

Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item



Agenda Item: B

Date: November 20, 2014

Title	Final Review of Proposed Plan to Develop an A-F School Grading System in Response to the 2014 Acts of the Assembly		
Presenter	Mrs. Shelley Loving-Ryder, Assistant Superintendent, Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement		
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Purpose of Presentation:

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

Previous Review or Action:

Previous review and action. Specify date and action taken below:

October 23, 3014: First Review

Action Requested:

Final review: Action requested at this meeting.

Alignment with Board of Education Goals: Please indicate (X) all that apply:

X	Goal 1: Accountability for Student Learning
	Goal 2: Rigorous Standards to Promote College and Career Readiness
	Goal 3: Expanded Opportunities to Learn
	Goal 4: Nurturing Young Learners
	Goal 5: Highly Qualified and Effective Educators
	Goal 6: Sound Policies for Student Success
	Goal 7: Safe and Secure Schools
	Other Priority or Initiative. Specify:

Background Information and Statutory Authority:

Goal 1: The approval of a school grading system will support accountability for student learning.

The 2014 General Assembly enacted legislation regarding the school grading formula that delayed the reporting of school grades required by the 2013 Acts of the Assembly from October 2014 to October 2016. The legislation further directed the Virginia Board of Education to consider: 1) the inclusion of additional factors in deriving the school grades and 2) the provision of multiple grades for each school rather than a single grade in the development of the school grading formula. According to the legislation, by January 1, 2015, the Board must develop and submit to the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Chairman of the Senate

Committee on Education and Health a preliminary plan for an A-to-F school performance grading system. By December 1, 2015, the Board must finalize the school performance grading system, make a summary of the system available to the public, and submit a summary of the system to the General Assembly. By October 1, 2016 and each October 1 thereafter, the Board shall assign individual school grades to each public school and make the assigned grades available to the public. The specific requirements of the 2014 legislation are provided below.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia that § 2 of Chapters 672 and 697 of the Acts of Assembly of 2013 is amended as follows:

“§ 2. The Board of Education, by October 1, 2016, shall report individual school performance using a grading system that ~~includes the standards of accreditation, state and federal accountability requirements, and student growth indicators in assigning grades. The grading system shall be~~ is based on an A-to-F grading scale. The Board, by October 1, 2014, shall (i) assign a grade from A to F to each public school in the Commonwealth; (ii) make both the system and the grade assigned to each school in the Commonwealth available to the public; and (iii) report to the General Assembly a summary of the system and the assigned grades. No later than January 1, 2015, the Board shall develop and submit to the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health a preliminary plan for an A-to-F school performance grading system. The Board, in developing the school performance grading system, can consider (i) the standards of accreditation, (ii) state and federal accountability requirements, (iii) state-mandated assessments, (iv) any alternative assessments developed or approved for use by the relevant local school board, (v) student growth indicators, (vi) student mobility, (vii) the experience and qualifications of school staff, (viii) total cost and funding per pupil, (ix) school safety, and (x) any other factors that the Board deems necessary to produce a full and accurate grade for each public elementary and secondary school in the Commonwealth. As part of its preliminary plan, the Board shall also determine, in consultation with the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health, whether to (a) assign a single letter grade to each school or (b) assign a series of letter grades to each school based on some or all of the factors in clauses (i) through (x) or any combination of such factors. No later than July 1, 2015, the Board shall provide notice and solicit public comment on the preliminary school performance grading system plan. No later than December 1, 2015, the Board shall finalize the school performance grading system, make a summary of the system available to the public, and submit a summary of the system to the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health. No later than October 1, 2016, and each October 1 thereafter, the Board shall assign a grade or a series of grades to each public elementary and secondary school in the Commonwealth and make such grades available to the public.”

Summary of Important Issues:

A proposed plan to develop a school grading formula that meets the requirements of the 2014 legislation may be found in Attachment A. Since the plan was reviewed at the October 23, 2014, meeting, an introductory section has been added. This section provides background on the Board’s previous deliberations on the A-F Grading System required by legislation passed by the 2013 General Assembly.

In addition, it suggests the use of an improved school report card web site as an alternative means of communicating the quality and characteristics of schools to the public. The new introductory language is highlighted in the attached plan.

Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

Costs will be absorbed within the Department of Education's existing resources.

