

Progress Today  
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# 6 OF 7 PETERSBURG SCHOOLS ACCREDITED

*One school in Dinwiddie, one in Hopewell slip*



PROGRESS-INDEX FILE PHOTOS

**Students of J.E.B. Stuart Elementary School select one of their teachers as a team captains during the Delta Dental Smart Smiles in School assembly earlier this year. The school was recently fully accredited.**

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Tri-Cities school systems turned in a slightly mixed performance in this year's statewide performance ratings, with one Petersburg school regaining its accreditation after three years while one school each in Dinwiddie County and Hopewell and two in Chesterfield County slipped a notch.

The Virginia Department of Education on Thursday released its annual report on public school accreditation ratings, which are based on students' performance on the Standards of Learning tests and other state assessment tools. All but one of the Tri-Cities' schools received accreditation, though three lost their status of full accreditation.

In Petersburg, J.E.B. Stuart Elementary School received a fully accredited rating this year after being denied accreditation for the previous three years. Peabody Middle School was denied accreditation for the sixth year in a row and was one of only two schools in the

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**Dr. Alvera Parrish became superintendent of Petersburg City Public Schools in June after three years as an assistant superintendent. She said the school system is "moving in the right direction."**

## SCHOOLS

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state to receive a denial this year.

Petersburg School Superintendent Dr. Alvera J. Parrish noted that this is the first year that the city has had six of its seven schools rated as accredited, which she said shows the division is "moving in the right direction." She said the school system is "very excited" that J.E.B. Stuart achieved both full accreditation and "adequate yearly progress" goals, and she hopes to see all six schools accredited next year.

The denial of accreditation for Peabody mainly reflects a continuing struggle with students' mathematics performance, Parrish said. The school system has hired a consultant to work with the students and faculty there to develop curriculum and teaching changes to improve math performance, she said.

Otherwise, she pointed out, Peabody showed significant improvement this year, with scores on English and history tests meeting state benchmarks after fall-

ing short last year.

Colonial Heights and Prince George County again received "fully accredited" ratings for all their schools based on testing during the 2010-11 school year.

Hopewell and Dinwiddie, which had received fully accredited ratings on all their schools last year, saw one school each fall into lower categories. Dinwiddie Middle School was rated "accredited with warning" because of a six-point drop in students' performance in mathematics. Hopewell High School received a "provisionally accredited" rating based on its "provisional" performance on a benchmark used this year for the first time, a Graduation Completion Index.

Two Chesterfield high schools, Chesterfield Community and Meadowbrook, also fell into the provisional category because of the new index, which awards points on a sliding scale for students who graduate on time or achieve related benchmarks.

High schools receive full credit for students who earn a board-recognized diploma and partial credit

for students who earn GEDs and local credentials, and for students who are still enrolled and expected to return for a fifth year of high school. The school must receive an index of at least 85 for full accreditation; an index of 80-84 points earns a provisional accreditation.

Statewide, the new benchmark lowered the percentage of high schools receiving full accreditation to 86 percent from 99 percent last year.

Overall, only 97 of the state's 132 school districts achieved full accreditation this year, down from 119 last year, and the number of schools that received full accreditation this year fell by 2 percentage points from last year.

Department of Education officials attributed the decline in part to the increasingly strict requirements imposed by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Last week, Superinten-

dent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said the state will probably seek a waiver of some of the requirements of the decade-old law, after President Barack Obama announced that the U.S. Department of Education will grant waivers to states that want to develop their own educational performance measures.

"Whenever standards are raised, there are schools that require time to meet the new expectations," Wright said in a statement on Thursday. "Our schools will begin a new trendline as these more rigorous standards and assessments become effective. But raising standards is the right thing to do and I am confident that our teachers and schools will rise to the challenge and Virginia students will be better prepared as a result."

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