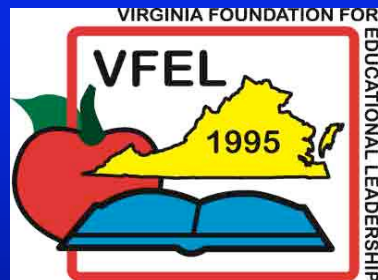


# Division Support for Substantial and Sustainable School Improvement

## A Capacity Building Program of the Virginia Department of Education



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# **Why was the program developed?**

**Concern that districts with schools in restructuring/reconstitution would only “fight fires”**

**Recognition that more schools might face reconstitution**

**VDOE limitations of staff time and other resources**

# **A proposed remedy**

**Increase capacity of school divisions to better support all their schools**

**Use research on districts that quickly and substantially improved student achievement**

**Develop cost-effective uses of VDOE resources**

**Begin with conditionally accredited schools/restructuring schools—with potential for scaling up**

# Planning for the VDOE WebEx Program

**Collaborative effort:**

- Virginia Department of Education
- Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership
- Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center
- Center for Innovation & Improvement

**Preliminary discussions plus a two-day planning session:**

- Ways to leverage VDOE resources
- Ways to actively engage division staff
- Possibility for scale-up and scheduling

**Decision was made to focus on a system of indicators**

# Timeline: 2007-2009



# How It Fits with VDOE Efforts to Support School Improvement

- Academic reviews are targeted in “layers” for schools not making either state or federal benchmarks.
- What happens:
  - In the first year, schools have a full scale academic review
  - Division staff are included on the academic review team
  - School develops a school improvement plan

- **Second year: Team provides support to leadership team (division and school) to monitor and implement school improvement plan**
- **Leadership development, academic coaching, etc., are provided with the intensity needed**
- **Division staff are included on the school support team**
- **Third year: Office of School Improvement begins working closely with division staff and “bumps up” the intervention**

