



## GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

# GOVERNING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE REGULATIONS ESTABLISHING STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA (8VAC20-131)

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*Revised March 2021*

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Introduction ..... 3

8VAC20-131-30 Student Achievement Expectations ..... 4

    Expedited Retakes of the Grades 3-8 SOL Tests and End-of-Course Tests Administered to Meet  
    Federal Accountability Only ..... 4

    Remediation Recovery ..... 6

    Testing Requirements under the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Standards of Accreditation ..... 8

    Foreign Exchange Student Participation in SOL Testing ..... 13

8VAC20-131-50 Graduation Requirements (for Students Entering Ninth Grade Prior to the 2018–2019  
School Year) ..... 14

    Additional Locally-Prescribed Graduation Credit Requirements ..... 14

    Standard Diploma Graduation Requirements (for Students Entering Ninth Grade Prior to 2018-2019) 15

    Advanced Studies Diploma Graduation Requirements (for Students Entering Ninth Grade Prior to  
2018-2019) ..... 17

    Courses to Satisfy Graduation Requirements ..... 18

    Use of Computer Science Courses to Satisfy Graduation Requirements ..... 18

    Sequential Electives Required for Graduation with a Standard Diploma ..... 19

    Awarding Differentiated Numbers of Verified Credit for CTE Certification and Licensure  
    Examinations ..... 21

    Virtual Course Graduation Requirement ..... 22

    Credit Accommodations ..... 25

    Diploma Seal of Biliteracy ..... 28

8VAC20-131-50(F) Modified Standard Diploma (for Students with Disabilities Who Entered Ninth  
Grade Prior to 2013-2014) ..... 30

    Modified Standard Diploma ..... 30

8VAC20-131-51 Graduation Requirements (Effective with the Students Who Enter the Ninth Grade in  
the 2018–2019 School Year) ..... 32

    Profile of a Virginia Graduate ..... 32

    Additional Locally-Prescribed Graduation Credit Requirements ..... 33

    Standard Diploma Graduation Requirements (Effective with the Students Who Enter the Ninth Grade  
in the 2018–2019 School Year) ..... 36

    Advanced Studies Diploma Graduation Requirements (Effective with the Students Who Enter the  
Ninth Grade in the 2018–2019 School Year) ..... 39

    Courses to Satisfy Graduation Requirements ..... 40

    Use of Computer Science Courses to Satisfy Graduation Requirements ..... 40

    Alternative Method to Earn Verified Credit in Laboratory Science ..... 42

    Sequential Electives Required for Graduation ..... 42

    Virtual Course Graduation Requirement ..... 44

Advanced Placement, Honors, or International Baccalaureate Course or Career and Technical Education Credential .....	46
Credit Accommodations .....	48
Diploma Seal of Biliteracy.....	51
8VAC20-131-60 Transfer Students .....	53
Transfer from a Nonpublic School.....	53
Graduation Requirements for Transfer Students .....	55
8VAC20-131-80 Instructional Program in Elementary Schools .....	62
Physical Fitness Programs in Elementary School.....	62
Physical Education and Physical Activity Program Guidelines .....	63
8VAC20-131-90 Instructional Program in Middle Schools .....	67
Physical Fitness Programs in Middle School.....	67
Physical Education and Physical Activity Program Guidelines .....	68
World Language and Algebra I in Middle School.....	72
Career Investigations Course .....	73
8VAC20-131-110 Standard and Verified Units of Credit .....	74
Alternatives to the 140 Clock Hour Requirement for Standard Units of Credit.....	74
Locally-Awarded Verified Credit .....	78
Authentic Performance Assessments .....	80
Substitute or Additional Tests Used to Verify Credit.....	83
Expedited Retakes for End-of-Course Tests Needed for Verified Credits .....	84
8VAC20-131-140 College and Career Readiness; Career Exposure, Exploration, and Planning; and Opportunities for Postsecondary Credit.....	85
Academic and Career Plans .....	85
8VAC20-131-170 Family Life Education .....	87
Family Life Education .....	87
8VAC20-131-240 Administrative and Staff Support; Staffing Requirements .....	88
Special Education Pupil-Teacher Ratios and Class Size .....	88
Career and Technical Education Pupil-Teacher Ratios and Class Size .....	89
8VAC20-131-380 Measurement of School Quality for Accreditation .....	90
Level Two Performance Designation for More Than Four Consecutive Years .....	90
8VAC20-131-410 Recognitions and Rewards for School and Division Accountability.....	92
Exemplar School Recognition .....	92
8VAC20-131-420 Waivers and Alternative Accreditation Plans .....	95
Experimental or Innovative Programs .....	95
Waivers of Graduation Requirements.....	97
Alternative Accreditation Plans and Waivers for Special Purpose Schools .....	98

## INTRODUCTION

This guidance document has been developed to provide additional details concerning the interpretation and implementation of certain provisions in the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (i.e. Standards of Accreditation or SOA). From time to time, this document will be revised to incorporate additional guidance resulting from legislation and/or to provide clarification on provisions where questions have arisen as to how implementation should occur. It includes guidance adopted by the Board of Education and guidance issued by the Department of Education.

This document is presented in the order of the of the SOA regulations. Each guidance topic is followed by the text of the SOA and the relevant guidance. This document does not include the text of the SOA in its entirety. The full text of the SOA is available online, [Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia \(8VAC20-131\)](#).

Where this document provides links to other guidance documents, the user should confirm that the linked document is the most current version.

## **8VAC20-131-30 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT EXPECTATIONS**

### **EXPEDITED RETAKES OF THE GRADES 3-8 SOL TESTS AND END-OF-COURSE TESTS ADMINISTERED TO MEET FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY ONLY**

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#### ***8VAC20-131-30(B) and (E) state:***

*B. In kindergarten through eighth grade, where the administration of Virginia Assessment Program tests is required by the board, each student shall be expected to take the tests following instruction. Students who are accelerated shall take the test aligned with the highest grade level, following instruction in the content. No student shall take more than one test in any content area in each year, except in the case of expedited retakes as provided for in this section...*

*...The board shall provide the same criteria for eligibility for an expedited retake of any SOL test, with the exception of the writing SOL tests, to each student regardless of grade level or course.*

*E. Each student in middle and secondary schools shall take all applicable end-of-course SOL tests following course instruction... ...Students shall not be required to take an end-of-course SOL test in an academic subject after they have earned the number of verified credits required for that academic content area for graduation, unless such test is necessary in order for the school to meet federal accountability requirements.*

#### ***Guidance:***

The following criteria shall be used in determining the eligibility of students for an expedited retake of: (1) an SOL test for grades 3-8, or (2) an end-of-course SOL test administered to meet federal accountability requirements only. Criteria for students who are retaking end-of-course tests to meet verified credit requirements are found in the guidance for “Expedited Retakes for End-of-Course Tests Needed for Verified Credits” in 8VAC20-131-110 of this document

The student must have a passing grade in the class associated with the test and meet one of the following:

- The student failed the test by a narrow margin as defined as a scaled score of 375-399; or
- The student failed the test with a scaled score below 375; and
  - had a documented extenuating circumstance that prevented him/her from performing at the expected level; and/or
  - there was a significant discrepancy between the student’s SOL test score and his/her typical academic performance.

#### ***Extenuating Circumstance:***

An extenuating circumstance is defined as an unusual and uncontrollable event that negatively impacted a student’s test performance. Examples of extenuating circumstances may include, but

are not limited to: the recent death of a family member, friend, or pet; a traumatic home situation; or other significant personal distress or disruption that does not qualify for irregularity retesting. Generally, school staff identify such situations before the student begins testing so that the testing session may be rescheduled. However, there are incidences where the circumstances affecting the student are not known until after testing has begun.

*Significant Achievement Discrepancy:*

Evidence that the SOL test score is significantly lower than expected based on the student's typical level of achievement may be used to justify retesting. Data used to establish the student's typical performance may include previous SOL test data in the same content area or evidence of the student's current academic achievement.

*Required Documentation:*

School divisions will maintain documentation of the unusual circumstances experienced for each student retested under the extenuating circumstances provision and evidence of the student's typical academic achievement for those retesting under the significant achievement discrepancy provision. Documentation will be subject to periodic review by Department staff on behalf of the Board. Information gathered during the reviews will be used to provide technical assistance to school divisions and may be shared in summary form with the Board.

*Parental Permission:*

Prior to any expedited retake for students who have failed an SOL test for grades 3-8, school divisions shall obtain and thereafter maintain documentation annually of affirmative parental consent and permission for a child to take an expedited retake. Parents of eligible students shall be notified: (a) of the opportunity to retake the test(s); (b) that the decision not to retake any or all of the test(s) will not impact their child's grade or academic record; and (c) of the opt-in requirement.

NOTE: Refer to the guidance for "Expedited Retakes for End-of-Course Tests Needed for Verified Credits" in 8VAC20-131-110 of this document for all other expedited retakes.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on March 22, 2018.)*

## **REMEDIATION RECOVERY**

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### ***8VAC20-131-30(C) states:***

*C. In kindergarten through grade 12, students may participate in a remediation recovery program as established by the board in English (reading) or mathematics or both.*

### ***Guidance:***

Remediation recovery is a voluntary program that schools may implement to encourage successful remediation of students who fail certain SOL tests in grades K-8 and high school reading and mathematics.

Placing a student in a remediation recovery program in reading and/or mathematics does not penalize a school if the fails the SOL test. Schools shall maintain, in the student's record, evidence of the student's participation in a remediation recovery program and the scores of any SOL tests taken following remediation.

Remediation recovery scores will count at the school where the student was tested as a remediation recovery student. Students may be counted in remediation recovery only once for each grade or test.

### **Grade 3 – 7 Tests**

Students who failed reading and/or mathematics tests in grades 3 through 7, and were promoted to the next grade, may participate in a remediation recovery program. These students will take the SOL test for the grade in which they are enrolled (e.g., a student who fails the grade 3 mathematics test and is promoted to grade 4, will take the grade 4 mathematics test following participation in a remediation recovery program).

- If these remediation recovery students pass the test(s) in the grade in which they are enrolled, their scores will be counted twice in the school's accreditation pass rate—once as part of the pass rate for the grade in which they are currently enrolled and a second time under remediation recovery.
- If these remediation recovery students fail the test, then the student's score is counted only once for the school's accreditation pass rate.

### **Grade 8 Tests**

Students who failed the grade 8 reading test and/or the grade 8 mathematics test and were promoted to the 9th grade may participate in a remediation recovery program and may retake the failed grade 8 reading and/or mathematics test.

- If these remediation recovery students retake and pass the grade 8 reading and/or mathematics tests in the 9th grade, their scores will be counted twice in the school's accreditation pass rate—once as part of the pass rate for the grade in which they are currently enrolled and a second time under remediation recovery.

- If these remediation recovery students fail the test for the course in which they are currently enrolled, then the student's score is counted only once for the school's accreditation pass rate.
- If these remediation recovery students fail the grade 8 reading and/or mathematics retest attempt, then the student's score will not be included in the school's accreditation pass rate.

*End-of-Course Reading and Mathematics Tests*

Students who fail an end-of-course (EOC) English reading test or an EOC mathematics test needed for verified credit may participate in a remediation recovery program. These remediation recovery students may retake the applicable SOL test at the next regularly scheduled administration.

- If these remediation recovery students retake and pass the EOC reading or mathematics test, the student's score will be counted twice in the school's accreditation pass rate—once as part of the subject area pass rate and a second time under remediation recovery.
- If these remediation recovery students fail the retake of the EOC test, then the student's score is not included in the school's accreditation pass rate.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006)*

## TESTING REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE EVERY STUDENTS SUCCEEDS ACT AND THE STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

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### **8VAC20-131-30(B) and (E) state, in part:**

*B. In kindergarten through eighth grade, where the administration of Virginia Assessment Program tests is required by the board, each student shall be expected to take the tests following instruction. Students who are accelerated shall take the test aligned with the highest grade level, following instruction in the content. No student shall take more than one test in any content area in each year, except in the case of expedited retakes as provided for in this section...*

*E. Each student in middle and secondary schools shall take all applicable end-of-course SOL tests following course instruction. The division superintendent shall certify to the Department of Education that the division's policy for dropping courses ensures that students' course schedules are not changed to avoid end-of-course SOL tests. Students who achieve a passing score on an end-of-course SOL test shall be awarded a verified unit of credit in that course in accordance with the provisions of 8VAC20-131-110. Students may earn verified units of credit in any courses for which end-of-course SOL tests are available. Students shall not be required to take an end-of-course SOL test in an academic subject after they have earned the number of verified credits required for that academic content area for graduation, unless such test is necessary in order for the school to meet federal accountability requirements. Middle and secondary schools may consider the student's end-of-course SOL test score in determining the student's final course grade. However, no student who has failed an end-of-course SOL test but passed the related course shall be prevented from taking any other course in a content area and from taking the applicable end-of-course SOL test. The board may approve additional tests to verify student achievement in accordance with guidelines adopted for verified units of credit described in 8VAC20-131-110.*

### **Guidance:**

#### Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Testing Requirements

Under ESSA, students must be tested in reading and mathematics annually in grades 3-8 and once in high school (grades 9-12). In science, students must be tested once in elementary school, once in middle school, and once in high school. Students may meet the ESSA testing requirements by taking a Standards of Learning (SOL) test, or in the case of students with significant cognitive disabilities, participating in the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP).

ESSA requires schools that do not test 95 percent of their students in reading and mathematics to submit a plan to the Virginia Department of Education. This requirement does not apply to science testing.

Students who do not take assessments are generally counted as non-participants; however, if parents refuse to have their students tested, such students count as participants and receive a “0” score. As in previous years, the “0” score is included in the school and division pass rates for federal accountability.

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, Virginia was approved to use all three end-of-course mathematics tests (Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II tests) and all three end-of-course science tests (Earth Science, Biology, and Chemistry tests) to meet federal accountability requirements. The United States Department of Education (USED) is now requiring Virginia to select one end-of-course test in each subject area to be used for federal accountability. Virginia has selected Algebra I as the high school mathematics test, Biology as the high school science test, and the end-of-course reading test for high school reading.

USED has granted Virginia a waiver so that students who have passed the Algebra I SOL test in middle school can use a score from the Geometry or Algebra II SOL test to meet the high school testing requirement in mathematics. Additionally, Virginia has been granted a waiver so that students who pass the Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II tests in middle school can use an SAT, ACT, AP, or IB test score in mathematics to meet the federal accountability requirement.

*Application of ESSA Testing Requirements and the SOA*

In accordance with the SOA, students enrolled in courses with end-of-course tests must take the tests unless they have earned the number of verified credits needed for graduation in that content area. However, high school students are expected to take tests in mathematics, science, and reading to meet federal accountability requirements, even if the student has earned the number of verified credits needed for graduation in that content area. This does not mean that students should continue to be administered additional tests until the school meets federal targets for academic achievement.

Specific guidance for each subject area is included in the table below:

<b><i>Guidance Regarding Testing Requirements under ESSA and the SOA</i></b>	
<b><i>Subject</i></b>	<b><i>Guidance</i></b>
<b>Mathematics</b>	In accordance with ESSA, students must take a mathematics test while enrolled in high school for federal accountability. Virginia has selected the Algebra I test as the high school mathematics test. Students who have completed the Algebra I course and passed the test prior to ninth grade must take either the Geometry or Algebra II SOL test while enrolled in high school. Although these students have earned a verified credit in mathematics in middle school, they are required to take a mathematics test in high school to meet federal accountability requirements. Students who have passed the Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II tests at the middle school level may use scores from the SAT, ACT, IB, or AP tests in mathematics to meet this requirement. Students with significant cognitive

<b><i>Subject</i></b>	<b><i>Guidance</i></b>
	<p>disabilities may meet the ESSA testing requirement by participating in the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP).</p> <p>With regard to high school transfer students, the ESSA requirement for each student to be tested in Algebra I is only applicable to those transfer students that are enrolled in an Algebra I course.</p>
<b>Reading</b>	<p>The SOL end-of-course reading test is being used as the high school test for reading. As such, all students must take the SOL end-of-course reading test or, in the case of students with significant cognitive disabilities, participate in VAAP to meet federal accountability requirements.</p>
<b>Science</b>	<p>Virginia has selected the Biology test as the high school science test to meet ESSA requirements. As such, school divisions are expected to administer the Biology test to all high school students regardless of whether a student has already earned the verified credit required for science. In many school divisions, Earth Science is taught before Biology, thus some students may have earned a verified credit in Earth Science prior to taking Biology. These students shall take the Biology test to meet federal requirements, despite having earned a verified credit in Earth Science. Students with significant cognitive disabilities may meet the ESSA testing requirement by participating in VAAP.</p> <p>Please note that schools are not required to submit a plan to VDOE if testing less than 95 percent of their students in science. However, the school's participation rate will be reported on the School Quality Profile under the ESSA tab.</p>
<b>History</b>	<p>The administration of history/social science tests is not required under ESSA. However, students are required to earn verified credits in history to meet graduation requirements. Students must take SOL end-of-course tests in history or board-approved substitute tests until they have earned the required number of verified credits.</p>

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Guidance</i>
<b>Writing</b>	<p>The administration of writing tests is not required under ESSA. However, students are required to earn verified credits in writing to meet graduation requirements. School divisions may choose to award verified credits in writing using either the current SOL assessment or local performance assessments. In addition, board-approved substitute tests for the end-of-course writing test may be used to verify credits in writing. Further information regarding the use of local performance assessments to verify credits in writing can be found in the <i>Authentic Performance Assessments</i> section of this document, under 8VAC20-131-110 Standard and Verified Units of Credit.</p>
<b>Student-Selected Verified Credit</b>	<p>Students who entered the ninth grade for the first time prior to 2018-2019 must earn a “student-selected” verified credit. School divisions have asked if students can choose which test they wish to use to meet this requirement or if they must continue to be administered SOL end-of-course tests until they have met the requirement. Because this credit is intended to be “student-selected,” students should be able to choose which test will be used for this purpose. Students may choose to attempt all eligible tests until they meet the additional verified credit requirement, or they may specify which test they will attempt. Students must be counseled carefully in making this decision to ensure that they do not miss the opportunity to earn verified credits. The student selected verified credit is no longer a requirement for students entering the ninth grade for the first time in 2018-2019 and beyond.</p>

*Ability of Students to “Opt-in” to an EOC SOL test*

Some school divisions have asked whether a student may be permitted to take an end-of-course SOL test after the student has earned the required verified credits for graduation and met the federal testing requirements. Once a student has earned the required verified credits for graduation and met the federal testing requirements, the student is not to be administered additional end-of-course tests.

Parents may, however, request that their student complete an end-of-course test beyond the required assessments by providing affirmative parental consent (“opt-in”) to the school division. Parents must submit their request in writing along with their affirmative consent for the administration of each end-of-course test requested beyond the required assessments. It is to be made clear to the parent and student that not completing additional end-of-course tests (i.e., tests beyond those needed to earn required verified credits for graduation and to meet federal testing requirements) will not impact the student’s grade or academic record. Prior to the administration of any additional end-of-course test to the student, the school division shall obtain and maintain

written documentation of the parent's request and affirmative consent to complete each additional end-of-course test.

It should be noted that end-of-course tests administered at the request of parents after the student has earned the required verified credits for graduation and met the federal testing requirements will not be included in calculations for state accreditation or federal accountability.

*Skipping SOL Test Administration Not Permitted*

Some school divisions have asked if they can skip administering SOL tests to students who have not yet earned the required verified credits in a subject area. For example, school divisions have asked if students who take Earth Science before Biology can skip the Earth Science test. Other school divisions have asked if students can skip taking the end-of-course tests in World Geography, World History I or World History II tests and take the Virginia/United States History test to earn the required verified credit. Based on the requirements of the SOA at 8VAC20-131-30(E), students may not skip these tests because they must be administered the end-of-course SOL tests until they have earned the required number of verified credits in the content area.