Timetable for Further Review/Action: By January 1, 2015, the plan will be submitted to the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board approve the proposed plan for the development of an A-F school grading system.

Rationale:

Approving the plan for the development of an A-F school grading system will permit the Board to submit its plan to the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health by January 1, 2015.

**Proposal for an A - F School Grading System for Virginia Public Schools
to be Presented to the Chairman of the House Committee on Education
and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health
by January 1, 2015**

Introduction

Originally, House Bill 1999/Senate Bill 1207, as passed in the 2013 session of the General Assembly, required that the Board of Education report individual school performance using a grading system that included the standards of accreditation, state and federal accountability requirements, and student growth indicators in assigning grades. The grading system was to be based on an A-to-F grading scale. The Board was to (i) assign a grade from A to F to each public school in the Commonwealth; (ii) make both the system and the grade assigned to each school in the Commonwealth available to the public; and (iii) report to the General Assembly a summary of the system and the assigned grades.

Student growth was defined as (i) whether individual students on average fell below, met, or exceeded an expected amount of growth based on a statewide average or reference base year on state assessments or additional assessments approved by the Board; (ii) maintained a proficient or advanced proficient performance level on state assessments; or (iii) made significant improvement within the below basic or basic level of performance on reading or mathematics assessments as determined by the Board. The Board did develop a grading system in response to that legislative requirement.

In the 2014 session of the General Assembly, House Bill 1229/Senate Bill 324 amended the law to require that the Board develop a preliminary plan for an A-F school performance grading system. In developing the system, the Board can consider (i) the standards of accreditation, (ii) state and federal accountability requirements, (iii) state-mandated assessments, (iv) any alternative assessments developed or approved for use by the relevant local school board, (v) student growth indicators, (vi) student mobility, (vii) the experience and qualifications of school staff, (viii) total cost and funding per pupil, (ix) school safety, and (x) any other factors that the Board deems necessary to produce a full and accurate grade for each public elementary and secondary school in the Commonwealth. Further, the Board shall also address, in consultation with the legislative education committees, whether to assign a single grade per school or assign multiple grades based on multiple factors.

The requirements of the 2014 legislation are provided below.

An Act to amend and reenact § 2 of Chapter 672 and § 2 of Chapter 692 of the Acts of Assembly of 2013, relating to a grading system for individual school performance; delay.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 2 of Chapter 672 of the Acts of Assembly of 2013 is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 2. The Board of Education, *by October 1, 2016*, shall report individual school performance using a grading system that *is* based on an A-to-F scale. *No later than January 1, 2015, the Board shall develop and submit to the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health a preliminary plan for an A-to-F school performance grading system.*

The Board, in developing the school performance grading system, can consider (i) the standards of accreditation, (ii) state and federal accountability requirements, (iii) state-mandated assessments, (iv) any alternative

assessments developed or approved for use by the relevant local school board, (v) student growth indicators, (vi) student mobility, (vii) the experience and qualifications of school staff, (viii) total cost and funding per pupil, (ix) school safety, and (x) any other factors that the Board deems necessary to produce a full and accurate grade for each public elementary and secondary school in the Commonwealth.

As part of its preliminary plan, the Board shall also determine, in consultation with the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health, whether to (a) assign a single letter grade to each school or (b) assign a series of letter grades to each school based on some or all of the factors in clauses (i) through (x) or any combination of such factors. No later than July 1, 2015, the Board shall provide notice and solicit public comment on the preliminary school performance grading system plan.

No later than December 1, 2015, the Board shall finalize the school performance grading system, make a summary of the system available to the public, and submit a summary of the system to the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health. No later than October 1, 2016, and each October 1 thereafter, the Board shall assign a grade or a series of grades to each public elementary and secondary school in the Commonwealth and make such grades available to the public.

As the Board worked to meet the requirements of this legislation, it has struggled to develop a metric that would accurately capture a variety of factors that help to describe how Virginia's schools are meeting the varied educational needs of our students. The Board has concluded that utilizing a single letter grading system attempts to over-simplify and assign values to what are very complicated factors that Virginia schools work to address each and every day as they strive to meet the educational needs of each individual student.