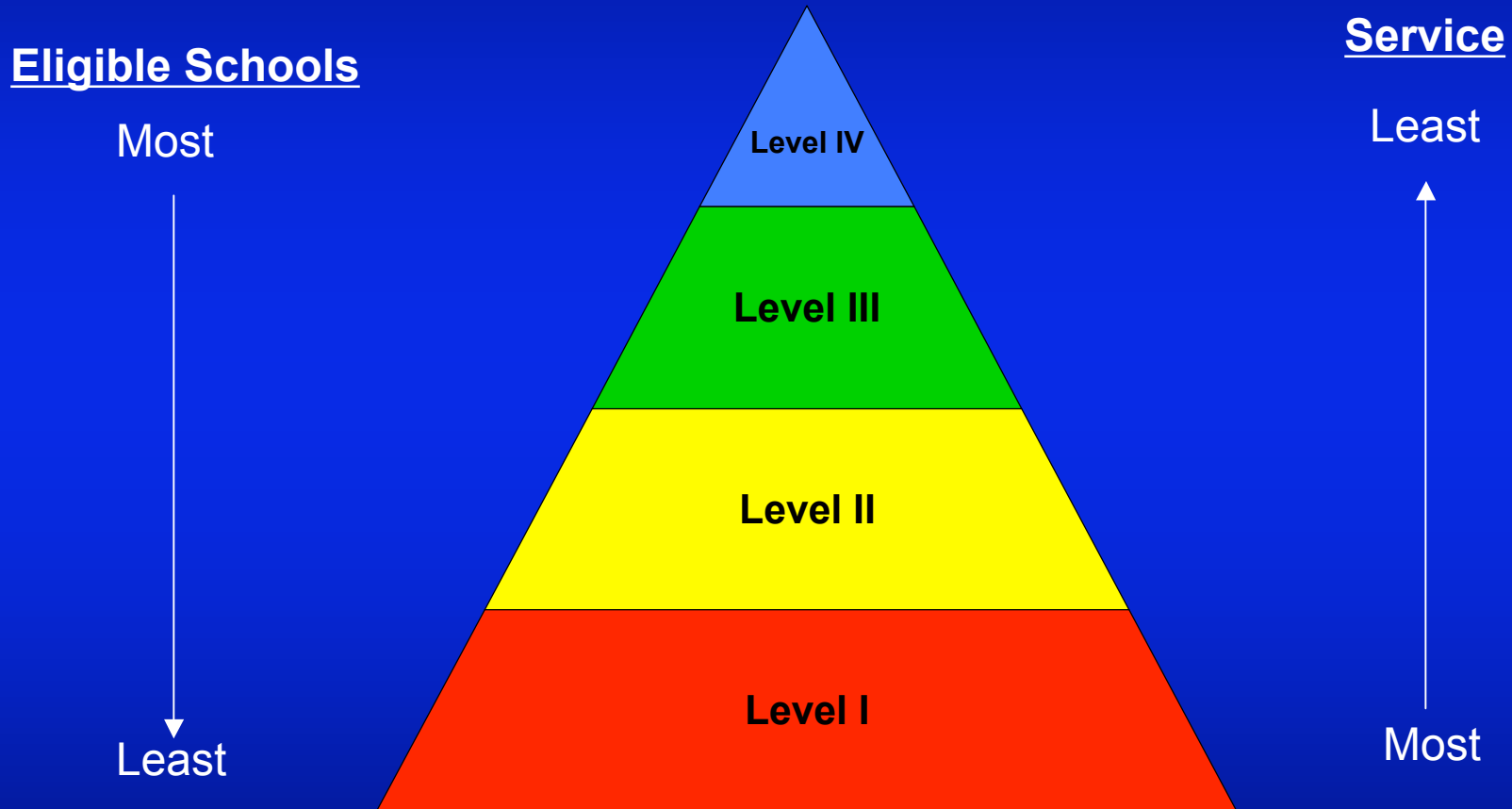


- **Most needy schools are assigned a coach or auditor and followed in a structured intervention (Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools)**
- **If school is in both federal and state sanctions, the coach or auditor monitors spending of the school improvement funds**
- **Fourth year: Major restructuring sanctions**

**<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/SchoolImprovement/>**

- **In Virginia, 30 schools are in major restructuring for either state or state/federal sanctions, and two are in NCLB restructuring.**
- **The WebEx Program is designed to support the divisions and schools in major restructuring.**
- **In order to receive a status of “conditional” versus “accreditation denied,” these schools had to apply to the Virginia Board of Education and agree to conditions that included the division’s participation in this project.**

# Delivery of Services and Eligible Schools



# Schools Eligible for Improvement Services

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accreditation Denied Schools (Memorandum of Understanding)</li> <li>• Schools Receiving Division-level Reviews</li> <li>• Conditionally Accredited Schools (Board Approved)</li> <li>• Title I Schools in Year 5 of Improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools Accredited with Warning for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Consecutive Year</li> <li>• Title I Schools in Year 4 of Improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools Accredited with Warning for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Consecutive Year</li> <li>• Title I Schools in Year 3 of Improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools Accredited with Warning for the 1<sup>st</sup> Year</li> <li>• Title I Schools in Year 1 or 2 of Improvement</li> </ul>

# The VDOE WebEx Program

- Focus is on learning/using a *process* for division and school improvement
- Seven “classes” with instruction provided over the web and telephone to teams from 20 school divisions
- Divisions assigned to small groups, each taught by two faculty members and the Director of the Office of School Improvement

- **PowerPoint presentations prepared by CII staff provide a common curriculum across the groups**
- **Content focuses on 20 “indicators” of effective district practices**
- **“Script” is supplemented by faculty members plus discussion from school personnel**
- **VDOE web site developed as an additional support**

# Focus on the “How”

- *Indicator* is an element that research connects with successful school improvement
- Missing link in research is the “how” behind the Indicator
- This project will focus on the “how”
- Each division team will link indicators with division improvement planning

# Sample Content from a WebEx



# **IA10-Resource Allocation**

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**The division regularly allocates/reallocates resources to support school, staff, and instructional improvement.**

# **Take a Broad View of Resources**

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**Human (i.e., staffing)**

**Financial**

**Time**

**Technology, materials, etc.**

**Staff development**

**Special support for at-risk students**

**Technical assistance**

# Make the Resource Allocation Process *Intentional*

Resource usage must be congruent with division goals for equity and excellence.

Focus resources on schools and students making inadequate progress.

Inform allocation decisions through use of multiple sources of data.

# Discussion: Resource Allocation

**Do we consciously and continuously ask whether resource decisions support our goals?**

**What information do we need to inform our resource allocation decisions?**

**Is the concept of equity reflected in our decisions about resource allocation (e.g., staff, money, time, special programs, technical assistance)?**

**How can we lessen negative impacts that may result from resource *reallocation*?**

# Key Elements: Sharing and Accountability

Division personnel report on their progress at the beginning of each WebEx:

- Which indicator received the most attention?
- What were some of the tasks developed to support progress on this indicator?
- Highlight successes, no matter how small. Be specific.
- Now highlight “speed bumps” and, again, be specific. Have strategies to address these been developed?