*(Adapted from guidance provided in Superintendent's Memo #299-18 on October 19, 2018, Superintendent's Memo #327-18 on November 30, 2018, and Superintendent's Email on January 14, 2019)*

## **FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN SOL TESTING**

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***8VAC20-131-30(H) states:***

*H. Students identified as foreign exchange students taking courses for credit shall be required to take the relevant Virginia Assessment Program tests, as specified in subsection E of this section. Foreign exchange students who are auditing courses are not eligible for academic credit for those courses and shall not be required to take the SOL tests for those courses.*

***Guidance:***

Foreign exchange students are not earning a Virginia diploma and therefore do not need verified credits to meet graduation requirements. Accordingly, foreign exchange students do not participate in SOL testing.

**8VAC20-131-50 GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (FOR STUDENTS ENTERING NINTH GRADE PRIOR TO THE 2018–2019 SCHOOL YEAR)**

The SOA includes two sections regarding graduation requirements: 8VAC20-131-50 and 8VAC20-131-51. Section [8VAC20-131-50](#) provides graduation requirements for students who entered ninth grade prior to the 2018-2019 school year. Section [8VAC20-131-51](#) provides graduation requirements for students who enter the ninth grade in the 2018-2019 school year or after. This document includes separate guidance on each set of graduation requirements.

**ADDITIONAL LOCALLY-PRESCRIBED GRADUATION CREDIT REQUIREMENTS**

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***8VAC20-131-50(A) states, in part:***

*A...The following requirements shall be the only requirements for a diploma, unless a local school board has prescribed additional requirements that have been approved by the board. All additional requirements prescribed by local school boards that have been approved by the board remain in effect until such time as the local school board submits a request to the board to amend or discontinue them.*

***Guidance:***

No additional requests from local school boards should be considered that would impact the graduation requirements in 8VAC20-131-50. For more information on additional, locally prescribed graduation requirements, including how such requirements may be rescinded, please refer to the guidance on 8VAC20-131-51(A).

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006)*

**STANDARD DIPLOMA GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (FOR STUDENTS ENTERING NINTH GRADE PRIOR TO 2018-2019)**

<b>8VAC20-131-50(B) – Standard Diploma Requirements</b>			
<b>Discipline Area</b>	<b>Standard Credits</b>	<b>Verified Credits</b>	<b>Specifications</b>
<b>English</b>	4	2	N/A
<b>Mathematics</b>	3	1	Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include at least two different course selections from among: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra, Functions, and Data Analysis, Algebra II, or other mathematics courses above the level of Algebra II. The board shall approve courses to satisfy this requirement. Per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a mathematics course credit.
<b>Laboratory Science</b>	3	1	<p>Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include course selections from at least two different science disciplines: earth sciences, biology, chemistry, or physics, or completion of the sequence of science courses required for the International Baccalaureate Diploma. The board shall approve courses to satisfy this requirement. Per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a science course credit.</p> <p>Students who complete a career and technical education program sequence and pass an examination or occupational competency assessment in a career and technical education field that confers certification or an occupational competency credential from a recognized industry, or trade or professional association, or acquire a professional license in a career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia may substitute the certification, competency credential, or license for (i) the student-selected verified credit and (ii) either a science or history and social science verified credit when the certification, license, or credential confers more than one verified credit. The examination or occupational competency assessment must be approved by the board as an additional test to verify student achievement.</p>
<b>History &amp; Social Sciences</b>	3	1	<p>Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include U.S. and Virginia History, U.S. and Virginia Government, and one course in either world history or geography or both. The board shall approve courses to satisfy this requirement.</p> <p>Students who complete a career and technical education program sequence and pass an examination or occupational competency assessment in a career and technical education field that confers certification or an occupational competency credential from a recognized industry, or trade or professional association, or acquire a professional license in a career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia may substitute the certification, competency credential, or license for (i) the student-selected verified credit and (ii) either a science or history and social science verified credit when the certification, license, or credential confers more than one verified credit. The examination or occupational competency assessment must be approved by the board as an additional test to verify student achievement.</p>

Discipline Area	Standard Credits	Verified Credits	Specifications
Health & Physical Education	2	0	N/A
World Language, Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education	2	0	Pursuant to § <a href="#">22.1-253.13:4</a> of the Code of Virginia, credits earned for this requirement shall include one credit in fine or performing arts or career and technical education. Per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a career and technical education course credit.
Economics and Personal Finance	1	0	N/A
Electives	4	0	Courses to satisfy this requirement shall include at least two sequential electives as required by the Standards of Quality.
Student Selected Test	0	1	A student may utilize additional tests for earning verified credit in computer science, technology, career and technical education, economics or other areas as prescribed by the board in <a href="#">8VAC20-131-110</a> .
Career and Technical Education Credential	0	0	Students shall earn a career and technical education credential approved by the Board of Education, except when a career and technical education credential in a particular subject area is not readily available or appropriate or does not adequately measure student competency, in which case the student shall receive satisfactory competency-based instruction in the subject area to satisfy the standard diploma requirements. The career and technical education credential, when required, could include the successful completion of an industry certification, a state licensure examination, a national occupational competency assessment, or the Virginia workplace readiness assessment.
<b>Total</b>	22	6	N/A
<b>Additional Requirements for Graduation</b>			
<b>For students entering the ninth-grade class for the first time in 2013-2014 and beyond:</b>		Students shall successfully complete one virtual course, which may be a noncredit-bearing course or a required or elective credit-bearing course that is offered online.	
<b>For students entering the ninth-grade class for the first time in 2016-2017 and beyond:</b>		Students shall be trained in emergency first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and the use of automated external defibrillators, including hands-on practice of the skills necessary to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan that documents that they cannot successfully complete this training shall be granted a waiver from this graduation requirement, as provided in <a href="#">8VAC20-131-420</a> B.	

**ADVANCED STUDIES DIPLOMA GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (FOR STUDENTS ENTERING NINTH GRADE PRIOR TO 2018-2019)**

<b>8VAC20-131-50(C) – Advanced Studies Diploma Requirements</b>			
<b>Discipline Area</b>	<b>Standard Credits</b>	<b>Verified Credits</b>	<b>Specifications</b>
<b>English</b>	4	2	N/A
<b>Mathematics</b>	4	2	Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include at least three different course selections from among: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, or other mathematics courses above the level of Algebra II. The board shall approve courses to satisfy this requirement. Per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a mathematics course credit.
<b>Laboratory Science</b>	4	2	Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include course selections from at least three different science disciplines from among: earth sciences, biology, chemistry, or physics or completion of the sequence of science courses required for the International Baccalaureate Diploma. The board shall approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement. Per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a science course credit.
<b>History &amp; Social Sciences</b>	4	2	Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include U.S. and Virginia History, U.S. and Virginia Government, and two courses in either world history or geography or both. The board shall approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.
<b>World Language</b>	3	0	Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include three years of one language or two years of two languages.
<b>Health &amp; Physical Education</b>	2	0	N/A
<b>Fine Arts or Career &amp; Technical Education</b>	1	0	Per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a career and technical education course credit.
<b>Economics and Personal Finance</b>	1	0	N/A
<b>Electives</b>	3	0	N/A
<b>Student Selected Test</b>	0	1	A student may utilize additional tests for earning verified credit in computer science, technology, career or technical education, economics or other areas as prescribed by the board in <a href="#">8VAC20-131-110</a> .
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>9</b>	N/A

<b>Additional Requirements for Graduation</b>	
<b>For students entering the ninth-grade class for the first time in 2013-2014 and beyond:</b>	Students shall successfully complete one virtual course, which may be a noncredit-bearing course or a required or elective credit-bearing course that is offered online.
<b>For students entering the ninth-grade class for the first time in 2016-2017 and beyond:</b>	Students shall be trained in emergency first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and the use of automated external defibrillators, including hands-on practice of the skills necessary to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan that documents that they cannot successfully complete this training shall be granted a waiver from this graduation requirement, as provided in <a href="#">8VAC20-131-420 B</a> .

### **COURSES TO SATISFY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

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In the requirements for mathematics, laboratory science, and history/social science, for both the standard diploma and the advanced studies diploma, 8VAC20-131-50 provides that the Board of Education shall approve courses to satisfy each requirement.

#### **Guidance:**

The list of courses approved by Board of Education for each requirement is available in the [Approved Courses to Satisfy Graduation Requirements \(Effective with Ninth Grade Class of 2010-2011\)](#) document.

### **USE OF COMPUTER SCIENCE COURSES TO SATISFY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS**

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In the requirements for both the standard diploma and the advanced studies diploma, 8VAC20-131-50 provides that, per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit may be considered a mathematics course credit, a science course credit, or a career and technical education course credit.

#### **Guidance:**

The Standards of Quality at § 22.1-253.13:4(D)(8) in the *Code of Virginia*, as is effective for students entering the ninth grade prior to the 2018-2019 school year, provide that the Board’s credit and course requirements for graduation shall “[c]onsider all computer science course credits earned by students to be science course credits, mathematics course credits, or career and technical education credits. The Board of Education shall develop guidelines addressing how computer science courses can satisfy graduation requirements.”

*Advanced Placement (AP) Computer Science A* may be considered a mathematics course, a laboratory science course, or career and technical education course under the conditions outlined below. A student may apply *AP Computer Science A* coursework to only one of the aforementioned areas. These guidelines are effective for the students entering ninth grade for the first time in 2015-2016 and beyond.

- For mathematics, *AP Computer Science A* currently provides a standard credit to satisfy graduation requirements.
- For laboratory science, *AP Computer Science A* may provide a standard credit to satisfy graduation requirements when students successfully complete laboratory science courses from the different science discipline areas in accordance with the Standards of Accreditation.

For *AP Computer Science A* to be applied as a standard credit for laboratory science, the course must include a significant experimental component where:

1. a testable question is developed based on a review of literature;
  2. an hypothesis drives a sequential experimental design;
  3. parameters are manipulated under controlled conditions to test how variables behave;
  4. systematic methods of organizing derived experimental data are employed;
  5. analysis of data requires statistical processes to form conclusions; and
  6. conclusions and findings are formally presented, defended, and argued. International Baccalaureate (IB) Computer Science coursework may be applied as a laboratory science as part of the recognized IB diploma requirement, which is currently governed under the Standards of Accreditation.
- For career and technical education, *AP Computer Science A* may provide a standard credit to satisfy graduation requirements. *AP Computer Science A* currently provides a student-selected verified credit for students who
    1. successfully complete a career and technical education program sequence in programming or a related programming sequence and
    2. successfully complete the AP Computer Science A examination with a score of three or higher.

Colleges and universities have varying ways of applying computer science course credits during the admission process. Many colleges and universities do not accept computer science as a mathematics or laboratory science course on student transcripts. In all cases, teachers and school counselors must carefully advise students and parents to ensure that their high school credit-bearing course selections and graduation planning career pathways are consistent with admission standards and program requirements for post-secondary education and training.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on January 22, 2015)*

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#### **SEQUENTIAL ELECTIVES REQUIRED FOR GRADUATION WITH A STANDARD DIPLOMA**

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In accordance with 8VAC20-131-50, four standard units of credit in an elective discipline area are required for students seeking graduation with a standard diploma. The regulation states, “*Courses to satisfy this requirement shall include at least two sequential electives as required by the Standards of Quality.*”

**Guidance:**

The Standards of Quality at § 22.1-253.13:4(D)(2) in the *Code of Virginia*, as it is effective for students entering the ninth grade prior to the 2018-2019 school year, provide, “*The requirements for a standard high school diploma shall, however, include at least two sequential electives chosen from a concentration of courses selected from a variety of options that may be planned to ensure the completion of a focused sequence of elective courses. Such focused sequence of elective courses shall provide a foundation for further education or training or preparation for employment.*”

“Sequential electives” refers to any series of courses that are used to fulfill the elective requirements for a Standard Diploma in which the content increases or expands in scope and sequence as students move through the various levels of the courses. To further assist local school divisions to ensure that students comply with the requirement, the following guidance is provided:

1. The two sequential electives may be in any discipline as long as the courses are not specifically required for graduation in 8VAC20-131-50 of the standards.
2. Notwithstanding item 1 above, a fine arts or career and technical education course used to satisfy the World Language, Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education graduation requirement may be used to partially satisfy this requirement.
3. Guidance for sequential electives in career and technical education programs are available from the Department of Education outlined in the *CTE Administrative Planning Guide* and may be accessed on the [CTE webpage](#). Sequential elective information is available for the following programs of study:
  - [Agricultural Education](#)
  - [Business & Information Technology](#)
  - [Career Connections](#)
  - [Family & Consumer Sciences](#)
  - [Health & Medical Sciences](#)
  - [Marketing](#)
  - [Technology Education](#)
  - [Trade & Industrial Education](#)
4. A sequence that includes an exploratory course followed by an introductory course cannot be used to satisfy this requirement; however, an introductory course followed by another level of the same course of study in any content area can be used. Such courses may include any sequence identified in the assignment codes document accompanying the Instructional Personnel Data Collection, which may be accessed at: [SCED Course Codes](#).
5. Students may take the focused sequence of elective courses in consecutive years or any two years of high school.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006 and updated on March 18, 2021)*

## **AWARDING DIFFERENTIATED NUMBERS OF VERIFIED CREDIT FOR CTE CERTIFICATION AND LICENSURE EXAMINATIONS**

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All students seeking to graduate with a standard diploma or advanced studies diploma under 8VAC20-131-50 are required to earn one student-selected verified credit. Regarding this student-selected verified credit, the regulation provides, “*A student may utilize additional tests for earning verified credit in computer science, technology, career and technical education, economics or other areas as prescribed by the board in 8VAC20-131-110.*”

Additional flexibility is provided for laboratory science and history/social science verified credit for students seeking to graduate with a standard diploma under 8VAC20-131-50. Regarding this flexibility, the regulation states, “*Students who complete a career and technical education program sequence and pass an examination or occupational competency assessment in a career and technical education field that confers certification or an occupational competency credential from a recognized industry, or trade or professional association, or acquire a professional license in a career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia may substitute the certification, competency credential, or license for (i) the student-selected verified credit and (ii) either a science or history and social science verified credit when the certification, license, or credential confers more than one verified credit. The examination or occupational competency assessment must be approved by the board as an additional test to verify student achievement.*”

### ***Guidance:***

All additional tests used for this purpose must be approved by the Board of Education.

*Earning Student-Selected Verified Credit.* One student-selected verified credit will be awarded for passing each certification or licensure examination that meets all of the criteria below and the student earns one standard unit of credit only in the career and technical education concentration or specialization.

*Criteria.* Student-selected verified credit will be awarded for certification or licensure examinations that meet all of the following criteria:

- Industry certification or licensure examinations that are approved to satisfy the requirements for the Board of Education’s Career and Technical Education Seal or the Board of Education’s Seal of Advanced Mathematics and Technology will satisfy requirements for student-selected verified credits.
- The teacher and/or the career and technical education program must be certified by the issuing organization relative to the industry certification or license.
- A standard credit may not be verified more than once.

Two student-selected verified credits will be awarded for passing each certification or licensure examination that meets all of the above criteria, and:

- The student meets the career and technical education concentration or specialization course requirements for the program completer.
- The student earns at least two standard units of credit in the career and technical education concentration or specialization.
- The student may substitute one of these verified credits for a verified credit in either science or history/social science.

A list of credentials approved for this purpose is available on the [High School Industry Credentialing](#) webpage.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006)*

## **VIRTUAL COURSE GRADUATION REQUIREMENT**

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All students seeking to graduate with a standard diploma or advanced studies diploma under 8VAC20-131-50 are required to successfully complete one virtual course.

### ***Guidance:***

Since 2013, students in Virginia have been required to “successfully complete one virtual course, which may be a noncredit-bearing course or a required or elective credit-bearing course that is offered online.” The Profile of a Virginia Graduate calls for students to be able to personalize their education to reflect their own interests and goals. The use of virtual courses in high schools supports this goal.

To assist school divisions in choosing which courses they will permit students to take to fulfill the graduation requirement, information is provided below based on current research and best practice.

Virtual courses are courses taught in a web-based environment. It may be suitable for a student to download parts of a course so that work may be accomplished offline, but generally a virtual course requires that students be connected to the Internet for at least part of the time.

Experiences students have while taking virtual courses in high school should prepare them to participate in college-level or career-based virtual courses after high school. Hence, virtual courses taken for this requirement should match the style of such courses as are commonly found on college campuses or in job training programs. They should encourage students to develop skills such as self-discipline, time-management, and focus.

### ***Types of Virtual Courses:***

***Fully Online:*** Fully online courses include courses with structured timelines for interaction, assignment completion, and assessment. Fully online courses may be closely monitored by a local teacher or students may work independently. Courses may be taken for full academic credit

or may supplement regular instruction by providing enrichment based on student interest or reinforcement of previous learning.

Examples of fully online courses:

- Virtual Virginia courses: Semester- or year-length courses taught by Virginia-certified teachers with a high level of student-teacher and student-student interaction through the Internet. A list of [Courses Offered](#) can be found on the Virtual Virginia webpage.
- Certain approved courses provided by an approved Multidivisional Online Provider (MOP): Many courses are provided as semester- or year-length courses, taught by Virginia-certified teachers, with at least a minimal level of student-teacher interaction. A searchable [List of Providers and Courses](#) is available online.
- Online Dual Enrollment courses provided through partnerships with local colleges and universities.

*Blended Courses:* Alternatively, many schools have developed blended courses, which combine some aspect of virtual learning with some characteristics of traditional face-to-face classrooms. Blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through a web-based environment that provides content, instruction, and feedback with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace. At least part of the instruction is provided at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home (adapted from the Chistensen Institute definition of blended learning).

Examples of blended courses:

- A course, such as the VDOE Economics and Personal Finance course on Virtual Virginia, taught partially online and partially by a classroom teacher who enhances the curriculum with other instructional tools and where students have some autonomy in how they interact with the material and each other.
- [Microsoft Imagine Academy Program](#), e-Learning option, with flexibility so that students may have some autonomy over their learning path, instructional time, and interaction with teacher and other students.

*Examples that would not fulfill the virtual course requirement:*

- A series of podcasts, such as often found on iTunes U or YouTube:  
A series of podcasts that provide content but does not include any sort of interaction with a teacher or other students.
- Short web-based, computer-mediated tutorials on specific skills:  
Tutorials that address very limited, specific skills but which have no way of assessing student ability to put those skills into use, and have no interaction with other students or a teacher.
- A class that incorporates online activities from an online textbook but which does not allow students any autonomy over their work pace or path.

- A “flipped” classroom model where students complete instructional activities outside of the classroom and work on understanding concepts and practicing skills in the regular classroom setting, but where the path and pace are set by the teacher with little room for students to receive extra guidance for particular problems or extra resources for particular interests.

*What a positive virtual course experience provides:*

- Students help plan out their own work pace and schedule
- Students have clear goals and reach those goals
- Students are self-motivated and self-disciplined
- Students interact with others, when appropriate, and in an appropriate manner
- Students use frequent feedback/assessment to improve their performance

*(Adapted from [Superintendent’s Memo #170-18](#), distributed on July 6, 2018)*

## CREDIT ACCOMMODATIONS

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### **8VAC20-131-50(B)(3) states:**

*B. Requirements for a Standard Diploma...*

*3. The board shall establish, through guidelines, credit accommodations to the standard and verified credit requirements for a Standard Diploma. Such credit accommodations for students with disabilities may include:*

- a. Approval of alternative courses to meet the standard credit requirements;*
- b. Modifications to the requirements for local school divisions to award locally awarded verified credits;*
- c. Approval of additional tests to earn a verified credit;*
- d. Adjusted cut scores required to earn verified credit; and*
- e. Allowance of work-based learning experiences.*

*The student's IEP or 504 Plan shall specify any credit accommodations that are applicable.*

*Students completing the requirements for the Standard Diploma may be eligible to receive an honor deemed appropriate by the local school board as described in subsection H of this section.*

### **Guidance:**

This guidance applies to students with disabilities who entered the ninth grade prior to 2018-2019. For Students with disabilities who entered the ninth grade prior to 2013-2014 that are seeking a Modified Standard Diploma, refer to the guidance on the Modified Standard Diploma. For students with disabilities who entered the ninth grade in 2018-2019 and beyond, refer to the guidance on Credit Accommodations in the graduation requirements for 8VAC20-131-51.

