes listed below was mentioned by at least two school divisions (i.e., the division had accomplished this during the past school year).

- Reading and literacy programs were strengthened.
- Professional development schedules were changed and content was refocused and targeted.
- Increases in student achievement were noted.
- A smooth transition of leadership
- A focus on working with teachers to use data
- Strengthened and improved school assessments
- Pacing guides were strengthened.
- The provision of a better climate for staff and students was emphasized.
- A focus on early, intensive remediation
- Increased collaboration
- Most participants were enthusiastic and participated wholeheartedly.

However, the most common successes experienced across divisions were found in their focus on delivering a consistent message and their focus on developing a shared understanding, which most divisions felt led to an increase in purposeful collaboration.

In addition to sharing the three successes, divisions were also asked to indicate two barriers their division had overcome this past school year. Several common barriers could be found across divisions. Some divisions felt they had overcome the following barriers:

- Middle school math scores
- Providing planning time for teachers, particularly elementary school teachers
- The inability to have frank and honest discussions about student achievement
- Teaching teachers to use data
- The lack of experienced teachers and principals due to turnover issues
- Lack of collaboration among staff and central office support personnel
- Issues of fidelity to implementation
- Low expectations from teachers and local school boards
- Having so many new teachers and new staff in leadership positions
- Reallocation of resources in the middle of the year

Participating divisions were also asked to indicate one thing they had learned during the WebEx sessions that had been especially helpful to them. Again, responses varied, but new knowledge gained across divisions also revealed some commonalities. Some divisions felt that they had learned about the following:

- Importance of early, intensive intervention
- Need for purposeful dialogue
- Need for an emphasis on fidelity of implementation
- Different variety of assessments of progress monitoring tools available for their use
- Crucial need for networking and collaboration with colleagues
- Improvement process
- Quick Win method
- All seem to be in the same boat and we can learn a lot from each other

As with the delivery of any initiative, questions almost always remain. When asked to indicate what question they still have unanswered, the following questions or statements of need were listed:

- What will the data show?
- What outstanding commitment to the DOE do we still have and what is their commitment to us?

- What additional resources are available to do the work we need to do?
- How do we go about developing and implementing effective incentives?
- I still have concerns over math scores and the disconnect between elementary and middle school math curriculums.
- What other funding options are available to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, particularly in math and for middle school?
- I still need more Quick Wins.
- How do we get high poverty parents interested in their child's education?
- I need information on the Clinical Faculty model.
- What are effective strategies that have been proven successful for maintaining fidelity that can be coupled with strategies implemented during 2007-08?

Overall Summary

A review of the three data sources collected at the June 20 closeout meeting provides a snapshot of how Virginia WebEx participants perceive this work. For the most part, respondents appear satisfied with the content and reported that the materials appear to be authoritative and based on best practices. Respondents also appear satisfied with WebEx processes, but express some concern about the format of the presentation style and the homework assignments. Respondents also seem to have found value in the sessions provided. The Web tool appeared to be well received, and respondents indicated that the tool has helped them focus or structure their improvement plans. Respondents appear to be concerned about some technical aspects of the tool and advise that additional training on the tool would be helpful. Overall, the WebEx work appears to be well received by the division teams, and respondents appear open to the next phase of this work. The networking and collaboration aspects of this work appear to be very well received, and respondents indicate this aspect of the work is especially helpful. Two concerns emerge across the feedback: respondents hope that the work could begin earlier in the school year than it did this past year and indicate they need more information on resource reallocation. Many respondents also appear to believe that this initiative has already impacted or will impact student achievement.