## **The WebEx Process *(continued)***

- **Division personnel have “homework” between WebEx sessions**
- **Online tool developed by CII supports the division assessment and improvement planning process**
- **Faculty members and VDOE personnel have access to each division’s online assessment and planning material**
- **Auditors monitor the work at the school level and submit monthly reports**
- **Monthly reports are reviewed for evidence of both homework and improved shared governance**

# STEPS for the Online Tool

- Design the team.
- Determine if this is a priority indicator.
- Provide information regarding how this indicator looks in the present.
- Determine if it is a priority for local educational agency (LEA) change.
- If it is, describe what it should look like when it is fully implemented.
- Develop action steps to ensure full implementation.
- Monitor action steps.

# How's it going?

- All 20 divisions are participating as required by the conditional granted by the Virginia Board of Education
- Feedback from participants highlight reflective nature of the process and opportunities for sharing of successful practices as helpful
- Shared governance is indicated in both the homework and monthly reports provided by auditors
- Divisions vary as to the quality of “homework”
- Provides diagnostic data for VDOE staff
- Virginia Board of Education is reviewing data and frequents the web site



# Plans for the Future

- Divisions in the first “class” will move on to use of a similar indicator process with their schools and will continue working on indicators with VDOE support
- CII has developed a turnaround assessment tool for the school-level
- Tool will be used with alternative governance teams, LEA staff, and principals
- Additional divisions will be encouraged to use the division-level (and, perhaps, school-level) indicator process, and new divisions that enter through sanctions established the by the Virginia Board of Education can use the process at the LEA level

# Capacity Issues also Direct Next Steps

- **Expertise at the SEA, LEA, and school levels could be less than what is needed for the expanding number of schools entering restructuring**
- **SREB Leadership modules may provide training and expertise needed at the SEA, LEA, and school levels**
- **Critical technical assistance is needed in turnaround skills of instructional leadership in chronically low-performing schools**

# Could the Process Be Used in Other States?

- Use approach as developed or perhaps modify for a more intensive summer workshop
- Online tool available with some modifications
- Should be integrated with other DOE supports
- Active participation by DOE staff and “message” of accountability are critical
- Assistance with needs assessments, plan development, and accessing nationally recognized expertise and resources can be facilitated by your regional comprehensive center (in this case the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center at Edvantia)

# Statewide System of Support

- Requires active, aggressive, and purposeful leadership
- Requires interaction with the State Board
- Requires an office dedicated to this task
- Requires partnerships with resources from outside of the state agency – SEAs need to “get over being the only show in town”
- There is an extensive national network of Regional Comprehensive Centers and Content Centers (*Go to: [www.ed.gov/about/contacts/gen/othersites/compcenters.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/contacts/gen/othersites/compcenters.html)*) that can increase SEA capacity to help their LEAs meet and exceed NCLB and state accountability requirements

**While relatively low-cost, it's not no cost—  
DOE staff time and other resources are needed**

**Collaboration of DOE with other partners an important element**

**\* \* \* \* \***

**Contact Information Regarding Online Indicator Tool:**

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## ***Appendix: Center for Improvement Indicators Selected By Virginia WebEx Faculty***

***IA02 – Community–The district includes civic and community leaders in district and school improvement planning and maintains regular communication with them.***

***IA07 – Achievement Targets–The district sets district, school, and student subgroup achievement targets.***

***IA11 - 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.***

***IB02 – 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.***

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***IC05 – Curriculum–The district provides a cohesive district curriculum guide aligned with state standards or otherwise places curricular expectation on the school.***

***IC06 - Data Training–The district provides the technology, training, and support to facilitate the school’s data management needs.***

***IA04 - Staff Incentives–The district provides incentives for staff who work effectively in hard-to-staff and restructured schools.***

***IA10 - Resource Reallocation–The district regularly reallocates resources to support school, staff, and instructional improvement.***

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***IA14 - Quality Staff—The district recruits, trains, supports, and places personnel to competently address the problems of schools in need of improvement.***

***IA12 - District Intervention—The district intervenes early when a school is not making adequate progress.***

***IC01 - 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.***

***IC02 - 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.***



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***IC03 - District-School Communication—District and school decision makers meet at least twice a month to discuss the school's progress.***

***IC07 - Professional Development—Professional development is built into the school schedule by the district, but the school is allowed discretion in selecting training and consultation that fit the requirements of its improvement/restructuring plan and its evolving needs.***

***IB07 - Programs and Practices—The improvement/restructuring plan includes research-based, field-proven programs, practices, and models.***

***IB08 – Vision—The improvement/restructuring plan includes a clear vision of what the school will look like when restructured or substantially improved.***

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***IB11 - Quick Wins—The improvement/restructuring plan focuses on “quick wins,” early successes in improvement.***

***ID01 - School Teams—A team structure is officially incorporated into the school improvement plan and school governance policy.***

***IA13 - Student Support—The district works with the school to provide early and intensive intervention for students not making progress.***

***ID10 - 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.***