### Student Eligibility Criteria.

Credit accommodations for the Standard Diploma shall be determined by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team or 504 plan committee, including the student where appropriate, at any point after the student's eighth grade year. The school must secure the informed written consent of the parent/guardian and the student, as appropriate, to choose credit accommodations after review of the student's academic history and full disclosure of the student's options. The student must meet the following criteria to be eligible to receive credit accommodations for the Standard Diploma:

- a. Student must have a current IEP or 504 plan with standards-based content goals
- b. Student has a disability that precludes him or her from achieving and progressing commensurate with grade level expectations, but is learning on-grade-level content
- c. Student needs significant instructional supports to access grade level SOL content and to show progress

- d. Based on multiple objective measures of past performance, student might not be expected to achieve the required standard and verified units of credit within the standard time frame

*Permissible Credit Accommodations for Verified Credits.*

- For students with credit accommodations, an additional or substitute test, approved by the Board of Education using the criteria in 8VAC20-131-110(C), may be used to earn verified credit. The list of approved tests is available on the [Substitute Tests for Verified Credit](#) webpage.
- The Virginia Modified Achievement Standards Test (VMAST) may be used for verified credit purposes for Algebra I and EOC reading. To take the VMAST for verified credit purposes, a student must meet all current VMAST eligibility requirements and beginning in the 2014-2015 school year the student must also meet the following additional criteria:
  - Student must pass the high school course; and
  - Score 374 or below on the end-of-course Standards of Learning test after taking the test at least twice

Beginning in 2014-2015, scores of students who participate in VMAST will no longer be included in the participation rate or pass rate calculations for federal accountability, as required for approval of Virginia’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility application.

- Local school boards may award locally-awarded verified credits (LAVC) in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and history and social science, following the same criteria applicable to all students as provided in 8VAC20-131-110(B) and the guidance for “Locally-Awarded Verified Credit.” Students who entered the ninth grade prior to 2018-2019 that require more than three LAVC in any subject may have the eligibility criteria for credit accommodations properly documented in the IEP or 504 plan. The limit on the number of LAVC that may be used to meet diploma requirements is not applicable to students with credit accommodations.
- Special permission credit accommodations permit local school boards to award LAVC in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and history/social science to certain students with disabilities. Eligible students must:
  - Pass the high school course based on a non-modified curriculum;
  - score below 375 on the SOL test;
  - have a documented disability that presents a unique or significant challenge to the degree that the student is unable to demonstrate knowledge of the course content on the SOL test using available accommodations; and

- demonstrate achievement in the academic content through an appeal process administered at the local level.

The decision to consider a special permission credit accommodation should be made through the IEP and/or 504 review process. School divisions must submit a Special Permission Credit Accommodation Form to VDOE for each student being considered for a LAVC with a SOL scaled score below 375. The form must include documentation regarding the disability that prevents the student from fully demonstrating their knowledge of the course content on the SOL test despite having accommodations. This documentation should include evidence of the use or consideration of other credit accommodations and other substitute assessment options.

- Local school boards may offer the opportunity for the expedited retake of end-of-course SOL tests as provided in 8VAC20-131-110(D), with the exception of the English writing SOL tests. The criteria included in the guidance for “Expedited Retake,” should be followed; however, the narrow margin criteria for students who qualify for credit accommodations is defined as a scaled score of 350-374, rather than 375-399.

*Permissible Credit Accommodations for Standard Credits.*

- Local school boards may deliver the Personal Finance course (3120) to include the 21 Work Readiness Skills (WRS) for the Commonwealth. This augmented course may be used to meet the Economics and Personal Finance requirement when the student has earned at least 3 standard credits in history and social science. Upon completion of the augmented Personal Finance course, the student may take the WRS assessment to earn the Board-approved WRS credential. This approach would satisfy the graduation requirements for economics and personal finance, history/social science, and the workplace credential.
- Parts I and II of certain required courses may be used to each earn a standard credit towards the total number required in the subject area. Students must complete both parts of the course in order to earn the standard credits. They may earn no more than three content area standard credits by taking these two-part courses. The remaining credit could be used as an elective credit.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on September 20, 2018)*

## **DIPLOMA SEAL OF BILITERACY**

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### ***8VAC20-131-50(H)(6) states:***

*6. The Board of Education's Seal of Biliteracy shall be awarded to students who demonstrate proficiency in English and at least one other language and meet additional criteria established by the board. Such seal shall be awarded to eligible students graduating from public high schools in the Commonwealth beginning in 2016.*

### ***Guidance:***

The Board of Education's Seal of Biliteracy certifies attainment of a high level of proficiency by a graduating high school student in one or more languages in addition to English (which may include American Sign Language).

The Board of Education's Seal of Biliteracy will be awarded to students who earn a Board of Education-approved diploma and:

1. pass all required End-of-Course Assessments in English reading and writing at the proficient or higher level; and
2. obtain proficiency at the intermediate-mid level or higher in one or more languages other than English, as demonstrated through an assessment from a list to be approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Students should demonstrate proficiency in English by meeting English language arts requirements for high school graduation through whatever means are currently in place to document attainment of that requirement.

Students should demonstrate proficiency in a world language other than English through one of a range of approved language assessment options, including Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and other national or international assessments at a level comparable to Intermediate Mid on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines. Options include:

- Foreign language AP examination with a score of three or higher or an IB examination with a score of four or higher; or
- Score 600 or higher on a Latin SAT II test (SAT Subject Test); or
- Receive a rating of Intermediate Mid or higher on a nationally or internationally available assessment of proficiency across language skills based on ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines; or
- Pass a foreign government's approved language exam, or a nation's high school level standardized exam in a language from a country in which the language is taught in school at a level comparable to Intermediate-mid or higher on the ACTFL proficiency scale; or
- Provide evidence of success at the B1 level or higher on an assessment authorized through the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages; or

- Provide evidence of attaining Level 3.0 or higher on the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI);
- Provide evidence of attaining an Intermediate level or higher rating on the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI:ASL); or
- If the school division can certify to the Superintendent that the test meets the rigor of a four-year high school course of study in that foreign language, passing a school division language examination that, at a minimum, assesses speaking, reading, listening, and writing in a language other than English at the Intermediate-mid proficiency level or higher. Any school division language examination offered as evidence for awarding the Seal of Biliteracy shall be approved in advance by the Superintendent for the purpose of determining proficiency in a language other than English.

The Virginia Department of Education will maintain a list of acceptable national and international tests with qualifying scores for reference in awarding the Seal of Biliteracy. The list of approved tests will be reviewed on a regular basis and available on the [Seal of Biliteracy](#) webpage.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on June 15, 2015)*

**8VAC20-131-50(F) MODIFIED STANDARD DIPLOMA (FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ENTERED NINTH GRADE PRIOR TO 2013-2014)**

The Modified Standard Diploma was an option available for students with disabilities who entered the ninth grade prior to 2013-2014 and were unlikely to meet the credit requirements for a Standard Diploma. Credit accommodations were established for students entering the ninth grade for the first time beginning in 2013-2014. These repealed standards for the Modified Standard Diploma are presented here as they remain applicable for students who entered the ninth grade prior to 2013-2014 and have not yet graduated.

**MODIFIED STANDARD DIPLOMA**

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**8VAC20-131-50(F), provided (at the time it was repealed in 2013):**

*F. Requirements for the Modified Standard Diploma.*

- 1. Every student shall be expected to pursue a Standard Diploma, Standard Technical Diploma, Advanced Studies Diploma, or Advanced Technical Diploma. The Modified Standard Diploma program is intended for certain students at the secondary level who have a disability and are unlikely to meet the credit requirements for a Standard Diploma. Eligibility and participation in the Modified Standard Diploma program shall be determined by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team including the student, where appropriate, at any point after the student's eighth grade year.*
- 2. The school must secure the informed written consent of the parent/guardian and the student to choose this diploma program after review of the student's academic history and the full disclosure of the student's options.*
- 3. The student who has chosen to pursue a Modified Standard Diploma shall also be allowed to pursue the Standard Diploma, Standard Technical Diploma, Advanced Studies Diploma, or 14 Advanced Technical Diploma at any time throughout that student's high school career, and the student must not be excluded from courses and tests required to earn these diplomas.*
- 4. Students pursuing the Modified Standard Diploma shall pass literacy and numeracy competency assessments prescribed by the board.*
- 5. Credits required for graduation with a Modified Standard Diploma.*

<i>Discipline Area</i>	<i>Standard Units of Credit Required</i>
<i>English</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Mathematics<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Science<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>2</i>
<i>History and Social Sciences<sup>3</sup></i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Health and Physical Education</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education</i>	<i>1</i>

<i>Discipline Area</i>	<i>Standard Units of Credit Required</i>
<i>Electives<sup>4</sup></i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>20</i>

<sup>1</sup> Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include content from among applications of algebra, geometry, personal finance, and probability and statistics in courses that have been approved by the board.

<sup>2</sup> Courses completed shall include content from at least two of the following: applications of earth science, biology, chemistry, or physics in courses approved by the board.

<sup>3</sup> Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include one unit of credit in U.S. and Virginia History and one unit of credit in U.S. and Virginia Government in courses approved by the board.

<sup>4</sup> Courses to satisfy this requirement shall include at least two sequential electives in the same manner required for the Standard Diploma.

6. The student must meet any additional criteria established by the Board of Education.

**Guidance:**

Literacy and Numeracy Requirements for the Modified Standard Diploma. Students who pursue the Modified Standard Diploma shall be required to attain a minimum score approved by the Board on the 8th grade Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in both English (Reading) and mathematics to meet literacy and numeracy requirements for this diploma. Students may substitute higher-level SOL tests (i.e. end-of-course English (Reading), Algebra I, Algebra II, or Geometry) for the 8th grade Standards of Learning test in English (Reading) and mathematics or other substitute tests approved by the Board. In addition, students pursuing the Modified Standard Diploma shall have opportunities for an expedited retest on the 8th grade (or higher level) tests in the same manner as prescribed in this guidance for students earning verified credit.

Sequential Electives Required for Graduation. The “Sequential Electives Required for Graduation with a Standard Diploma” guidance above remains applicable for students seeking a Modified Standard Diploma.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006)*

## **8VAC20-131-51 GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (EFFECTIVE WITH THE STUDENTS WHO ENTER THE NINTH GRADE IN THE 2018–2019 SCHOOL YEAR)**

The SOA includes two sections regarding graduation requirements: 8VAC20-131-50 and 8VAC20-131-51. Section [8VAC20-131-50](#) provides graduation requirements for students who entered ninth grade prior to the 2018-2019 school year. Section [8VAC20-131-51](#) provides graduation requirements for students who enter the ninth grade in the 2018-2019 school year or after. This document includes separate guidance on each set of graduation requirements.

### **PROFILE OF A VIRGINIA GRADUATE**

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#### ***8VAC20-131-51(A) states, in part:***

*A...Both the Standard Diploma and the Advanced Studies Diploma shall provide multiple paths toward college, career, and citizenship readiness for students to follow in the later years of high school. Each such pathway shall provide meaningful and rigorous opportunities tied to instruction to achieve workplace and citizenship skills through internships, externships, credentialing, and blended learning, which may be offered for credit toward high school graduation, in accordance with department guidelines.*

*In accordance with the Profile of a Virginia Graduate approved by the board, the instructional program leading to a Standard Diploma or Advanced Studies Diploma shall ensure that students (i) attain the knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences necessary to be successful in the evolving global economy whether immediately entering the world of work or pursuing a postsecondary education and (ii) acquire and be able to demonstrate foundational skills in critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship...*

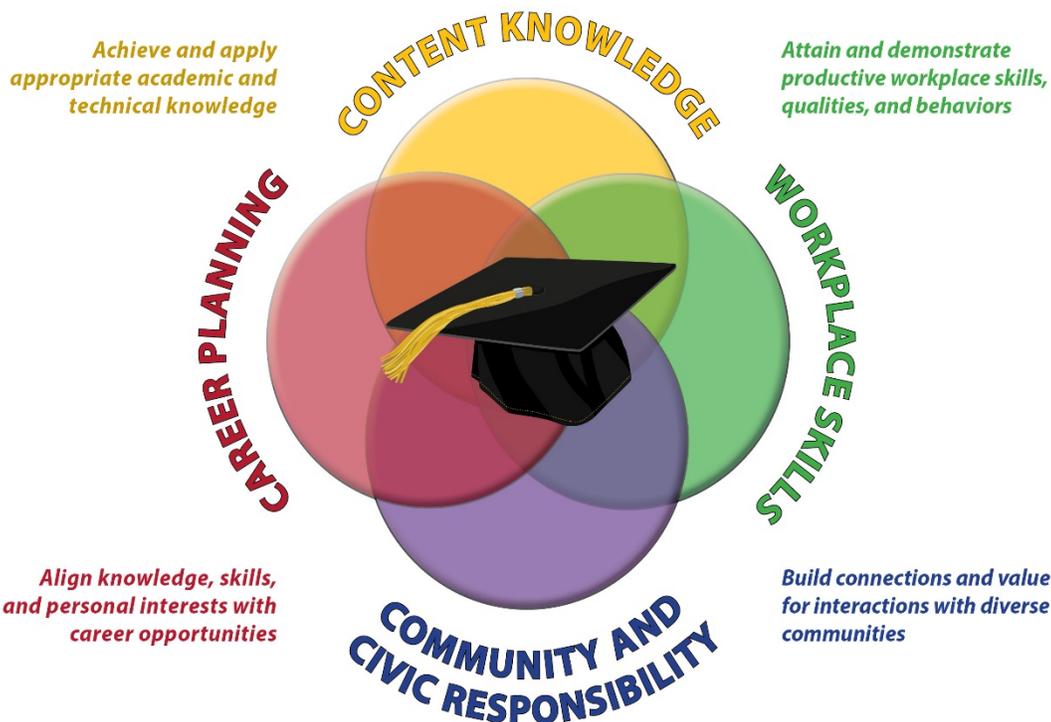
#### ***Guidance:***

The *Profile of a Virginia Graduate* describes four overlapping areas for student learning and achievement considered essential to success beyond high school. These are:

- *Content Knowledge.* Knowledge of subject areas based on state-wide standards and their application
- *Workplace Skills.* Demonstration of personal skills and behaviors required for productivity, effective relationships, and problem-solving within one's workplace
- *Community and Civic Responsibility.* Understanding of the opportunities within civic organizations for service and decision-making and responsibility for respectful interaction with others
- *Career Exploration.* Individual participation in career exploration, planning, and preparation, based on understanding of personal interests, skills, and abilities, and the needs of the economy

## Profile of a Virginia Graduate

In Virginia, the Life Ready Individual Will  
During His or Her K-12 Experience:



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### ADDITIONAL LOCALLY-PRESCRIBED GRADUATION CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

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**8VAC20-131-51(A) states, in part:**

*A...The requirements in this section shall be the only requirements for a diploma, unless a local school board has prescribed additional requirements that have been approved by the board. All additional requirements prescribed by local school boards that have been approved by the board remain in effect until such time as the local school board submits a request to the board to amend or discontinue them.*

**Guidance:**

The Standards of Quality, at § 22.1-253.13:4(A) in the *Code of Virginia*, permit local school boards to prescribe additional diploma requirements, provided that they are approved by the Board of Education.

*Standard Diploma.* Generally, the Board will approve requests from local school divisions to require up to two additional local credits to obtain the Standard Diploma, up to a maximum of 24 required credits.

Generally, the Board will approve local requests for additional graduation requirements in the core discipline areas of the Standards of Learning (English, mathematics, science, or history/social science). For example, a local request to add one additional credit requirement in history and one in science would generally be approved, because that would not exceed a total graduation credit requirement of 24, and those credits are in the core disciplines.

Requests for additional local credits in disciplines outside the core discipline areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In evaluating requests for additional local graduation credits outside the core discipline areas, the Board generally may consider, among other criteria, a local school division's graduation and drop-out rates and its students' performance on the Standards of Learning tests.

*Advanced Studies Diploma.* Generally, the Board will approve requests from local school divisions for local additional credits required for the Advanced Studies Diploma above the 24 required in the standards if the credits are in the discipline areas of English, mathematics, science, history/social science, fine arts (including performing arts), career and technical education, or world language. The Board will consider credits outside these discipline areas on a case-by-case basis.

*Transfer Students.* Any local school division receiving approval to increase its course credit requirements may not deny either the Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma to any transfer student who has otherwise met the requirements contained in the standards, if the transfer student can only meet the division's requirements by taking a heavier than normal courseload in any semester, by taking summer school, or by taking courses after the time when he or she otherwise would have graduated.

*Prospective Application/Advance Notice.* A local school division's additional credit requirements should apply only to students who have not yet entered ninth grade at the time the additional credits are approved.

*Allocation of Electives.* Generally the Board will approve requests from local school divisions to allocate elective credits for local prescribed course requirements, while reducing the number of electives by an equal amount so that the total number of graduation credit requirements remains unchanged.

For the Standard Diploma, generally the Board will approve allocations of electives to prescribed credits in the core discipline areas of English, mathematics, science, or history/social science. Requests to allocate electives for prescribed credits outside of the core disciplines will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

For the Advanced Studies Diploma, generally the Board will approve allocations of electives to prescribed credits in the discipline areas of English, mathematics, science, history/social science, fine arts (including performing arts) or career and technical education, or world language. Requests to allocate electives for prescribed credits outside of these disciplines will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Generally, a local school division may offer, as an option to students, the opportunity to pursue concentrated courses of study by taking related courses in a specialty area (for example, career and technical education, fine or performing arts), or to choose to take a variety of elective courses. Offering such options shall not require Board approval so long as choosing a particular concentration of elective courses is not mandatory for graduation.

*Rescinding Additional Graduation Requirements.* Additional locally prescribed graduation requirements may be rescinded, so long as the school board's graduation requirements meet or exceed the current graduation requirements prescribed by the Standards of Accreditation.

The local school board must approve the request. A letter of request, which must be signed by the chairman of the school board and the superintendent, shall be submitted to the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The letter must specify which locally prescribed requirements would be amended or discontinued, and must list the graduation requirements that would continue to be in effect.

