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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 22, 2022

**NORFOLK PUBLIC SCHOOLS SHARES ITS 2022-2023 ACCREDITATION RESULTS BASED ON  
2021-2022 SOL TEST RESULTS**

NORFOLK, VA - Data released on Thursday, September 22 by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) projects twenty-four (24) schools within Norfolk Public Schools (NPS) (57.1%) will be accredited, and eighteen (18) schools (42.9%) will be accredited with conditions for the 2022-2023 school year.

While accreditation this year has not rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, Chief Academic Officer Dr. James M. Pohl indicated that there are encouraging signs of recovery. For example, when examining the spring Standards of Learning (SOL) combined performance rates, 81% of the division's schools experienced an increase in the combined performance rate for English while 48% recorded an increase in the combined performance rate for mathematics (comparing performance during the 2021-2022 school year to pre-pandemic tests results). However, science proved to be an area of needed growth for Norfolk Public Schools, and thus, a barrier to an improved accreditation scenario. During the 2019-2020 school year, 66.7% of NPS' current schools were accredited, and 33.3% were accredited with conditions. The VDOE waived accreditation ratings for the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years in recognition of the enormous challenges inherent in educating children during a global pandemic.

***Science proved a problematic subject area across the commonwealth***

"I believe it is significant to point out that science alone kept eight (8) schools from meeting the overall accreditation benchmark. In fact, had the VDOE decided to factor science out of accreditation calculations, a move many school divisions would have supported, thirty-two (32) schools or 76.2% would have been accredited and ten (10) or 23.8% would have been accredited with conditions. That would have put NPS in the position of improving its accreditation standing," Dr. Pohl commented.

What made student mastery in this area so difficult this year? According to Dr. Pohl, the pacing and delivery of science instruction proved especially challenging. Science standards for the 5th

and 8th grade assessments are extensive enough that instruction must be delivered over a multiple-year schedule. This meant when students were tested last spring, the majority of instruction they had received to be successful on the assessment had been taught online during the previous school year. “In fact, when examining the VDOE’s science data in the “all students” reporting category, all but one of the 133 school divisions in Virginia experienced a decline in science from the previous accreditation year,” he said.

Superintendent Dr. Sharon I. Byrdsong noted, “I trust sharing such information with our community will not be seen as offering excuses but as advancing understanding of the challenges involved in learning recovery. Learning recovery will not occur overnight; however, as evidenced by our reading and mathematics data, it is taking place. The teachers, administrators, support staff, and division-level leadership of Norfolk Public Schools remain unrelenting in our advocacy for children. We have been moving the needle of student achievement in a positive direction, and we will continue to do so. We will not rest until every school is accredited and, most importantly, each child is well-positioned to succeed in school and their lives beyond our doors.”

### ***Plans for strengthening instruction***

Dr. Byrdsong and Dr. Pohl have shared plans such as the implementation of additional science assessments; increased use of hands-on activities for science; increased professional development for elementary teachers in the area of science instruction; curriculum revisions to address new science standards; and increased tutoring supports for schools with high needs.

Progress in mathematics and reading has been encouraging. Nineteen (19) NPS schools made at least a 10-point gain in combined performance rates for English and/or mathematics academic achievement. The intense effort that has been put forth in those areas will not only continue, they also will be strengthened to help ensure improvements in all schools. Dr. Byrdsong noted key improvement strategies in mathematics and reading will involve continued professional development for teachers and administrators; an ongoing focus on data to meet each school’s and each student’s needs; additional tutoring assistance; and a laser-like focus in the next budget cycle on improving Norfolk Public Schools’ competitive edge in the area of teacher recruitment.

### ***An example of how one Norfolk school facilitated significant improvement***

“Our teachers, administrators, and support staff across the division have worked tirelessly to help children regain academic confidence and social-emotional well-being. Just to provide our community a sense of the tremendous effort that this work involves, I would like to share one school’s work as an example,” said Dr. Byrdsong. A summary of St. Helena Elementary School’s improvement efforts accompanies this news release.

Norfolk Public Schools (NPS) is on a mission to ensure that all students maximize their academic potential, develop skills for lifelong learning, and become successful contributors to a global society. We believe Norfolk Public Schools is the cornerstone of a proudly diverse community with highly qualified teachers and staff dedicated to providing diverse teaching and learning opportunities for all students.