The Board is committed to redesigning our existing report card so that it is a better tool for communicating that myriad of factors that our schools work to address each and every day but also so it will be understandable for our parents, our educators and our communities. Possible considerations include: (1) color coding the data so a quick look may highlight areas of concern, accomplishment and excellence; (2) creating a dash board to give a quick highlight as well as including detail for those who would like to explore the data in greater depth; (3) determining what is required to be included on the report card and what is not; and (4) exploring both the priority and placement of the many data points, to name just a few of the possible considerations.

While the Board believes that a report card which sets out multiple and varied factors and includes data points without assigning a grade can give parents, educators and the community a fuller understanding of how each school is meeting the educational needs of each of their individual students, the following plan is being submitted in response to the legislative mandate.

Planned Steps in Developing an A-F Grading System in Response to 2014 Legislation

Compare Requirements of 2014 Legislation to A-F Grading System Adopted in 2013

As a first step in preparing a plan to address the 2014 legislation, the requirements of the 2014 legislation will be compared to the A-F school grading formula adopted by the Virginia Board of Education in 2013. The purpose of this comparison will be to determine similarities and differences and action steps necessary to meet the requirements of 2014 legislation. The requirements of the 2013 Acts of Assembly are provided below.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. *The Board of Education shall approve student growth indicators by July 31, 2013. The Department of Education shall provide a report to the Governor and the General Assembly on the approval of the student growth indicators and their uses by December 1, 2013. The growth indicators shall be used in the standards of accreditation of schools and in teacher evaluations.*

§ 2. The Board of Education shall report individual school performance using a grading system that includes the standards of accreditation, state and federal accountability requirements, and student growth indicators in assigning grades. The grading system shall be based on an A-to-F grading scale. The Board, by October 1, 2014, shall (i) assign a grade from A to F to each public school in the Commonwealth; (ii) make both the system and the grade assigned to each school in the Commonwealth available to the public; and (iii) report to the General Assembly a summary of the system and the assigned grades.

§ 3. As used in this act, for purposes of assigning grades, "student growth" means (i) whether individual students on average fall below, meet, or exceed an expected amount of growth based on a statewide average or reference base year on state assessments or additional assessments approved by the Board; (ii) maintaining a proficient or advanced proficient performance level on state assessments; or (iii) making significant improvement within the below basic or basic level of performance on reading or mathematics assessments as determined by the Board.

The Virginia School Grading System adopted in 2013 assigned a single letter grade, A-F, to Virginia public schools that are part of the state accreditation system. The grading system incorporated the legislative requirements by combining three primary focus areas that are important for students' long-term school and life success:

- 1) Proficiency of a school's students in core content areas of mathematics, English (reading and writing), science, and history and social science as measured by passing rates on statewide assessments
- 2) Growth or learning gains of an elementary or middle school's students in reading and mathematics as measured by year--to-year ("growth") on state assessments
- 3) College and career readiness of a high school's students as measured by indicators that students have graduated with college and career ready credentials, or are progressing on a pathway to graduating from high school prepared for college and careers.

Research Other States' A - F School Grading Systems

Department staff will identify states that have implemented A - F school grading systems, including those which assign one overall grade and those which assign multiple grades. These systems will be reviewed to determine relevance to Virginia's plan.

Evaluate Potential Inclusion of Additional Data Elements

Virginia Department of Education staff will 1) determine the availability of additional data elements required in the 2014 legislation through existing data collections and 2) identify those elements that would require the collection of additional information from school divisions. In addition, the Department staff will review current research on indicators of school quality to determine the relevance of the data elements included in the 2014 legislation to school success. Finally, the Board will secure legal advice on any issues associated with the use of data not maintained by the Virginia Department of Education in the grading formula.

Consult with Education Committees of the General Assembly

As required by the 2014 legislation, the Board will consult with the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health to determine whether to assign one grade or multiple grades. The results of this consultation will be used to further refine the plan.

Engage Stakeholders

By July 1, 2015, the Board will provide notice and solicit public comment on the school grading system from stakeholders, such as school division staff, educational organizations, parents, students, citizens, businesses, and representatives from higher education.

Finalize the A - F School Grading System and Report Grades

By December 1, 2015, the Board will finalize the school grading system, make a summary of this system available to the public, and submit a summary of the system to the Chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Education and Health. By October 1, 2016, and each October 1 thereafter the Board will report a grade(s) for each public school.