The Board of Education has delegated approval of these requests to the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The criterion for approval is that the graduation requirements remaining in effect must meet or exceed the current graduation requirements prescribed by the Board of Education.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006 and November 17, 2011)*

**STANDARD DIPLOMA GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (EFFECTIVE WITH THE STUDENTS WHO ENTER THE NINTH GRADE IN THE 2018–2019 SCHOOL YEAR)**

<b>8VAC20-131-51(B) – Standard Diploma Requirements</b>			
<b>Subject Area</b>	<b>Standard Credits</b>	<b>Verified Credits</b>	<b>Specifications</b>
<b>English</b>	4	2	N/A
<b>Mathematics</b>	3	1	Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include at least two different course selections from among: algebra I, geometry, algebra functions, and data analysis, algebra II, or other mathematics courses approved by the board to satisfy this requirement. Per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a mathematics course credit.
<b>Laboratory Science</b>	3	1	<p>Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include course selection from at least two different science disciplines: earth sciences, biology, chemistry, or physics, or completion of the sequence of science courses required for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and shall include interdisciplinary courses that incorporate Standards of Learning content from multiple academic areas. The board shall approve courses to satisfy this requirement. Per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a science course credit.</p> <p>Students who complete a career and technical education program sequence and pass an examination or occupational competency assessment in a career and technical education field that confers certification or an occupational competency credential from a recognized industry, or trade or professional association, or acquires a professional license in a career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia may substitute the certification, competency credential, or license for either a laboratory science or history and social science verified credit when the certification, license, or credential confers more than one verified credit. The examination or occupational competency assessment must be approved by the board as an additional test to verify student achievement.</p>

Subject Area	Standard Credits	Verified Credits	Specifications
<b>History and Social Sciences</b>	3	1	<p>Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include Virginia and U.S. history, Virginia and U.S. government, and one course in either world history or geography or both. The board shall approve courses to satisfy this requirement.</p> <p>Students who complete a career and technical education program sequence and pass an examination or occupational competency assessment in a career and technical education field that confers certification or an occupational competency credential from a recognized industry, or trade or professional association, or acquires a professional license in a career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia may substitute the certification, competency credential, or license for either a laboratory science or history and social science verified credit when the certification, license, or credential confers more than one verified credit. The examination or occupational competency assessment must be approved by the board as an additional test to verify student achievement.</p>
<b>Health and Physical Education</b>	2	0	N/A
<b>World Language, Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education</b>	2	0	Per the Standards of Quality, credits earned for this requirement shall include one credit in fine or performing arts or career and technical education. Per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a career and technical course credit.
<b>Economics &amp; Personal Finance</b>	1	0	N/A
<b>Electives</b>	4	0	Courses to satisfy this requirement shall include at least two sequential electives as required by the Standards of Quality.
<b>Total</b>	22	5	N/A
<b>Additional Requirements for Graduation</b>			
<b>Advanced Placement, Honors, or International Baccalaureate Course or Career and Technical Education Credential</b>	<p>In accordance with the Standards of Quality, students shall either (i) complete an Advanced Placement, honors, or International Baccalaureate course, or (ii) earn a career and technical education credential approved by the board, except when a career and technical education credential in a particular subject area is not readily available or appropriate or does not adequately measure student competency, in which case the student shall receive satisfactory competency-based instruction in the subject area to satisfy the standard diploma requirements. The career and technical education credential, when required, could include the successful completion of an industry certification, a state licensure examination, a national occupational competency assessment, or the Virginia workplace readiness assessment.</p>		

8VAC20-131-51 Graduation Requirements (Effective with the Students Who Enter the Ninth Grade in the 2018–2019 School Year):  
 Standard Diploma Graduation Requirements (Effective with the Students Who Enter the Ninth Grade in the 2018–2019 School Year)

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Subject Area	Standard Credits	Verified Credits	Specifications
<b>Virtual Course</b>			Students shall successfully complete one virtual course, which may be a non-credit-bearing course or a required or elective credit-bearing course that is offered online.
<b>Training in emergency first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and the use of automated external defibrillators (AED)</b>			Students shall be trained in emergency first aid, CPR, and the use of AED, including hands-on practice of the skills necessary to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Students with an IEP or 504 Plan that documents that they cannot successfully complete this training shall be granted a waiver from this graduation requirement, as provided in <a href="#">8VAC20-131-420</a> B.
<b>Demonstration of the five Cs</b>			Students shall acquire and demonstrate foundational skills in critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship in accordance with the Profile of a Virginia Graduate approved by the board.

**ADVANCED STUDIES DIPLOMA GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS (EFFECTIVE WITH THE STUDENTS WHO ENTER THE NINTH GRADE IN THE 2018–2019 SCHOOL YEAR)**

<b>8VAC20-131-51(C) – Advanced Studies Diploma Requirements</b>			
<b>Subject Area</b>	<b>Standard Credits</b>	<b>Verified Credits</b>	<b>Specifications</b>
<b>English</b>	4	2	N/A
<b>Mathematics</b>	4	1	Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include at least three different course selections from among: algebra I, geometry, algebra II, or other mathematics courses above the level of algebra II. The board shall approve courses to satisfy this requirement. Per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a mathematics course credit.
<b>Laboratory Science</b>	4	1	Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include course selections from at least three different science disciplines from among: earth sciences, biology, chemistry, or physics or completion of the sequence of science courses required for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and shall include interdisciplinary courses that incorporate Standards of Learning content from multiple academic areas. The board shall approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement. Per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a science course credit.
<b>History and Social Sciences</b>	4	1	Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include Virginia and U.S. history, Virginia and U.S. government, and two courses in either world history or geography or both. The board shall approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.
<b>World Language</b>	3	0	Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include three years of one language or two years of two languages.
<b>Health and Physical Education</b>	2	0	N/A
<b>Fine Arts or Career and Technical Ed</b>	1	0	Per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit earned by students may be considered a career and technical credit.
<b>Economics &amp; Personal Finance</b>	1	0	N/A
<b>Electives</b>	3	0	Courses to satisfy this requirement shall include at least two sequential electives as required by the Standards of Quality.
<b>Total Credits</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>5</b>	

<b>Additional Requirements for Graduation</b>	
<b>Advanced Placement, Honors, or International Baccalaureate Course or Career and Technical Education Credential</b>	In accordance with the Standards of Quality, students shall either (i) complete an Advanced Placement, honors, or International Baccalaureate course, or (ii) earn a career and technical education credential approved by the board, except when a career and technical education credential in a particular subject area is not readily available or appropriate or does not adequately measure student competency, in which case the student shall receive satisfactory competency-based instruction in the subject area to satisfy the standard diploma requirements. The career and technical education credential, when required, could include the successful completion of an industry certification, a state licensure examination, a national occupational competency assessment, or the Virginia workplace readiness assessment.
<b>Virtual Course</b>	Students shall successfully complete one virtual course, which may be a non-credit-bearing course or a required or elective credit-bearing course that is offered online.
<b>Training in emergency first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and the use of automated external defibrillators (AED)</b>	Students shall be trained in emergency first aid, CPR, and the use of AED, including hands-on practice of the skills necessary to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Students with an IEP or 504 Plan that documents that they cannot successfully complete this training shall be granted a waiver from this graduation requirement, as provided in <a href="#">8VAC20-131-420 B</a> .
<b>Demonstration of the five Cs</b>	Students shall acquire and demonstrate foundational skills in critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship in accordance with the Profile of a Virginia Graduate approved by the board.

## COURSES TO SATISFY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In the requirements for mathematics, laboratory science, and history/social science, for both the standard diploma and the advanced studies diploma, 8VAC20-131-51 provides that the Board of Education shall approve courses to satisfy each requirement.

### **Guidance:**

The list of courses approved by Board of Education for each requirement is available in the [Approved Courses to Satisfy Graduation Requirements \(Effective with Ninth Grade Class of 2010-2011\)](#) document.

## USE OF COMPUTER SCIENCE COURSES TO SATISFY GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

In the requirements for both the standard diploma and the advanced studies diploma, 8VAC20-131-51 provides that, per the Standards of Quality, a computer science course credit may be considered a mathematics course credit, a science course credit, or a career and technical education course credit.

### **Guidance:**

The Standards of Quality at § 22.1-253.13:4(D)(14) in the *Code of Virginia* provide that the Board’s credit and course requirements for graduation shall “[c]onsider all computer science

*course credits earned by students to be science course credits, mathematics course credits, or career and technical education credits. The Board of Education shall develop guidelines addressing how computer science courses can satisfy graduation requirements.”*

*Advanced Placement (AP) Computer Science A* may be considered a mathematics course, a laboratory science course, or career and technical education course under the conditions outlined below. A student may apply *AP Computer Science A* coursework to only one of the aforementioned areas. These guidelines are effective for the students entering ninth grade for the first time in 2015-2016 and beyond.

- For mathematics, *AP Computer Science A* currently provides a standard credit to satisfy graduation requirements.
- For laboratory science, *AP Computer Science A* may provide a standard credit to satisfy graduation requirements when students successfully complete laboratory science courses from the different science discipline areas in accordance with the Standards of Accreditation.

For *AP Computer Science A* to be applied as a standard credit for laboratory science, the course must include a significant experimental component where:

1. a testable question is developed based on a review of literature;
  2. an hypothesis drives a sequential experimental design;
  3. parameters are manipulated under controlled conditions to test how variables behave;
  4. systematic methods of organizing derived experimental data are employed;
  5. analysis of data requires statistical processes to form conclusions; and
  6. conclusions and findings are formally presented, defended, and argued. International Baccalaureate (IB) Computer Science coursework may be applied as a laboratory science as part of the recognized IB diploma requirement, which is currently governed under the Standards of Accreditation.
- For career and technical education, *AP Computer Science A* may provide a standard credit to satisfy graduation requirements. *AP Computer Science A* currently provides a student-selected verified credit for students who
    1. successfully complete a career and technical education program sequence in programming or a related programming sequence and
    2. successfully complete the AP Computer Science A examination with a score of three or higher.

Colleges and universities have varying ways of applying computer science course credits during the admission process. Many colleges and universities do not accept computer science as a mathematics or laboratory science course on student transcripts. In all cases, teachers and school counselors must carefully advise students and parents to ensure that their high school credit-bearing course selections and graduation planning career pathways are consistent with admission standards and program requirements for post-secondary education and training.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on January 22, 2015)*

### **ALTERNATIVE METHOD TO EARN VERIFIED CREDIT IN LABORATORY SCIENCE**

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The SOA provides flexibility for laboratory science verified credit for students seeking graduation with a standard diploma under 8VAC20-131-51. Regarding this flexibility, the regulation states, “*Students who complete a career and technical education program sequence and pass an examination or occupational competency assessment in a career and technical education field that confers certification or an occupational competency credential from a recognized industry, or trade or professional association, or acquires a professional license in a career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia may substitute the certification, competency credential, or license for either a laboratory science ~~or history and social science~~\*\* verified credit when the certification, license, or credential confers more than one verified credit. The examination or occupational competency assessment must be approved by the board as an additional test to verify student achievement.*”

\*\*In 2018, the General Assembly eliminated the ability to substitute a certification, competency credential, or license for verified credits in history/social science. In accordance with the 2018 legislation, verified credit in history/social science may only be earned by successful completion of an end-of-course Standards of Learning test, Board-approved substitute tests for history/social science, and locally-awarded verified credit. However, the ability to substitute a certification, competency credential, or license for verified credit in laboratory science remains available.

#### ***Guidance:***

A student may earn a verified credit in laboratory science by meeting the following criteria:

- Meeting the career and technical education concentration or specialization course requirements to be a program completer
- Earning at least two standard units of credit in the career and technical education concentration or specialization
- Successfully completing at least two Board-approved industry certifications or licensure examinations

A list of credentials approved for this purpose is available on the [High School Industry Credentialing](#) webpage.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006)*

### **SEQUENTIAL ELECTIVES REQUIRED FOR GRADUATION**

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In accordance with 8VAC20-131-51, four standard units of credit in an elective discipline area are required for students seeking graduation with a standard diploma; three standard units of

credit in an elective discipline area are required for students seeking graduation with an advanced studies diploma. Regarding elective credits, the regulation provides, “*Courses to satisfy this requirement shall include at least two sequential electives as required by the Standards of Quality.*”

**Guidance:**

The Standards of Quality, at § 22.1-253.13:4(D)(5) in the *Code of Virginia*, provide that the Board’s graduation requirements shall: “[r]equire students to complete at least...two sequential elective courses chosen from a concentration of courses selected from a variety of options that may be planned to ensure the completion of a focused sequence of elective courses that provides a foundation for further education or training or preparation for employment.”

“Sequential electives” means any series of courses that are used to fulfill the elective requirements for a Standard and an Advanced Studies Diploma in which the content increases or expands in scope and sequence as students move through the various levels of the courses. To further assist local school divisions to ensure that students comply with the requirement, the following guidance is provided:

1. The two sequential electives may be in any discipline as long as the courses are not specifically required for graduation in 8VAC20-131-51 of the standards.
2. Notwithstanding item 1 above, a fine arts or career and technical education course used to satisfy the World Language, Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education graduation requirement for the Standard Diploma, or the Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education requirement for the Advanced Studies Diploma may be used to partially satisfy this requirement.
  - a. For students seeking to graduate with a Standard diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma in the 2021-2022 or 2022-2023 cohorts, a World Language course used to satisfy the World Language, Fine Arts, or Career and Technical Education requirement for the Standard diploma or the World Language requirement for the Advanced Studies Diploma may be used to partially satisfy the sequential elective requirement, so long as the total number of required credits for the diploma are achieved.
    - i. If using World Language courses to meet the sequential elective graduation requirement for the Advanced Studies diploma per the flexibility in 2(a) above, students taking three credits of one language would need a total of four credits in World Language to meet both the sequential elective requirement and the World Language graduation requirement; students taking two credits of two languages would require a third year of one of the languages to fulfill both the sequential elective requirement and the World Language requirement.
    - ii. If using World Language courses to meet the sequential elective graduation requirement for the Standard diploma per the flexibility in 2(a) above,

students would need a total of two credits in World Language, as well as one credit in fine or performing arts or career and technical education, to meet both the sequential elective requirement and the World Language, Fine Arts, or Career and Technical Education requirement.

3. Guidance for sequential electives in career and technical education programs are available from the Department of Education outlined in the *CTE Administrative Planning Guide* and may be accessed on the [CTE webpage](#). Sequential elective information is available for the following programs of study:
  - a. [Agricultural Education](#)
  - b. [Business & Information Technology](#)
  - c. [Career Connections](#)
  - d. [Family & Consumer Sciences](#)
  - e. [Health & Medical Sciences](#)
  - f. [Marketing](#)
  - g. [Technology Education](#)
  - h. [Trade & Industrial Education](#)
4. A sequence that includes an exploratory course followed by an introductory course cannot be used to satisfy this requirement; however, an introductory course followed by another level of the same course of study in any content area can be used. Such courses may include any sequence identified in the assignment codes document accompanying the Instructional Personnel Data Collection, which may be accessed at: [SCED Course Codes](#).
5. A two credit course, regardless of content and as long as the courses are not specifically required for graduation, can fulfill the sequential elective graduation requirement if course content builds on itself and creates a foundation for further education or training or preparation for employment.
6. Students may take the focused sequence of elective courses in consecutive years or any two years of high school.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006 and updated on March 18, 2021)*

## **VIRTUAL COURSE GRADUATION REQUIREMENT**

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All students seeking to graduate with a standard diploma or advanced studies diploma under 8VAC20-131-51 are required to successfully complete one virtual course.

### ***Guidance:***

Since 2013, students in Virginia have been required to “successfully complete one virtual course, which may be a noncredit-bearing course or a required or elective credit-bearing course that is offered online.” The Profile of a Virginia Graduate calls for students to be able to personalize their education to reflect their own interests and goals. The use of virtual courses in high schools supports this goal.

To assist school divisions in choosing which courses they will permit students to take to fulfill the graduation requirement, information is provided below based on current research and best practice.

Virtual courses are courses taught in a web-based environment. It may be suitable for a student to download parts of a course so that work may be accomplished offline, but generally a virtual course requires that students be connected to the Internet for at least part of the time.

Experiences students have while taking virtual courses in high school should prepare them to participate in college-level or career-based virtual courses after high school. Hence, virtual courses taken for this requirement should match the style of such courses as are commonly found on college campuses or in job training programs. They should encourage students to develop skills such as self-discipline, time-management, and focus.

*Types of Virtual Courses:*

*Fully Online:* Fully online courses include courses with structured timelines for interaction, assignment completion, and assessment. Fully online courses may be closely monitored by a local teacher or students may work independently. Courses may be taken for full academic credit or may supplement regular instruction by providing enrichment based on student interest or reinforcement of previous learning.

Examples of fully online courses:

- Virtual Virginia courses: Semester- or year-length courses taught by Virginia-certified teachers with a high level of student-teacher and student-student interaction through the Internet. A list of [Courses Offered](#) can be found on the Virtual Virginia webpage.
- Certain approved courses provided by an approved Multidivisional Online Providers (MOP): Many courses are provided as semester- or year-length courses, taught by Virginia-certified teachers, with at least a minimal level of student-teacher interaction. A searchable [List of Providers and Courses](#) is available online.
- Online Dual Enrollment courses provided through partnerships with local colleges and universities.

*Blended Courses:* Alternatively, many schools have developed blended courses, which combine some aspect of virtual learning with some characteristics of traditional face-to-face classrooms. Blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through a web-based environment that provides content, instruction, and feedback with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace. At least part of the instruction is provided at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home (adapted from the Chistensen Institute definition of blended learning).

Examples of blended courses:

- A course, such as the VDOE Economics and Personal Finance course on Virtual Virginia, taught partially online and partially by a classroom teacher who enhances the curriculum with other instructional tools and where students have some autonomy in how they interact with the material and each other.
- [Microsoft Imagine Academy Program](#), e-Learning option, with flexibility so that students may have some autonomy over their learning path, instructional time, and interaction with teacher and other students.

*Examples that would not fulfill the virtual course requirement:*

- A series of podcasts, such as often found on iTunes U or YouTube:  
A series of podcasts that provide content but does not include any sort of interaction with a teacher or other students.
- Short web-based, computer-mediated tutorials on specific skills:  
Tutorials that address very limited, specific skills but which have no way of assessing student ability to put those skills into use, and have no interaction with other students or a teacher.
- A class that incorporates online activities from an online textbook but which does not allow students any autonomy over their work pace or path.
- A “flipped” classroom model where students complete instructional activities outside of the classroom and work on understanding concepts and practicing skills in the regular classroom setting, but where the path and pace are set by the teacher with little room for students to receive extra guidance for particular problems or extra resources for particular interests.

*What a positive virtual course experience provides:*

- Students help plan out their own work pace and schedule
- Students have clear goals and reach those goals
- Students are self-motivated and self-disciplined
- Students interact with others, when appropriate, and in an appropriate manner
- Students use frequent feedback/assessment to improve their performance

*(Adapted from [Superintendent’s Memo #170-18](#))*

**ADVANCED PLACEMENT, HONORS, OR INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE COURSE OR  
CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION CREDENTIAL**

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All students seeking to graduate with a standard diploma or advanced studies diploma under 8VAC20-131-51 are required to: (i) complete an Advanced Placement, honors, or International Baccalaureate course; or (ii) earn a career and technical education credential approved by the Board of Education.

***Guidance:***

While completion of a dual enrollment course is not listed as a way to fulfill this requirement, a school division may designate a dual enrollment course as an honors course.

In making such a designation, school divisions should consider the definition of the term honors course provided in the Board's [Regulations Governing Secondary School Transcripts \(8VAC20-160-10\)](#):

*"Honors course" means a course offered to academically advanced students to provide opportunities to study and learn with other advanced students and to accelerate their learning in a specific content area. These courses are designed to be more challenging by covering additional topics or some topics in greater depth.*

## CREDIT ACCOMMODATIONS

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### ***8VAC20-131-51(B)(3) states:***

*B. Requirements for a Standard Diploma...*

*3. The board shall establish through guidelines credit accommodations to the standard and verified credit requirements for a Standard Diploma. Such credit accommodations for students with disabilities may include:*

- a. Approval of alternative courses to meet the standard credit requirements;*
- b. Modifications to the requirements for local school divisions to award locally awarded verified credits;*
- c. Approval of additional tests to earn a verified credit;*
- d. Adjusted cut scores required to earn verified credit; and*
- e. Allowance of work-based learning experiences.*

*The student's IEP or 504 Plan shall specify any credit accommodations applicable for the student.*

*Students completing the requirements for the Standard Diploma may be eligible to receive an honor deemed appropriate by the local school board as described in subsection H of this section.*

### ***Guidance:***

This guidance applies to students with disabilities who entered the ninth grade in 2018-2019 or beyond. For Students with disabilities who entered the ninth grade prior to 2013-2014 that are seeking a Modified Standard Diploma, refer to the guidance on the Modified Standard Diploma. For students with disabilities who entered the ninth grade prior to 2018-2019, refer to the guidance on Credit Accommodations in the graduation requirements for 8VAC20-131-50.

### ***Student Eligibility Criteria.***

Credit accommodations for the Standard Diploma shall be determined by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team or 504 plan committee, including the student where appropriate, at any point after the student's eighth grade year. The school must secure the informed written consent of the parent/guardian and the student, as appropriate, to choose credit accommodations after review of the student's academic history and full disclosure of the student's options. The student must meet the following criteria to be eligible to receive credit accommodations for the Standard Diploma:

- a. Student must have a current IEP or 504 plan with standards-based content goals*
- b. Student has a disability that precludes him or her from achieving and progressing commensurate with grade level expectations, but is learning on-grade-level content*

- c. Student needs significant instructional supports to access grade level SOL content and to show progress
- d. Based on multiple objective measures of past performance, student might not be expected to achieve the required standard and verified units of credit within the standard time frame

*Permissible Credit Accommodations for Verified Credits.*

- For students with credit accommodations, an additional or substitute test, approved by the Board of Education using the criteria in 8VAC20-131-110(C), may be used to earn verified credit. The list of approved tests is available on the [Substitute Tests for Verified Credit](#) webpage.
- The Virginia Modified Achievement Standards Test (VMAST) may be used for verified credit purposes for Algebra I and EOC reading. To take the VMAST for verified credit purposes, a student must meet all current VMAST eligibility requirements and beginning in the 2014-2015 school year the student must also meet the following additional criteria:
  - Student must pass the high school course; and
  - Score 374 or below on the end-of-course Standards of Learning test after taking the test at least twice

Beginning in 2014-2015, scores of students who participate in VMAST will no longer be included in the participation rate or pass rate calculations for federal accountability, as required for approval of Virginia’s Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility application.

- Local school boards may award locally-awarded verified credits (LAVC) in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and history and social science, following the same criteria applicable to all students as provided in 8VAC20-131-110(B) and the guidance for “Locally-Awarded Verified Credit.” Students who entered the ninth grade prior to 2018-2019 that require more than three LAVC in any subject may have the eligibility criteria for credit accommodations properly documented in the IEP or 504 plan. The limit on the number of LAVC that may be used to meet diploma requirements is not applicable to students with credit accommodations.
- Special permission credit accommodations permit local school boards to award LAVC in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and history/social science to certain students with disabilities. Eligible students must:
  - Pass the high school course based on a non-modified curriculum;
  - score below 375 on the SOL test;

- have a documented disability that presents a unique or significant challenge to the degree that the student is unable to demonstrate knowledge of the course content on the SOL test using available accommodations; and
- demonstrate achievement in the academic content through an appeal process administered at the local level.

The decision to consider a special permission credit accommodation should be made through the IEP and/or 504 review process. School divisions must submit a Special Permission Credit Accommodation Form to VDOE for each student being considered for a LAVC with a SOL scaled score below 375. The form must include documentation regarding the disability that prevents the student from fully demonstrating their knowledge of the course content on the SOL test despite having accommodations. This documentation should include evidence of the use or consideration of other credit accommodations and other substitute assessment options.

- Local school boards may offer the opportunity for the expedited retake of end-of-course SOL tests as provided in 8VAC20-131-110(D), with the exception of the English writing SOL tests. The criteria included in the guidance for “Expedited Retake,” should be followed; however, the narrow margin criteria for students who qualify for credit accommodations is defined as a scaled score of 350-374, rather than 375-399.

*Permissible Credit Accommodations for Standard Credits.*

- Local school boards may deliver the Personal Finance course (3120) to include the 21 Work Readiness Skills (WRS) for the Commonwealth. This augmented course may be used to meet the Economics and Personal Finance requirement when the student has earned at least 3 standard credits in history and social science. Upon completion of the augmented Personal Finance course, the student may take the WRS assessment to earn the Board-approved WRS credential. This approach would satisfy the graduation requirements for economics and personal finance, history/social science, and the workplace credential.
- Parts I and II of certain required courses may be used to each earn a standard credit towards the total number required in the subject area. Students must complete both parts of the course in order to earn the standard credits. They may earn no more than three content area standard credits by taking these two-part courses. The remaining credit could be used as an elective credit.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on September 20, 2018)*

## **DIPLOMA SEAL OF BILITERACY**

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### ***8VAC20-131-51(H)(6) states:***

*6. The Board of Education's Seal of Biliteracy shall be awarded to students who demonstrate proficiency in English and at least one other language and meet additional criteria established by the board. Such seal shall be awarded to eligible students graduating from public high schools in the Commonwealth beginning in 2016.*

### ***Guidance:***

The Board of Education's Seal of Biliteracy certifies attainment of a high level of proficiency by a graduating high school student in one or more languages in addition to English (which may include American Sign Language).

The Board of Education's Seal of Biliteracy will be awarded to students who earn a Board of Education-approved diploma and:

1. pass all required End-of-Course Assessments in English reading and writing at the proficient or higher level; and
2. obtain proficiency at the intermediate-mid level or higher in one or more languages other than English, as demonstrated through an assessment from a list to be approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Students should demonstrate proficiency in English by meeting English language arts requirements for high school graduation through whatever means are currently in place to document attainment of that requirement.

Students should demonstrate proficiency in a world language other than English through one of a range of approved language assessment options, including Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and other national or international assessments at a level comparable to Intermediate Mid on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines. Options include:

- Foreign language AP examination with a score of three or higher or an IB examination with a score of four or higher; or
- Score 600 or higher on a Latin SAT II test (SAT Subject Test); or
- Receive a rating of Intermediate Mid or higher on a nationally or internationally available assessment of proficiency across language skills based on ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines; or
- Pass a foreign government's approved language exam, or a nation's high school level standardized exam in a language from a country in which the language is taught in school at a level comparable to Intermediate-mid or higher on the ACTFL proficiency scale; or
- Provide evidence of success at the B1 level or higher on an assessment authorized through the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages; or

- Provide evidence of attaining Level 3.0 or higher on the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI);
- Provide evidence of attaining an Intermediate level or higher rating on the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI:ASL); or
- If the school division can certify to the Superintendent that the test meets the rigor of a four-year high school course of study in that foreign language, passing a school division language examination that, at a minimum, assesses speaking, reading, listening, and writing in a language other than English at the Intermediate-mid proficiency level or higher. Any school division language examination offered as evidence for awarding the Seal of Biliteracy shall be approved in advance by the Superintendent for the purpose of determining proficiency in a language other than English.

The Virginia Department of Education will maintain a list of acceptable national and international tests with qualifying scores for reference in awarding the Seal of Biliteracy. The list of approved tests will be reviewed on a regular basis and available on the [Seal of Biliteracy](#) webpage.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on June 15, 2015)*

## **8VAC20-131-60 TRANSFER STUDENTS**

### **TRANSFER FROM A NONPUBLIC SCHOOL**

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#### ***8VAC20-131-60(A) and (D) state, in part:***

*A. ...Students transferring in grades kindergarten through 8 from Virginia public schools or nonpublic schools accredited by one of the approved accrediting constituent members of the Virginia Council for Private Education (VCPE) shall be given recognition for all grade-level work completed. The academic record of students transferring from all other schools shall be evaluated to determine appropriate grade placement in accordance with policies adopted by the local school board...*

*D. A secondary school shall accept credits toward graduation received from Virginia nonpublic schools accredited by one of the approved accrediting constituent members of the VCPE. The board shall maintain contact with the VCPE and may periodically review its accrediting procedures and policies as part of its policies under this section.*

*Nothing in these standards shall prohibit a public school from accepting standard units of credit toward graduation awarded to students who transfer from all other schools when the courses for which the student receives credit generally match the description of or can be substituted for courses for which the receiving school gives standard credit, and the school from which the child transfers certifies that the courses for which credit is given meet the requirements of 8VAC20-131-110 A.*

#### ***Guidance:***

The Standards of Quality, at § 22.1-253:4(A) in the *Code of Virginia*, require local school boards to make provisions “to facilitate the transfer and appropriate grade placement of students from other public secondary schools, from nonpublic schools, or from home instruction as outlined in the standards for accreditation.” Each local school board shall develop a policy for the transfer of students consistent with the Standards of Accreditation.

Any student transferring to a Virginia public school from a nonpublic school accredited by a constituent member of the Virginia Council for Private Education (VCPE) shall receive credit for all grade level work completed in the nonpublic school. Information regarding constituent members is available from [VCPE](#). This guidance is applicable to grades K through 12.

When a student transfers from a nonpublic school that is not accredited by a constituent member of the VCPE, the receiving school shall make every reasonable effort to determine the level of achievement of students transferring in grades K through 8. If the receiving school is unable to determine the acceptability of prior work for the student to be placed in accordance with local school board policy, the school may consider using the results of any nationally-normed standardized test as a guide for grade placement.

At the secondary level, when a student transfers from a nonpublic school that is not accredited by a constituent member of the VCPE, if the receiving school staff is unable to determine that the courses for which the student has been awarded credit, or in the case of some students who have received home instruction, or no credit was awarded, the receiving school may use the results of any nationally-normed standardized content-specific test already taken by the student as a basis for awarding credit. Schools should refrain from using teacher-made tests because the transferring student has not been provided with the specific instruction for these tests that was made available at the receiving school. Schools may review course descriptions, lesson plans, tests, or other appropriate documentation from the student's previous school in making decisions regarding the acceptability of the standard units of credit.

The receiving school is not required to award a letter or numeric grade when accepting courses in transfer.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006)*

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS

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### **8VAC20-131-60(F) and (G) state, in part:**

*F...Students transferring into a Virginia public school from other than a Virginia public school shall earn no fewer than the number of verified units listed in subdivision G 1 or G 2 of this section. The school division shall accept the following tests from the sending state, country, private school, or Department of Defense Educational Activity school for the purpose of awarding verified units of credit in courses previously completed at another school or program of study, for the purpose of awarding a Virginia high school diploma:*

- 1. End-of-course tests required for graduation by the sending state;*
- 2. Exit tests required for graduation by the sending state; and*
- 3. National norm-referenced achievement tests. When students transfer to a Virginia public school from a state that requires a national norm-referenced achievement test, and that state education agency has set a "cut score" or passing score for the purpose of graduation, the school division shall accept the test for the purpose of awarding a verified credit if the test includes some content in a subject for which a verified credit may be awarded. If that state education agency has not set a cut score for the norm-referenced test, the test may not be used for the purpose of awarding a verified credit or earning a high school diploma.*

*Any substitute test approved by the board for verified credit shall be accepted in lieu of the applicable SOL tests if the applicable standard credit has been earned by the student.*

*The sending state's test must include content in the subjects for which verified credit is awarded. The test does not have to be comparable to a Virginia SOL test, so long as the test includes some content in the subject area. If the test includes some content from more than one subject, verified credits shall be awarded for every subject area covered by the test.*

*G. Students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time after the tenth grade shall earn as many credits as possible toward the prescribed graduation requirements. However, schools may substitute courses required in other states in the same content area if the student is unable to meet the specific content requirements of 8VAC20-131-50 or 8VAC20-131-51, respectively, without taking a heavier than normal course load in any semester, by taking summer school, or by taking courses after the time when the student otherwise would have graduated.*

*The graduation requirements for students transferring into a Virginia high school for the first time shall be as follows:*

- 1. For a Standard Diploma:*

*a. Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time at the beginning of or during the ninth grade prior to the 2018-2019 school year shall meet the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-50. Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time at the beginning of or during the ninth grade in the 2018-2019 school year or thereafter shall meet the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-51.*

*b. Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time at the beginning of or during the tenth grade prior to the 2019-2020 school year or at the beginning of the eleventh grade prior to the 2020-2021 school year shall meet the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-50, except that such students shall only be required to earn a minimum of four verified units of credit: one each in English, mathematics, history, and science. Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time at the beginning of or during the tenth grade in the 2019-2020 school year or thereafter or at the beginning of the eleventh grade in the 2020-2021 school year or thereafter, shall meet the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-51.*

*c. Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time during the eleventh grade prior to the 2020-2021 school year or at the beginning of the twelfth grade prior to the 2021-2022 school year shall meet the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-50, except that such students shall only be required to earn a minimum of two verified units of credit: one in English and one in mathematics if participation in mathematics testing is required by federal law, otherwise, such verified credit may be of the student's own choosing. Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time during the eleventh grade in the 2020-2021 school year or thereafter, or at the beginning of twelfth grade in the 2021-2022 school year or thereafter, shall meet the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-51, except that such students shall only be required to earn a minimum of two verified units of credit: one in English and one in mathematics if participation in mathematics testing is required by federal law, otherwise, such verified credit may be of the student's own choosing.*

*d. Students transferring after 20 instructional hours per course of their senior or twelfth grade year shall be given every opportunity to earn a diploma following the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-50 for students entering prior to the 2021-2022 school year, or following the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-51 for students entering in the 2021-2022 school year or thereafter. If it is not possible for the student to meet the requirements for a diploma, arrangements should be made for the student's previous school to award the diploma. If these arrangements cannot be made, a waiver of the verified unit of credit requirements may be available to the student. The Department of Education may grant such waivers upon request by the local school board in accordance with guidelines prescribed by the board.*

*2. For an Advanced Studies Diploma:*

*a. Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time at the beginning of or during the ninth grade prior to the 2018-2019 school year shall earn credit as prescribed in 8VAC20-131-50. Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time at the beginning of or during the ninth grade in the 2018-2019 school year or thereafter shall earn credit as prescribed in 8VAC20-131-51.*

*b. Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time at the beginning of or during the tenth grade prior to the 2019-2020 school year or at the beginning of the eleventh grade prior to the 2020-2021 school year shall meet the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-50, except that such students shall only be required to earn a minimum of six verified units of credit: two in English and one each in mathematics, history, and science and one of the student's own choosing. Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time during the tenth grade in the 2019-2020 school year or thereafter or at the beginning of the eleventh grade in the 2020-2021 school year or thereafter shall earn credit as prescribed in 8VAC20-131-51.*

*c. Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time during the eleventh grade prior to the 2020-2021 school year or at the beginning of the twelfth grade prior to the 2021-2022 school year shall meet the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-50, except that such students shall only be required to earn a minimum of four verified units of credit: one in English, one in mathematics if required participation in mathematics testing is required by federal law, otherwise such verified credit may be of the student's own choosing, and two additional verified credits of the student's own choosing. Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time during the eleventh grade in the 2020-2021 school year or thereafter, or at the beginning of the twelfth grade in the 2021-2022 school year or thereafter, shall meet the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-51, except that such students shall only be required to earn a minimum of two verified units of credit: one in English, and one in mathematics if required participation in mathematics testing is required by federal law, otherwise such verified credit may be of the student's own choosing.*

*d. Students transferring after 20 instructional hours per course of their senior or twelfth grade year shall be given every opportunity to earn a diploma following the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-50 for students entering prior to the 2021-2022 school year, or following the graduation requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-51 for students entering in the 2021-2022 school year or thereafter. If it is not possible for the student to meet the requirements for a diploma, arrangements should be made for the student's previous school to award the diploma. If these arrangements cannot be made, a waiver of the verified unit of credit requirements may be available to the student. The Department of Education may grant such waivers upon request by the local school board in accordance with guidelines prescribed by the board.*

*3. For an Applied Studies Diploma: In accordance with the requirements of the Standards of Quality, students with disabilities who complete the requirements of their Individualized Education Plan and do not meet the requirements for other diplomas shall be awarded Applied Studies Diplomas in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations regarding special education.*

*Students who pursue an Applied Studies Diploma shall be allowed to pursue a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma at any time during high school. Such students shall not be excluded from courses or tests required to earn these diplomas.*

*4. For a Certificate of Program Completion: In accordance with the requirements of the Standards of Quality, students who complete prescribed programs of studies defined by the local school board, but do not qualify for a Standard Diploma, an Advanced Studies Diploma, or an Applied Studies Diploma shall be awarded Certificates of Program Completion. The requirements for Certificates of Program Completion are developed by local school boards in accordance with the Standards of Quality.*

**Guidance:**

Graduation requirements for students transferring into a Virginia public high school for the first time are stated in 8VAC20-131-60(G). The “first time” refers to the first time the student was enrolled in a Virginia public high school in that grade regardless of where the student attended school in the ninth grade. Therefore, a student who entered a Virginia public high school in the ninth grade, transferred to another state, and returned to a Virginia public high school in a later grade may be allowed to earn the Standard or Advanced Studies diploma by meeting the criteria of 8VAC20-131-60(G).

Parents or guardians of transfer students should be notified as soon as possible of the graduation requirements for students entering a Virginia public high school. The notification should include definitions of standard and verified credits, information on available diploma types, and numbers of standard and verified units of credit required for each diploma.

Testing and verified credits.

School divisions shall only require transfer students to take Standards of Learning (SOL) tests to earn verified credits toward graduation requirements:

- After verified credits earned as a result of another state’s accountability system have been awarded; and
- After determining that certain SOL tests are necessary to fulfill the graduation requirements for the selected diploma based on the student’s grade level and date of enrollment.

In all cases where students have earned a standard credit for coursework completed in another state but need to take the associated SOL test for verified credit, school divisions are encouraged to consider what supports should be made available to those students prior to testing. In order to aid preparation, efforts should be made to provide these students and their parents or guardians

with sufficient notice of testing dates and information about the testing process, as well as options for remediation and retakes that may be available if needed.

The following criteria should be considered when accepting test scores from other states, countries, private schools, or Department of Defense Educational Activity schools for the purpose of meeting verified credit requirements:

- If the sending entity requires the student to take a test or tests, but the entity has not set a specified cut score or passing score, the student must meet the same testing requirements as all other transfer students.
- If the sending entity does not require students to pass end-of-course or exit tests in order to graduate, the student must meet the same testing requirements as all other transfer students.
- If the sending entity administers content-based end-of-course tests required for graduation and the student achieved a passing score on any of those tests, the school division shall automatically accept the student's passing scores on the tests for the purpose of awarding verified credits in those subject areas. The test does not have to be comparable to a Virginia SOL test, so long as the test includes some content in the subject area.
- If the sending entity administers a comprehensive subject area examination (e.g., an exit test) as a testing requirement for graduation, the school division shall automatically accept the student's passing scores on the tests for the purpose of awarding verified credits in those subject areas. The test does not have to be comparable to a Virginia SOL test, so long as the test includes some content in the subject area. If the test includes some content from more than one subject, verified credits shall be awarded for every subject area covered by the test.
- If the sending entity administers a national norm-referenced achievement test and that state agency has established a "cut score" or passing score for the purpose of graduation, the school division shall accept the test for the purpose of awarding a verified credit if the test includes some content in a subject for which a verified credit may be awarded. If that entity has not set a cut score for the norm-referenced test, the test may not be used for the purpose of awarding a verified credit or earning a high school diploma.
- If the student has taken any substitute test approved by the Virginia Board of Education for verified credit and achieved the required cut score, the school division shall accept the substitute test in lieu of the applicable SOL assessment.

*Verified Credit Requirements for Students Transferring During the Eleventh Grade or the Beginning of the Twelfth Grade*

Sections 8VAC20-131-60(G)(1)(c) and (G)(2)(c) require students entering a Virginia high school for the first time during the eleventh grade or at the beginning of the twelfth grade to earn two verified credits: (i) one in English, and (ii) a verified credit in mathematics if participation in

mathematics testing is required by federal law, otherwise the verified credit may be of the student's own choosing. In accordance with federal law, participation in mathematics testing is only required if such transfer students are enrolled in Algebra I.

- Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time during the eleventh grade or at the beginning of the twelfth grade who are not enrolled in Algebra I are not subject to the federal mathematics testing requirement, and may use a student selected verified credit.
- Students entering a Virginia high school for the first time during the eleventh grade or at the beginning of the twelfth grade who are enrolled in Algebra I are subject to the federal mathematics testing requirement and shall take the SOL EOC Algebra I test. However, if the student fails the SOL EOC Algebra I test, the student may use a different subject of the student's own choosing to earn the verified credit for graduation.

*Waiver of Verified Credit for Transfers During the Twelfth Grade.*

Local school boards, through the division superintendent, may request waivers of the verified credit requirement for students who may be eligible for such a waiver by providing a written request to the Department of Education no more than 90 calendar days prior to the student's anticipated graduation date. The request for a waiver shall be submitted on forms provided by the Department of Education and shall include documentation that the student transferred from outside the state, or from a private school, or was receiving home instruction, within a timeframe that would not allow the student to meet the reduced verified credit provisions of 8VAC20-131-60(G)(1)(c) or (G)(2)(c) of the standards and what efforts have been made to comply with the standards. An application form has been developed for this purpose and is available as an attachment to [Superintendent's Memo #076-17](#).

*Graduation Requirements for Transfer Students.*

Students entering a Virginia high school during the tenth grade or later may benefit by having to earn a reduced number of verified credits, as stated in 8VAC20-131-60(G), and summarized in this table:

A student entering a Virginia high school for first time:	Prior to 2018-2019 school year:	2018-2019 school year:	2019-2020 school year:	2020-2021 school year:	2021-2022 school year and thereafter:
At the beginning of or during ninth grade	All requirements of 8VAC20-131-50	All requirements of 8VAC20-131-51			
At the beginning of or during tenth grade	All requirements of 8VAC20-131-50, except: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For a Standard diploma, only four verified credits required: English (1), mathematics (1), history (1), and science (1)</li> <li>For an Advanced Studies diploma, only six verified credits required: English (2), mathematics (1), history (1), science (1), and student-selected (1)</li> </ul>		All requirements of 8VAC20-131-51		
At the beginning of eleventh grade	All requirements of 8VAC20-131-50, except: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For a Standard diploma, only four verified credits required: English (1), mathematics (1), history (1), and science (1)</li> <li>For an Advanced Studies diploma, only six verified credits required: English (2), mathematics (1), history (1), science (1), and student-selected (1)</li> </ul>			All requirements of 8VAC20-131-51	
During eleventh grade	All requirements of 8VAC20-131-50, except: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For a Standard diploma, only two verified credits required: English (1), and student-selected (1)(<i>see note 2</i>).</li> <li>For an Advanced Studies diploma, only four verified credits required: English (1), and student-selected (3)(<i>see note 2</i>).</li> </ul>			All requirements of 8VAC20-131-51, except only two verified credits required: English (1), and student-selected (1)( <i>see note 2</i> ).	
At the beginning of twelfth grade	All requirements of 8VAC20-131-50, except: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For a Standard diploma, only two verified credits required: English (1), and student-selected (1)(<i>see note 2</i>).</li> <li>For an Advanced Studies diploma, only four verified credits required: English (1), and student-selected (3)(<i>see note 2</i>).</li> </ul>			All requirements of 8VAC20-131-51, except only two verified credits required: English (1), and student-selected (1)( <i>see note 2</i> ).	
During twelfth grade	Students should be given every opportunity to earn a diploma following the graduation requirements in 8VAC20-131-50. If not possible, arrangements should be made for the student's previous school to award the diploma. If these arrangements cannot be made, a waiver of the verified credit requirements may be requested by the local school board to the Department of Education.			Students should be given every opportunity to earn a diploma following the graduation requirements in 8VAC20-131-51. If not possible, arrangements should be made for the student's previous school to award the diploma. If these arrangements cannot be made, a waiver of the verified credit requirements may be requested by the local school board to the Department of Education.	
Notes:					
1. "Beginning" means within the first 20 hours of instruction per course. "During" means after the first 20 hours of instruction per course. 2. See " <i>Verified Credit Requirements for Students Transferring During the Eleventh Grade or the Beginning of the Twelfth Grade</i> " guidance topic above.					

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006, and [Superintendent's Memo #309-14](#))*

## **8VAC20-131-80 INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

### **PHYSICAL FITNESS PROGRAMS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

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***8VAC20-131-80(A) provides, in part:***

*A...[E]ach school...shall require students to participate in a program of physical fitness during the regular school year in accordance with guidelines established by the board...*

***Guidance:***

Every school division should develop a local policy to ensure that each student participates in a program of physical fitness, whether it be through a physical education program offering at the school or another type of activity. It shall be up to each local school division to determine in its policy how to ensure student participation in such a program during the regular school year and to establish minimum time amounts for student participation. In their local policies, school divisions should establish a process for verifying and documenting student participation.

The goals for elementary students should focus on the achievement of a health-enhancing level of physical fitness. Elementary students become aware of health-related fitness components (cardio-respiratory endurance, muscular endurance, muscular strength, flexibility, and body composition) while engaging in a variety of physical activities.

Meeting the physical fitness requirements may be accomplished by either of the following:

- Requiring all students to take a sequential program of physical education that involves moderate to vigorous physical activity based on Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) as required by 8VAC20-131-90; or
- Requiring those students who do not take physical education to participate in:
  - Before- and after- school physical activity programs, such as intramurals, clubs, dance programs, community sports programs, and interscholastic athletics;
  - Other opportunities outside of school, such as an individual physical activity, which may include: (1) a student walking or bike riding outside of the school day; (2) student participation in a physical activity with a parent; (3) individual activity lessons (e.g. ballet); or (4) student participation in a local fitness facility program; or
  - Joint school and community recreation activities that require physical activity.

The local policy should provide for the effective use of school and community resources and equitably serve the needs and interests of all students, taking into consideration age appropriateness, differences of gender, cultural norms, physical and cognitive abilities, students with disabilities, and fitness levels. Students who participate in effective physical fitness programs during the regular school year develop lifelong habits that promote health and learning. Systemic, sustainable changes to fitness programs occur when schools, families, and communities create health-promoting school environments together.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006)*

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

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In addition to the guidance on physical fitness programs, the Board of Education has developed physical education program guidelines for elementary and middle schools, as required by [House Bill 1092 \(2012\)](#).

These guidelines pertain to physical education, which should not be confused with physical activity. Physical education is a planned, sequential, quality instructional program that helps students acquire the knowledge, processes, skills, and confidence needed to make healthy decisions, learn the skills necessary for performing a variety of physical activities and understand the benefits of achieving and maintaining a physically active lifestyle. By contrast, physical activity is any bodily movement that is produced by the contraction of skeletal muscles that increases energy expenditure.

### ***Guidance:***

1. Physical education programs should provide students with an opportunity to learn health-enhancing concepts and skills.

### ***Indicators:***

- Applicable beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, § 22.1-253.13:1(D)(15) of the *Code of Virginia* requires local school divisions to implement a program of physical activity available to all students in grades kindergarten through five consisting of at least 20 minutes per day or an average of 100 minutes per week during the regular school year and available to all students in grades six through 12 with a goal of at least 150 minutes per week on average during the regular school year. Such program may include any combination of (i) physical education classes, (ii) extracurricular athletics, (iii) recess, or (iv) other programs and physical activities deemed appropriate by the local school board. Each local school board must incorporate into its local wellness policy a goal for the implementation of such program during the regular school year.
- Elementary and middle schools provide each student a program of instruction which corresponds to the *Standards of Learning* for physical education and health consistent with the provisions of the SOA;
- Qualified health and physical education teachers provide instruction for all students, including students with disabilities; and
- Schools provide adequate equipment, technology, and facilities that provide healthy, safe, active, and equitable learning experiences.

### ***Guidance:***

All elementary and middle school students in Virginia have the opportunity to benefit from physical education. Knowledge about human movement is fundamental to optimizing health and performance, and preventing injury and illness. Students with

special needs receive physical education instruction in the least restrictive environment, and physical education is available equally to children with disabilities and children without disabilities.

- a. Students are taught by qualified health and physical education teachers who use effective interdisciplinary instructional practices that supports learning for all students. Schools provide adequate facilities and equipment, adequate time for instruction, and class size that supports high-quality instruction and ensures student safety.
  - b. Schools ensure the physical education curriculum articulates both the competencies necessary for lifelong learning and the competencies needed for holistic social, emotional and physical development.
  - c. Schools adopt strategies to maximize opportunities for children to participate in high-quality physical education and physical activity to improve health, and prevent and control chronic diseases.
2. Physical education programs should ensure meaningful content and skills are included in the physical education curriculum.

Indicators:

- School divisions develop and implement standards-based curricula and assessments based on the *Physical Education Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools*, which identify-essential skills, knowledge, and dispositions that students should demonstrate to reach the outcomes stated in the standards for kindergarten through grade twelve.
- The content of the *Standards of Learning* for physical education is organized around the following five essential strands of health and physical development and application:
  - Motor Skill Development;
  - Anatomical Basis of Movement;
  - Fitness Planning;
  - Social Development; and
  - Energy Balance.
- The standards in each strand are sequenced to progress in complexity from grade level to grade level. Achieving the performance expectations from the previous grade level serves as the foundation for attaining the benchmarks at the next level.
- School divisions adopt an instructional sequence and program that best serves their own students.

Guidance:

The *Physical Education Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools* establish minimum expectations for what students should know and be able to do at the end of

each grade or course in physical education, and are intended to support the following goals for students:

- a. Demonstrate competence in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities. Student learning focuses on the development and demonstration of competence in motor skills and a variety of movement forms, increasing the likelihood of participation in physical activities. (Motor Skill Development)
  - b. Apply knowledge of the structures and functions of the body and how they relate to and are affected by human movement in learning and developing motor skills and specialized movement forms. Student learning focuses on understanding basic anatomy and physiology, along with movement concepts and principles, to improve motor skills. (Anatomical Basis of Movement)
  - c. Achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of personal fitness. Student learning focuses on the importance of fitness and active lifestyles, ability to evaluate personal fitness levels, and to create an appropriate fitness plan with goals, activities, and timelines that will maintain and improve their levels of physical fitness. Recommended criterion-referenced wellness testing includes: Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run (PACER), cadence push-ups, cadence curl-ups, back-saver sit and reach, and trunk lift (Fitness Planning)
  - d. Demonstrate the aptitude, attitude, and skills to lead responsible, fulfilling, and respectful lives. Student learning focuses on communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, goal setting and attainment, critical and creative thinking, resilience, and self-directed learning. (Social Development)
  - e. Explain the importance of energy balance and nutritional needs of the body to maintain optimal health and prevent chronic disease. Student learning focuses on nutrition and functional fitness concepts and the importance of energy balance for physical health and chronic disease prevention. (Energy Balance)
  - f. Additional information about the [Physical Education Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools](#) and related resources are available on the [Physical Education](#) VDOE webpage.
3. Physical education programs should ensure students are taught by qualified health and physical education teachers.

Indicators:

- Health and physical education teachers meet or exceed the [Standards of Professional Practice for Teachers of Health and Physical Education](#);
- Health and physical education teachers are supported through regular, high-quality professional development opportunities.

Guidance:

The [\*Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards for Teachers\*](#) include seven performance standards. The first six (professional knowledge, instructional delivery, assessment of and for student learning, learning environment, professionalism, and instructional planning), are key elements that describe the knowledge that teachers possess and actions that they take to advance student learning. The seventh performance standard is student academic progress.

Effective classroom management techniques and engaging instruction are used to maximize student learning. Instructional planning begins with a curriculum scope and sequence that is aligned to the Standards of Learning; connects instruction with prior learning; makes topics relevant to students' lives and experiences; and ensures mastery of knowledge, concepts, and skills.

Delivery of instruction in physical education includes strategies, resources, materials, and tools for the sequencing of learning experiences that are designed to engage all students in active learning.

4. Physical education programs should encourage students to be physically active and become physically fit for life.

*Indicators:*

- Curricula focuses student learning on understanding the relationship between a health-enhancing level of physical fitness and the prevention of chronic disease, and provides students, teachers, and parents with the necessary information to design an individualized program of fitness.
- Schools implement a comprehensive approach to promoting physical activity, both in school and settings outside of school, and help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, and confidence needed to be physically active for life.

*Guidance:*

A well-designed physical education curriculum integrates the five components of fitness, and improves the fitness of students using sound training principles and best practices. Students who participate in physical education programs that promote personal fitness and encourage daily physical activity will be more likely to become physically fit and responsible in their physical activity choices and behaviors for a lifetime.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on June 28, 2018)*

## **8VAC20-131-90 INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS**

### **PHYSICAL FITNESS PROGRAMS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL**

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***8VAC20-131-90(A) provides, in part:***

*A...[E]ach school...shall require students to participate in a program of physical fitness during the regular school year in accordance with guidelines established by the board...*

***Guidance:***

Every school division should develop a local policy to ensure that each student participates in a program of physical fitness, whether it be through a physical education program offering at the school or another type of activity. It shall be up to each local school division to determine in its policy how to ensure student participation in such a program during the regular school year and to establish minimum time amounts for student participation. In their local policies, school divisions should establish a process for verifying and documenting student participation.

Building on material covered at the elementary level, middle school students should continue to learn more about the components of fitness, how they are developed and improved, how they interrelate, and how they contribute to overall fitness.

Meeting the physical fitness requirements may be accomplished by either of the following:

- Requiring all students to take a sequential program of physical education that involves moderate to vigorous physical activity based on Virginia’s Standards of Learning (SOL) as required by 8VAC20-131-90; or
- Requiring those students who do not take physical education to participate in:
  - Before- and after- school physical activity programs, such as intramurals, clubs, dance programs, community sports programs, and interscholastic athletics;
  - Other opportunities outside of the school, such as an individual physical activity, which could include: (1) a student walking or bike riding outside of the school day; (2) student participation in a physical activity with a parent; (3) individual lessons in activities such as ballet; or (4) a student participating in a local fitness facility program; or
  - Joint school and community recreation activities that require physical activity.

The local policy should provide for the effective use of school and community resources and equitably serve the needs and interests of all students, taking into consideration age appropriateness, differences of gender, cultural norms, physical and cognitive abilities, students with disabilities, and fitness levels. Students who participate in effective physical fitness programs during the regular school year develop lifelong habits that promote health and learning. Systemic, sustainable changes to fitness programs occur when schools, families, and communities create health-promoting school environments together.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006.)*

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

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In addition to the guidance on physical fitness programs, the Board of Education has developed physical education program guidelines for elementary and middle schools, as required by [House Bill 1092 \(2012\)](#).

These guidelines pertain to physical education, which should not be confused with physical activity. Physical education is a planned, sequential, quality instructional program that helps students acquire the knowledge, processes, skills, and confidence needed to make healthy decisions, learn the skills necessary for performing a variety of physical activities and understand the benefits of achieving and maintaining a physically active lifestyle. By contrast, physical activity is any bodily movement that is produced by the contraction of skeletal muscles that increases energy expenditure.

### ***Guidance:***

1. Physical education programs should provide students with an opportunity to learn health-enhancing concepts and skills.

### ***Indicators:***

- Applicable beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, § 22.1-253.13:1(D)(15) of the *Code of Virginia* requires local school divisions to implement a program of physical activity available to all students in grades kindergarten through five consisting of at least 20 minutes per day or an average of 100 minutes per week during the regular school year and available to all students in grades six through 12 with a goal of at least 150 minutes per week on average during the regular school year. Such program may include any combination of (i) physical education classes, (ii) extracurricular athletics, (iii) recess, or (iv) other programs and physical activities deemed appropriate by the local school board. Each local school board must incorporate into its local wellness policy a goal for the implementation of such program during the regular school year.
- Elementary and middle schools provide each student a program of instruction which corresponds to the *Standards of Learning* for physical education and health consistent with the provisions of the SOA;
- Qualified health and physical education teachers provide instruction for all students, including students with disabilities; and
- Schools provide adequate equipment, technology, and facilities that provide healthy, safe, active, and equitable learning experiences.

### ***Guidance:***

All elementary and middle school students in Virginia have the opportunity to benefit from physical education. Knowledge about human movement is fundamental to optimizing health and performance, and preventing injury and illness. Students with special needs receive physical education instruction in the least restrictive environment,

and physical education is available equally to children with disabilities and children without disabilities.

- d. Students are taught by qualified health and physical education teachers who use effective interdisciplinary instructional practices that supports learning for all students. Schools provide adequate facilities and equipment, adequate time for instruction, and class size that supports high-quality instruction and ensures student safety.
  - e. Schools ensure the physical education curriculum articulates both the competencies necessary for lifelong learning and the competencies needed for holistic social, emotional and physical development.
  - f. Schools adopt strategies to maximize opportunities for children to participate in high-quality physical education and physical activity to improve health, and prevent and control chronic diseases.
2. Physical education programs should ensure meaningful content and skills are included in the physical education curriculum.

Indicators:

- School divisions develop and implement standards-based curricula and assessments based on the *Physical Education Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools*, which identify essential skills, knowledge, and dispositions that students should demonstrate to reach the outcomes stated in the standards for kindergarten through grade twelve.
- The content of the *Standards of Learning* for physical education is organized around the following five essential strands of health and physical development and application:
  - Motor Skill Development;
  - Anatomical Basis of Movement;
  - Fitness Planning;
  - Social Development; and
  - Energy Balance.
- The standards in each strand are sequenced to progress in complexity from grade level to grade level. Achieving the performance expectations from the previous grade level serves as the foundation for attaining the benchmarks at the next level.
- School divisions adopt an instructional sequence and program that best serves their own students.

Guidance:

The *Physical Education Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools* establish minimum expectations for what students should know and be able to do at the end of

each grade or course in physical education, and are intended to support the following goals for students:

- g. Demonstrate competence in motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities. Student learning focuses on the development and demonstration of competence in motor skills and a variety of movement forms, increasing the likelihood of participation in physical activities. (Motor Skill Development)
  - h. Apply knowledge of the structures and functions of the body and how they relate to and are affected by human movement in learning and developing motor skills and specialized movement forms. Student learning focuses on understanding basic anatomy and physiology, along with movement concepts and principles, to improve motor skills. (Anatomical Basis of Movement)
  - i. Achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of personal fitness. Student learning focuses on the importance of fitness and active lifestyles, ability to evaluate personal fitness levels, and to create an appropriate fitness plan with goals, activities, and timelines that will maintain and improve their levels of physical fitness. Recommended criterion-referenced wellness testing includes: Progressive Aerobic Cardiovascular Endurance Run (PACER), cadence push-ups, cadence curl-ups, back-saver sit and reach, and trunk lift (Fitness Planning)
  - j. Demonstrate the aptitude, attitude, and skills to lead responsible, fulfilling, and respectful lives. Student learning focuses on communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, goal setting and attainment, critical and creative thinking, resilience, and self-directed learning. (Social Development)
  - k. Explain the importance of energy balance and nutritional needs of the body to maintain optimal health and prevent chronic disease. Student learning focuses on nutrition and functional fitness concepts and the importance of energy balance for physical health and chronic disease prevention. (Energy Balance)
  - l. Additional information about the [Physical Education Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools](#) and related resources are available on the [Physical Education](#) VDOE webpage.
3. Physical education programs should ensure students are taught by qualified health and physical education teachers.

Indicators:

- Health and physical education teachers meet or exceed the [Standards of Professional Practice for Teachers of Health and Physical Education](#);
- Health and physical education teachers are supported through regular, high-quality professional development opportunities.

Guidance:

The [\*Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards for Teachers\*](#) include seven performance standards. The first six (professional knowledge, instructional delivery, assessment of and for student learning, learning environment, professionalism, and instructional planning), are key elements that describe the knowledge that teachers possess and actions that they take to advance student learning. The seventh performance standard is student academic progress.

Effective classroom management techniques and engaging instruction are used to maximize student learning. Instructional planning begins with a curriculum scope and sequence that is aligned to the Standards of Learning; connects instruction with prior learning; makes topics relevant to students' lives and experiences; and ensures mastery of knowledge, concepts, and skills.

Delivery of instruction in physical education includes strategies, resources, materials, and tools for the sequencing of learning experiences that are designed to engage all students in active learning.

4. Physical education programs should encourage students to be physically active and become physically fit for life.

*Indicators:*

- Curricula focuses student learning on understanding the relationship between a health-enhancing level of physical fitness and the prevention of chronic disease, and provides students, teachers, and parents with the necessary information to design an individualized program of fitness.
- Schools implement a comprehensive approach to promoting physical activity, both in school and settings outside of school, and help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, and confidence needed to be physically active for life.

*Guidance:*

A well-designed physical education curriculum integrates the five components of fitness, and improves the fitness of students using sound training principles and best practices. Students who participate in physical education programs that promote personal fitness and encourage daily physical activity will be more likely to become physically fit and responsible in their physical activity choices and behaviors for a lifetime.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on June 28, 2018)*

## **WORLD LANGUAGE AND ALGEBRA I IN MIDDLE SCHOOL**

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**8VAC20-131-90(C) states:**

*C. Level one of a world language and an Algebra I course shall be available to all eighth grade students. For any high school credit-bearing course taken in middle school, parents may request that grades be omitted from the student's transcript and the student not earn high school credit for the course in accordance with policies adopted by the local school board. Notice of this provision must be provided to parents with a deadline and format for making such a request. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to prevent a middle school from offering any other credit-bearing courses for graduation.*

**Guidance:**

Local school boards shall offer world language and Algebra I courses to students in the eighth grade. Nothing in the standards prevents schools from offering these courses to other grades in that school. When students below the ninth grade successfully complete courses offered for credit in grades 9 through 12, credit shall be counted toward meeting the standard units required for graduation provided the courses are equivalent in content and academic rigor as those courses offered at the secondary level.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006.)*

## CAREER INVESTIGATIONS COURSE

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**8VAC20-131-90(A) states, in part:**

*A...Each middle school shall provide a course in career investigation in accordance with the provisions of 8VAC20-131-140. School divisions may seek alternate means of delivering the career investigation course content provided it is equivalent in content and rigor and provides the foundation students to develop their academic and career plans as described in 8VAC20-131-140 C 2. Possible alternative means to deliver the career investigation course content could include online methods, middle school exploratory course options, and delivering the course content through other courses.*

**Guidance:**

The Department of Education has developed the [Delivering Career Investigations Guidance Document for School Personnel](#) to provide pertinent information to assist schools with options for delivering the Career Investigations curriculum. This document was distributed in [Superintendent's Memo #053-18](#).

## **8VAC20-131-110 STANDARD AND VERIFIED UNITS OF CREDIT**

### **ALTERNATIVES TO THE 140 CLOCK HOUR REQUIREMENT FOR STANDARD UNITS OF CREDIT**

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#### **8VAC20-131-110(A) states:**

*A. A "standard unit of credit" or "standard credit" is a credit awarded for a course in which the student successfully completes 140 clock hours of instruction and the requirements of the course. A school division may waive the requirement that a student receive 140 clock hours of instruction to earn a standard credit, effective with students enrolled in the 2015-2016 school year, as prescribed in the Standards of Quality and board guidelines. When credit is awarded in less than whole units, the increment awarded must be no greater than the fractional part of the 140 hours of instruction provided. If a school division elects to award credit on a basis other than the 140 clock hours of instruction required for a standard unit of credit defined in this subsection, the local school division shall provide the board with satisfactory proof, based on board guidelines, that the students for whom the 140-clock-hour requirement is waived have learned the content and skills included in the relevant Standards of Learning. In addition, the local school division shall develop a written policy approved by the superintendent and school board that ensures:*

- 1. That the content of the course for which credit is awarded is comparable to 140 clock hours of instruction; and*
- 2. That upon completion, the aims and objectives of the course have been met.*

#### **Guidance:**

The Virginia Board of Education interprets the waiver of the 140-clock-hour requirement as applying to: (1) Board-approved courses; (2) Career and Technical Education courses, as applicable; and (3) local elective courses. Local elective courses must be approved by the local school board, be explicitly described in the school division secondary course of study, and have clearly-defined and publicly-available learning objectives commensurate in scope and detail with state learning standards and competencies.

School divisions may waive the requirement that a student receives 140 clock hours of instruction to earn a standard unit of credit. School divisions that choose to exercise this option may issue waivers for qualified students under the following conditions.

1. Approved School Board Policy: A school division shall have in place a written policy that is in compliance with the Regulations Establishing the Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (SOA) and includes specific criteria ensuring that:
  - a. the outcomes of the work for which standard credit is awarded are equal to progress and learning achieved in 140 clock hours of instruction;
  - b. upon completion, a student has demonstrated mastery by meeting the specific objectives and performance requirements of the course that match or exceed the expectations of

- students who have received 140 clock hours of instruction with similar standards, competencies, or objectives;
- c. the evidence of mastery of the pertinent content and skills for a student receiving a waiver is fully documented; retained securely by the school division, electronically or in hard copy consistent with student records retention requirements; and available for review by the Virginia Department of Education if requested;
  - d. success criteria for awarding a waiver of the 140-clock-hour requirement for the course are clear, objective, and agreed upon prior to a student embarking on the effort;
  - e. a student receives prior approval from the school principal (or designated school staff person) before pursuing the work, task, or assessment that is required to meet the waiver success criteria;
  - f. student eligibility for prior approval is based on local school board criteria that include such elements as current and prior academic performance, student demonstrated readiness, and/or recommendations by school staff or other knowledgeable adults;
  - g. there is a process for developing accommodations for students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency;
  - h. the total number of standard credits that can be achieved via the waiver option is defined;
  - i. the consequences of standard credits achieved by waiver are accounted for in terms of factors such as class rank, grade point average, extracurricular eligibility, and high school transcripts;
  - j. a clearly-defined school division appeal process is in place for solving disputes should they arise; and
  - k. the process for a student pursuing the waiver option is fully transparent and communicated with parents and the community.
2. Waiver Pathway Options: A school division that chooses to use the waiver of the 140-clockhour requirement may select among three general paths to award standard credits. These include:
- a. Courses that award a standard credit and have less than 140 clock hours of instruction. The school division must have documentation based on the local school board policy that defines its rationale for the reduction of instructional time and substantive evidence that it provides equivalent instruction with equivalent outcomes in the reduced clock hours.
  - b. Independent study, work sample portfolio, demonstrated performance, and locally developed or Standard of Learning assessment
    - i. Evidence must encompass a comprehensive assemblage of media products, artifacts, and performance that demonstrate a student has mastered academically rigorous material and meets or exceeds approved learning standards, competencies, or objectives for the course.
    - ii. The required content and evaluative criteria for the products must be defined prior to the advent of student work and based on the same objectives as the standard course.

- iii. The assemblage of evidence and overall process must be managed by a licensed and endorsed teacher (in the area of the coursework) with an agreed-upon series of program checkpoints throughout a specified timeline for the study.
  - iv. The school division must determine whether the aggregate work: (a) is of commensurate depth and quality as work performed in the traditional secondary classroom; and (b) meets predefined evaluative criteria shared with the student.
  - v. A student must meet a predefined performance level on a locally-developed assessment for the coursework. This may be an oral examination, performance (e.g., recital/concert), written test, or some other objective tool or process developed by the school division. The division may also use applicable Standards of Learning assessments for this purpose.
- c. Demonstrated achievement via national or international assessments
- i. The assessment must: (a) have a standardized administration; (b) be determined to be valid and reliable by an external body; and (c) be used in other states or internationally.
  - ii. The assessment must be scored independently of the school division.
  - iii. The division must have completed a rigorous review of the assessment, in accordance with the local school board policy and determined that it is aligned with the course objectives for which the waiver is being requested.
  - iv. The student must provide evidence to the school principal (or designated staff person) through performance, product, interview, and/or school staff professional judgement that he/she has some command of the course content and should be allowed to demonstrate mastery-level performance for a standard credit.
  - v. The division must have determined beforehand or develop a process for determining a qualifying score for awarding a standard credit that the division equates with mastery of the course content and skills.
  - vi. The division policy must define the number of attempts a student may make to achieve the qualifying score during a given time period and must ensure equitable access for all students should assessments have a monetary cost.

*Continuing Role of State Assessments* While the division may use the Standards of Learning assessments for awarding a standard credit as outlined in 2.b.v. of these guidelines, the Standards of Learning assessments will continue to be used in their traditional role as determiners of awarding verified credits.

*Compliance and Reporting* The school division will annually provide the following information to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

1. The school division will inform the VDOE, by the start of the school year, whether it is exercising its option to waive the 140-clock-hour requirement to award standard units of credit and indicate which, if any, of the alternative paths it will use.

2. If using the waiver option, the school division will report on the Compliance with the Standards of Quality and Other Requirements data collection that:
  - a. it has an approved school board policy in place that meets the elements defined in the Guidelines section above; and
  - b. expectations for student achievement (and past student performance, if applicable) for alternative paths are commensurate with 140 clock hours of instruction.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 22, 2015.)*

## LOCALLY-AWARDED VERIFIED CREDIT

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### **8VAC20-131-110(B) states, in part:**

*B. A "verified unit of credit" or "verified credit" is a credit awarded for a course in which a student earns a standard unit of credit, and meets one of the following:*

*3. Meets the criteria for the receipt of a locally awarded verified credit when the student has not passed a corresponding SOL test.*

*a. Students who enter the ninth grade for the first time prior to the 2018-2019 school year and do not pass SOL tests in English, mathematics, science or history and social science may receive locally awarded verified credits from the local school board in accordance with criteria established in guidelines adopted by the board. Credit accommodations for students with disabilities may be used to confer locally awarded verified credits as provided in 8VAC20-131-50 B 3.*

*b. Students who enter the ninth grade for the first time in the 2018-2019 school year or thereafter and do not pass SOL tests in English, mathematics, laboratory science, or history and social science may receive locally awarded verified credits from the local school board in accordance with criteria established in guidelines adopted by the board. No more than one locally awarded verified credit may be used to satisfy graduation requirements, except as provided in 8VAC20-131-51 B 3 for students with disabilities seeking a standard diploma.*

### **Guidance:**

- For students who enter the ninth grade for the first time prior to the 2018-2019 school year, no more than three verified credits may be awarded through this process and locally-awarded verified credits may not be used to award verified credits for the Advanced Studies diploma.
- For students entering the ninth grade in the 2018-2019 academic year or thereafter, no more than one verified credit may be awarded through this process.
- Students eligible for credit accommodations shall not be subject to the limitations on the number of verified credits that may be awarded through this process.
- The award of verified credits under this guidance will not be used to recalculate a school's accreditation rating.
- To be eligible to earn locally awarded verified credits in English, mathematics, science, or history/social science under this guidance, a student must:
  - Pass the high school course;
  - Score within a 375-399 scale score range on any administration of the Standards of Learning test after taking the test at least twice; and
  - Demonstrate achievement in the academic content through an appeal process administered at the local level.

- The Board of Education requires that local school boards adopt policies to govern procedures used to confer locally-awarded verified credit. The verification process will include:
  - The appointment by the local school board of a local review panel comprised of at least three educators. Different panels may be appointed for individual schools or groups of schools, at the local school board's discretion.
  - The local review panel will review information that provides evidence of the student's achievement of adequate knowledge of the Standards of Learning content. The panel shall have discretion in determining the information to be considered and may include, but not be limited to: results of classroom assignments, divisionwide exams, course grades, and additional academic assignments (e.g., papers, projects, essays, or written questions) as deemed appropriate.
  - Based on the evidence reviewed, the local review panel may award the verified credit, deny the verified credit, suggest participation in a remedial program and retesting, or make additional academic assignments as deemed appropriate prior to determining whether to award the verified credit.

*(Approved by the Board of Education on March 22, 2018.)*

## **AUTHENTIC PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS**

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### ***8VAC20-131-110(B) states, in part:***

*B. A "verified unit of credit" or "verified credit" is a credit awarded for a course in which a student earns a standard unit of credit, and meets one of the following:*

...

*4. Meets the criteria for the receipt of a verified credit in history and social science by demonstrating mastery of the content of the associated course on an authentic performance assessment that complies with guidelines adopted by the board. Such students shall not also be required to take the corresponding SOL test in history and social science.*

*5. Meets the criteria for the receipt of a verified credit in English (writing) by demonstrating mastery of the content of the associated course on an authentic performance assessment, that complies with guidelines adopted by the board. Such students shall not also be required to take the corresponding SOL test in English (writing).*

### ***Guidance regarding performance assessment for verified credit in history/social science:***

The 2018 General Assembly enacted legislation prohibiting the award of verified credit for performance assessments in history/social studies. This supersedes the language in 8VAC20-131-110. The 2018 legislation provides that the only way to earn a verified credit in history and social science is through successfully completing: (i) a Standards of Learning assessment; (ii) a substitute test that incorporates or exceeds the course content; or (iii) a locally awarded verified credit.

### ***Guidance regarding performance assessment for verified credit in English writing:***

#### ***Students in grade 11 English or Beyond in the 2018-2019 School Year***

Students who complete grade 11 English in the 2018-2019 school year or who have previously completed instruction in the Grades 9-11 English SOL have been instructed under the 2010 English SOL. Local performance assessments used to verify credits in writing for these students must measure the SOL included in the test blueprint for the end-of-course writing test found in the [2010 English Writing SOL test blueprint](#) and must include a persuasive writing sample. School divisions will score such writing samples using readers trained and qualified through the rubric and accompanying materials available on the [English SOL Online Writing](#) webpage.

The student writing samples and the results of any other assessment used by the school division to determine student proficiency in the writing skills included in the 2010 English SOL for grades 9-11 constitute a body of evidence. School divisions will review the body of evidence against the current performance level descriptors available on the [SOL Performance Level Descriptors](#) webpage to determine students' level of achievement in high school writing.

Performance levels for high school writing are: (i) advanced; (ii) proficient; or, (iii) does not meet the standard (fails). Students who are judged to be proficient or advanced according to these descriptors should be awarded a verified credit.

*Students who are enrolled in grade 10 English or Below in the 2018-2019 School Year*

SOL Coverage: Students who are enrolled in grade 10 English or below in the 2018-2019 school year will be instructed primarily using the 2017 English SOL. School divisions that choose to award verified credits to these students in writing using authentic performance assessments must administer assessments that cover the writing and research standards included in the English Standards of Learning (SOL) for grades 9-11. A list of the applicable SOL is provided below.

- Grade 9 English: SOL 9.6, 9.7, 9.8
- Grade 10 English: SOL 10.6, 10.7, 10.8
- Grade 11 English: SOL 11.6, 11.7, 11.8

Evaluation of Performance Tasks: Performance tasks used to award verified credits must be evaluated using the quality criteria tool found on the [Performance-Based and Local Alternative Assessment](#) webpage and must include three types of writing covered by the English Standards of Learning for grades 9-11: persuasive, analytic, and argumentative. At least one of the writing samples must include a research component. School divisions are encouraged to develop writing assessments that require students to read a passage and respond to what they have read. Because the verified credit in writing covers content from the 2017 English SOL for grades 9-11, writing samples should be collected throughout the student's high school career. Examples of writing assignments that address each type of writing are included in Appendix A. These examples provide ideas for school divisions to use in developing tasks but would require school division staff to customize them by providing additional detail before they could be administered to students.

Completion of Writing Samples: All writing samples collected for the purpose of verifying a credit in writing must be completed at school under the supervision of school personnel. Writing samples must be completed independently by the student.

Scoring Student Writing Samples: Student writing samples must be scored using the state-developed high school writing rubric by scorers who have been trained on the application of the rubric. Teachers used as scorers shall not score their own students' writing samples. A draft of the high school writing rubric may be found in Appendix B. Materials to be used in training scorers on the application of the rubric will be available in the late summer or early fall of 2019. Depending on the availability of funding, the Virginia Department of Education will provide opportunities for the external verification of local scores.

Determining if a Verified Credit Should be Awarded: The student writing samples and the results of any other assessment used by the school division to determine student proficiency in the writing skills included in the English SOL for grades 9-11 constitute a body of evidence.

School divisions will review the body of evidence against the performance level descriptors that describe the student’s level of achievement in high school writing and will determine if the student’s achievement is advanced, proficient, or does not meet the standard (fails). Students who are judged to be proficient or advanced according to these descriptors should be awarded a verified credit. More information on performance level descriptors for student achievement in high school writing based on the 2017 SOL for grades 9, 10, and 11 will be available in early fall 2019.

Verified Credit Plans: On an annual basis, school divisions will be asked to notify the Virginia Department of Education if they choose to use local performance assessments to verify credits in writing. School divisions that choose this option must prepare verified credit plans which describe how the local performance assessments will meet the requirements included in these guidelines. Verified Credit Plans will be subject to periodic review by Department staff on behalf of the Board. Information gathered during the reviews will be used to provide technical assistance to school divisions and may be shared in summary form with the Board.

Desk Reviews: Department staff will conduct annual “desk reviews” in which documents will be examined and school division staff interviewed either by webinar or by telephone. The purpose of these reviews will be to determine how local school divisions that choose to use performance assessments to verify writing credits are implementing these guidelines. The reviews will help Department staff to identify technical assistance needs and to identify best practices for sharing with other Virginia school divisions. Documents reviewed may include tasks administered to students, division-specific materials used to train teachers, and samples of student writing from the various score points of the rubric.

*Use of Performance Assessments in State Accreditation or Federal Accountability*

The results of the local authentic performance assessments will not be used to designate state accreditation or federal accountability status.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on September 20, 2018)*

## **SUBSTITUTE OR ADDITIONAL TESTS USED TO VERIFY CREDIT**

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### ***8VAC20-131-110(C) states:***

*C. The board may from time to time approve additional tests for the purpose of awarding verified credit. Such additional tests, which enable students to earn verified units of credit, must, at a minimum, meet the following criteria:*

- 1. The test must be standardized and graded independently of the school or school division in which the test is given;*
- 2. The test must be knowledge based;*
- 3. The test must be administered on a statewide multistate or international basis, or administered as part of another state's accountability assessment program; and*
- 4. To be counted in a specific academic area, the test must measure content that incorporates or exceeds the Standards of Learning content in the course for which verified credit is given.*

*The board shall set the score that must be achieved to earn a verified unit of credit on the additional test options.*

### ***Guidance:***

The Board of Education has approved a list of tests acceptable as substitutes for end-of-course Standards of Learning tests and passing scores for those tests, which is available on the [Substitute Tests for Verified Credit](#) webpage.

## **EXPEDITED RETAKES FOR END-OF-COURSE TESTS NEEDED FOR VERIFIED CREDITS**

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### **8VAC20-131-110(D) states:**

*D. With such funds as are appropriated by the General Assembly, the board shall provide opportunities for students who meet criteria adopted by the board to have an expedited retake of a SOL test to earn verified credit.*

### **Guidance:**

The following criteria shall be used in determining the eligibility of students for an expedited retake of an end-of-course test for verified credit.

The student must require the test to earn verified credit needed for graduation, have a passing grade in the course associated with the test, and have met one of the following:

- Failed the test by a narrow margin defined as a scaled score of 375-399, or
- Failed the test by any margin and had extenuating circumstances that would warrant retesting

Extenuating circumstances will be defined by the local school division superintendent but must be restricted to situations that specifically affect the student who is being retested. Extenuating circumstances may include the need to pass the test to graduate.

NOTE: Refer to the guidance for “Expedited Retakes of the Grades 3-8 SOL tests and End-of-Course Tests Administered to Meet Federal Accountability Requirements” in 8VAC20-131-30 of this document for all other expedited retakes.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on March 22, 2018.)*

**8VAC20-131-140 COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS; CAREER EXPOSURE, EXPLORATION, AND PLANNING; AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR POSTSECONDARY CREDIT**

**ACADEMIC AND CAREER PLANS**

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**8VAC20-131-140(B) states, in part:**

*B. Beginning with the 2013-2014 academic year and through the 2017-2018 academic year:*

*1. All schools shall begin development of a personal Academic and Career Plan (ACP) for each seventh-grade student with completion by the fall of the student's eighth-grade year. Students who transfer from other than a Virginia public school into the eighth grade shall have the plan developed as soon as practicable following enrollment. Beginning with the 2014-2015 academic year, students who transfer into a Virginia public school after their eighth-grade year shall have an ACP developed upon enrollment. The components of the ACP shall include the student's program of study for high school graduation and a postsecondary career pathway based on the student's academic and career interests. The ACP shall be developed in accordance with guidelines established by the board and signed by the student, student's parent or guardian, and school official or officials designated by the principal. The ACP shall be included in the student's record and shall be reviewed and updated, if necessary, before the student enters the ninth and eleventh grades. The school shall have met its obligation for parental involvement if it makes a good faith effort to notify the parent or guardian of the responsibility for the development and approval of the ACP. Any personal ACPs prescribed by local school boards for students in grades 7 through 12 and in effect as of June 30, 2009, are approved to continue without further action by the board...*

*C. Beginning with the 2018-2019 academic year:*

*2. Beginning in the elementary school years, students are to explore the different occupations associated with career clusters and select an area or areas of interest. Students shall begin the development of an academic and career plan portfolio (ACPP) in elementary grades to include information about interests, values such as dependability and responsibility, and skills supporting decisions about their future interests and goals. The ACPP is a repository for planning notes, class projects, interest inventory results, awards and recognitions, and other information related to academic and career plans and preparation. The ACPP is student led and updated and revised as the student continues to plan for the student's future throughout school years. The information contained in the ACPP shall serve as the foundation for creating the ACP in grade 7.*

*In middle school, students are to complete a locally selected career interest inventory and select a career pathway. To support development of the ACP, students shall complete a career investigations course selected from the career and technical education state-*

*approved list, or a school division-provided alternative means of delivering the career investigations course content, provided that the alternative is equivalent in content and academic rigor. The course, or its alternative, shall address, at a minimum, planning for academic courses, work-based learning opportunities, completion of industry certifications, possible independent projects, and postsecondary education. The course, or its alternative, shall include demonstration of personal, professional, and technical workplace readiness skills.*

*All schools shall continue development of a personal ACP with each seventh-grade student with completion by the end of the student's seventh-grade year. Students who transfer from other than a Virginia public school into the eighth grade shall have the ACP developed as soon as practicable following enrollment. Students who transfer into a Virginia public school after their eighth-grade year shall have an ACP developed upon enrollment. The components of the ACP shall include the student's program of study for high school graduation and a postsecondary career pathway based on the student's academic and career interests. In high school, a career-related learning experience shall be chosen by the student and documented in the ACP.*

*3. The ACP shall be developed in accordance with guidelines established by the board and signed by the student, student's parent or guardian, and school official or officials designated by the principal. The ACP shall be included in the student's record and shall be reviewed and updated annually.*

**Guidance:**

The [Academic and Career Plan](#) webpage provides resources for school divisions to consider when implementing Academic and Career Plan Portfolios and Academic and Career Plans, including the Board of Education's [Guidelines for Academic and Career Plans](#), adopted in 2009.

## **8VAC20-131-170 FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION**

### **FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION**

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***8VAC20-131-170 states:***

*Each school may implement the Standards of Learning for the Family Life Education program promulgated by the board or a Family Life Education program consistent with the guidelines developed by the board, which shall have the goals of reducing the incidence of pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases and substance abuse among teenagers.*

***Guidance:***

The Board's *Family Life Education Guidelines and Standards of Learning* and other instructional resources are available on the [Family Life Education](#) webpage.

**8VAC20-131-240 ADMINISTRATIVE AND STAFF SUPPORT; STAFFING REQUIREMENTS**  
**SPECIAL EDUCATION PUPIL-TEACHER RATIOS AND CLASS SIZE**

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**8VAC20-131-240(I) states:**

*I. Staff-student ratios in special education and career and technical education classrooms shall comply with regulations of the board.*

**Guidance:**

Special education pupil-teacher ratios and class sizes are governed by the Standards of Quality at § 22.1-253.13:2 in the *Code of Virginia*, the SOA, as well as the Board's *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia* (Special Education regulations), in Section [8VAC20-81-40](#) of the Administrative Code.

The SOA and Special Education regulations do not limit the proportionate amount or limits to the number of students with disabilities in a general education classroom or course, as long as the teacher load and special education teacher caseloads meet the requirements of both regulations.

## **CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION PUPIL-TEACHER RATIOS AND CLASS SIZE**

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***8VAC20-131-240(I) states:***

*I. Staff-student ratios in special education and career and technical education classrooms shall comply with regulations of the board.*

***Guidance:***

Career and Technical Education maximum class sizes are governed by the Standards of Quality at § 22.1-253.13:2 in the *Code of Virginia*, the SOA, and the Board's *Regulations Governing Career and Technical Education* at [8VAC20-120-150](#) in the Administrative Code.

The Department of Education maintains a list of the maximum class sizes for certain courses, which is available on the [CTE Program Administration and Management](#) webpage.

## **8VAC20-131-380 MEASUREMENT OF SCHOOL QUALITY FOR ACCREDITATION**

### **LEVEL TWO PERFORMANCE DESIGNATION FOR MORE THAN FOUR CONSECUTIVE YEARS**

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***8VAC20-131-380(E) states, in part:***

*2. Level Two: Near Standard. A school's achievement on the specific indicator, although below Level One: At or Above Standard, is within specified ranges of performance that either represent: (i) achievement near Level One or (ii) improvement from Level Three: Below Standard, within a specified range.*

*A school quality indicator within the Level Two: Near Standard range that does not improve to the Level One: At or Above Standard at the end of four years, with progress evaluated by the end of the second year as specified in 8VAC20-131-400 C 5, shall be designated as Level Three: Below Standard, at the end of the four-year period.*

***Guidance:***

Each School Quality Indicator and the corresponding Performance Levels for each Indicator are described in 8VAC20-131-380(F)(1). This subsection provides that a school shall not receive a Level Two performance designation for more than four consecutive years in any individual School Quality Indicator. This rule applies to each school quality indicator, as well as the individual reporting groups that are calculated for achievement in English and mathematics to produce the composite school quality indicators for Academic Achievement Gaps in English and mathematics.

If a school quality indicator would be designated Level Two performance for a fifth consecutive year, it would be assigned Level Three performance for the fifth year.

This guidance clarifies how the four-year maximum duration for Level Two performance will apply to the revised accreditation system beginning with the accreditation ratings released for the 2018-2019 school year and through the 2021-2022 school year.

For certain school quality indicators, the baseline year for calculating consecutive years of Level Two performance designation will be 2018-2019 accreditation ratings (using school quality data from the 2017-2018 school year). The four-year maximum duration for Level Two performance in the following school quality indicators will become applicable beginning with the accreditation ratings released for the 2022-2023 school year:

- Academic achievement gaps in English;
- Academic achievement gaps in mathematics;
- Dropout rate; and
- Chronic absenteeism.

Certain school quality indicators in the revised accreditation system have been the basis for school accreditation under the previous system. Because these are not new school quality indicators, the baseline year for calculating consecutive years of Level Two performance

designation for these indicators will be 2014-2015 accreditation ratings (using school quality data from the 2013-2014 school year). The four-year maximum duration for Level Two performance for these school quality indicators will become applicable beginning with the accreditation ratings released for the 2018-2019 school year. Those school quality indicators are:

- Academic achievement for all students in English;
- Academic achievement for all students in mathematics;
- Academic achievement for all students in science; and
- The Graduation and Completion Index.

The College, Career, and Civic Readiness Index is a school quality indicator that will not be effective for school accreditation until the 2022-2023 school year. Because this indicator is based on a four-year cohort beginning with ninth graders entering high school in the 2018-2019 school year, no data will exist to calculate this school quality indicator prior to the 2022-2023 school year. The baseline year for calculating consecutive years of Level Two performance for this school quality indicator will be 2022-2023 accreditation ratings (using school quality data from the 2021-2022 school year). The four-year maximum duration for Level Two performance will become applicable to this school quality indicator beginning with the accreditation ratings released for the 2026-2027 school year.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 18, 2018.)*

## **8VAC20-131-410 RECOGNITIONS AND REWARDS FOR SCHOOL AND DIVISION ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **EXEMPLAR SCHOOL RECOGNITION**

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#### ***8VAC20-131-410 states:***

*A. Schools and divisions may be recognized by the board in accordance with guidelines it shall establish for the Virginia Index of Performance (VIP) incentive program. In order to encourage school divisions to promote student achievement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), the board shall take into account in its guidelines a school division's increase in enrollment and elective course offerings in these STEM areas. Such recognition may include:*

- 1. Public announcements recognizing individual schools and divisions;*
- 2. Tangible rewards;*
- 3. Waivers of certain board regulations;*
- 4. Exemptions from certain reporting requirements; or*
- 5. Other commendations deemed appropriate to recognize high achievement.*

*In addition to board recognition, local school boards shall adopt policies to recognize individual schools through public announcements, media releases, and participation in community activities when setting policy relating to schools and budget development, as well as other appropriate recognition.*

*B. Schools and divisions may be designated and recognized by the board for exemplar performance in accordance with criteria and guidelines it shall establish for top achievement in one or more school quality indicators, and the board may include recognition for high performing schools in specific peer categories, such as schools with high levels of poverty.*

#### ***Guidance:***

These guidelines establish the Board's criteria to designate schools that have achieved exemplar performance based upon the school quality indicators used for accreditation. Three categories of exemplar performance will be recognized: (1) Highest achievement, (2) Continuous improvement; and (3) Innovative practice.

#### ***Highest Achievement:***

Eligibility for recognition for highest achievement is limited to schools rated "Accredited" during the most current accreditation cycle. Schools that meet *all* of the following criteria will be recognized for highest achievement:

- School meets state benchmark in reading, math *and* science (75 percent for reading and 70 percent for math and science) based on the current year pass rate on state assessments (not including growth or English Learner progress);
- All student groups within school meet state benchmark in reading *and* math (75 percent for reading and 70 percent for math) based on the current year pass rate on state assessments (not including growth or English Learner progress), *and*
  - For schools with two student groups, there is no more than five percentage points between the lowest performing group and all other students in the school; or
  - For schools with three or more student groups, there is no more than ten percentage points between the lowest performing group and all other students in the school
- School demonstrates a current year chronic absenteeism rate of 15 percent or lower.

For schools with a graduating class, two additional criteria apply:

- School demonstrates a current year Graduation and Completion Index of 88 points or higher;
- School demonstrates a current year dropout rate of six percent or lower.

#### Continuous Improvement:

Eligibility for recognition for continuous improvement is open to all accreditation-eligible schools that do not receive recognition for high achievement in the same year. Schools rated as “Accredited” or “Accredited with Conditions” and meet *at least one* of the following criteria will be recognized annually for continuous improvement:

- School demonstrates an increase in the combined rate for math, reading *and* science for each of the past three years, with a total increase across the three years of ten points or more;
- School demonstrates an increase in the combined rate for two or more student groups in reading *and* math for each of the past three years, with a total increase across the three years of ten points or more;
- School demonstrates a decrease in the chronic absenteeism rate for each of the past three years, with a total reduction across the three years of 15 percent or more of the first year’s chronic absenteeism rate;
- School demonstrates an increase in the Graduation and Completion Index (GCI) for each of the past three years, with a total increase across the three years of four percent or more; *and* school demonstrates a decrease in the dropout rate for each of the past three years, with the total reduction across three years of 15 percent or more of the first year’s dropout rate.

#### Innovative Practice:

Eligibility for recognition of an innovative practice is open to all accreditation-eligible schools, any school division, and any local school board. Schools, divisions, and school boards will be recognized every two years for innovative practices based upon the following criteria:

- School- or division-wide implementation of a new or creative evidence-based alternative to existing instructional or administrative practices in a defined student population

- Practice must be implemented for at least two full academic years
- Goals and objectives for practice must align with one of the following priority areas:
  - Closing achievement gaps among vulnerable and/or minority student groups
  - Developing an integrated STEM approach to learning
  - Building genuine relationships with families to support overall family well-being and children's healthy development
  - Enhancing technology infrastructure to increase students' access to connected devices and the internet
  - Elevating the quality and character of the school environment so that it reflects the positive and support norms, goals, and values of the community
  - Retaining high-quality teachers
  - Developing life-ready students through implementation of the *Profile of a Virginia Graduate* and the 5 C's framework (skills in critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship)
- Data provided by school or division demonstrates practice is meeting its objectives and is having a significant impact on outcomes for the targeted student population

Innovative practice recognition will be awarded through an agency-established application process. Schools, divisions, or school boards will self-nominate and submit applications to their Regional Superintendent designee. Regional Superintendents will review each application and submit a subset of finalists to the Board for consideration. Board members will rate each application received against a rubric and those scoring above a pre-determined range will be recognized.

Schools, divisions, and school boards recognized in any of the three categories of exemplar performance will be listed in the Superintendent's Annual Report and on the Virginia Department of Education website. Other incentives may be provided as resources allow.

The criteria for the Virginia Index of Performance Program are available on the [VIP Awards Criteria](#) webpage.

*(Approved by the Board of Education on April 26, 2018.)*

## **8VAC20-131-420 WAIVERS AND ALTERNATIVE ACCREDITATION PLANS**

### **EXPERIMENTAL OR INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS**

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#### ***8VAC20-131-420(A) and (C) state:***

*A. Except as specified in this section, the board may grant, for a period of up to five years, a waiver of requirements of this chapter that are not mandated by state or federal law or designed to promote health or safety. The board may grant all or a portion of the request for a waiver and designate conditions as appropriate. Waivers of requirements in 8VAC20-131-30, 8VAC20-131-50, 8VAC20-131-51, 8VAC20-131-70, and 8VAC20-131-370 through 8VAC20-131-430 shall not be granted, and no waiver may be approved for a program that violates the Standards of Quality...*

*C. Waivers for innovative or school experimental programs. With the approval of the local school board, schools seeking to implement experimental or innovative programs, or both, that are not consistent with this chapter shall submit a waiver request to the board for evaluation and approval prior to implementation. The request must include the following:*

- 1. Purpose and objectives of the experimental or innovative programs;*
- 2. Description and duration of the programs;*
- 3. Anticipated outcomes;*
- 4. Number of students affected;*
- 5. Evaluation procedures; and*
- 6. Mechanisms for measuring goals, objectives, and student academic achievement.*

#### ***Guidance:***

School boards may apply for approval of experimental or innovative programs that are not consistent with the Standards of Accreditation.

In accordance with § 22.1-79.1 of the *Code of Virginia*, experimental or innovative programs shall include instructional programs which are offered on a year-round basis by a school division in one or more of its elementary, middle, or high schools.

An *experimental program* is defined, for purposes of a waiver, as a program which is operated under controlled circumstances and which is designed to test and to establish, by objective measures, the positive cognitive effect of an educational theory. The experimental program must be offered generally to the student body of the school.

An *innovative program* is defined, for purposes of a waiver, as an educational program that implements creative, original, or new ideas or methods and are likely to result in better outcomes

for student participants. The innovative program must be offered generally to the student body of the school.

Any experimental or innovative program must ensure parental and community involvement.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006 and March 28, 2013)*

## WAIVERS OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

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### ***8VAC20-131-420(B) states, in part:***

*B. Waivers of some of the requirements of this chapter may be granted by the board based on submission of a request from the division superintendent and chairman of the local school board. The request shall include documentation of the justification and need for the waiver. In no event shall waivers be granted to the requirements of Part III (8VAC20-131-30 et seq.) of this chapter except that the board may provide for the waiver of certain graduation requirements in 8VAC20-131-50 and 8VAC20-131-51 upon (i) the board's initiative or (ii) the request of a local school board on a case-by-case basis. The board shall develop guidelines for implementing this chapter...*

### ***Guidance:***

The Board of Education may, upon its own initiative, waive certain graduation requirements in 8VAC20-131-50 or 8VAC20-131-51 by resolution. The resolution shall specify the requirement(s) being waived and, if the waiver is time-limited, when the waiver would expire.

Local school boards may seek a waiver of certain graduation requirements on a case-by-case basis by submitting a request to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, on behalf of the Board, which explains what requirement(s) are requested to be waived and the justification for each requirement(s) requested for waiver. The justification shall include a statement of the efforts made by the local school board to assist the student to meet the requirement(s) prior to requesting the waiver. Waiver requests may not be submitted more than 90 days prior to the date the student is expected to graduate and, if possible, at least 15 days prior to graduation.

The local superintendent shall notify the Superintendent of Public Instruction as soon as feasible when there is a situation that could potentially result in a request for a waiver, in order to explore options that might be available to permit the student to graduate without needing a waiver. The Superintendent may approve the waiver on behalf of the Board and report to the Board waivers that have been granted or denied.

For the purposes of this provision, good cause may include, but not be limited to, a catastrophic, sudden, or debilitating illness or injury suffered by the student late in his high school career or a sudden, unexpected requirement or event that causes the family to relocate to another state where the student is unable to complete graduation requirements either in Virginia or the receiving state. Requirements that have been approved for a waiver shall be noted on the student's official academic record (transcript).

In no event shall a waiver be granted that would substantially reduce or diminish the integrity of the diplomas approved by the Board of Education.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on January 13, 2011)*

## **ALTERNATIVE ACCREDITATION PLANS AND WAIVERS FOR SPECIAL PURPOSE SCHOOLS**

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### ***8VAC20-131-420(D) provides, in part:***

*D. Alternative accreditation plans. Subject to the provisions of subsection B of this section, the governing school board of special purpose schools such as those provided for in § 22.1-26 of the Code of Virginia, Governor's schools, special education schools, alternative schools, or career and technical schools that serve as the student's school of principal enrollment may seek approval of an alternative accreditation plan from the board. Schools offering alternative education programs, schools with a graduation cohort of 50 or fewer students as defined by the graduation rate formula adopted by the board may request that the board approve an alternative accreditation plan to meet the graduation and completion index benchmark. Special purpose schools with alternative accreditation plans shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the programs offered in the school and approved by the board prior to August 1 of the school year for which approval is requested. Any student graduating from a special purpose school with a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma must meet the requirements prescribed in 8VAC20-131-50 or 8VAC20-131-51...*

### ***Guidance:***

Schools described in this standard are those that serve as a student's school of principal enrollment and where students are reported in fall membership for the school. Fall membership determines whether or not these schools are subject to the provisions of these standards; therefore, schools reporting fall membership are subject to the provisions of the standards.

In accordance with the provisions of 8VAC20-131-420(B) of the standards, local school boards may seek waivers of provisions of the standards to address the unique needs of special purpose schools. Such requests may include an alternative accreditation plan. Applications must be submitted to the Board for consideration at least ninety days prior to August 1 of the school year. Requests for consideration must be accompanied by information that documents the need for approval of the request. As part of the approval process, the Board of Education will consider the following criteria:

1. The mission, purpose, and target population of the school justify its categorization as a "special purpose" school and, therefore, the school is eligible to request an alternative accreditation plan.
2. The characteristics and special needs of the student population are clearly defined, and the criteria for student placement require parental consultation and agreement.
3. The program of instruction provides all students with opportunities to study a comprehensive curriculum that is customized to support the mission of the school and the student population's success in achieving the Standards of Learning.
4. The school provides transition planning to help students be successful when they return to a regular school setting.

5. Strategies used to evaluate student progress are aligned to the mission and purpose of the school and include standards-based academic achievement measures.
6. Convincing evidence has been provided that students who are enrolled in the school have not been successful in other schools subject to all the accrediting standards.
7. Students will be taught by highly qualified teachers who meet the Board of Education's licensure requirements for instructional personnel.
8. Rationale and documentation provide convincing evidence that the "special purpose" nature of the school precludes its being able to reach and maintain "Accredited" status as defined in these standards.
9. Alternative accreditation criteria described in the plan include academic achievement measures that are objective, measurable, and directly related to the mission and purpose of the school.
10. The plan includes use of statewide assessment achievement results of reading and mathematics.
11. The plan meets the testing requirements of these standards.
12. The plan meets the federal testing requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, as revised.
13. The plan provides convincing evidence that all provisions required to be documented in 8VAC20-131-390(B) are met for standards in which waivers have not been requested.
14. Waivers have been requested for accrediting standards that are not being met, and the rationale for the waivers are clear and appropriate for the mission and purpose of the school.

Application materials for alternative accreditation plans are available on the [School Improvement Academic Reviews](#) webpage.

*(Adapted from guidance approved by the Board of Education on October 26, 2006)*