

# Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: E.

Date: January 10, 2008

Topic: First Review of a Request for an Increased Graduation Requirement from Roanoke County Public Schools

Presenters: Ms. Anne Wescott, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications  
Dr. Cecil Snead, Director of Instruction, for Dr. Lorraine Lange, Superintendent,  
Roanoke County Public Schools

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## Origin:

Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

Board review required by  
 State or federal law or regulation  
 Board of Education regulation  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Action requested at this meeting       Action requested at future meeting: \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

## Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action  
 Previous review/action  
date \_\_\_\_\_

## Background Information:

The Standards of Quality for Public Schools (SOQ) in § 22.1-253.13:4 of the *Code of Virginia* require local school boards to award diplomas to all secondary school students who earn the units of credit prescribed by the Board of Education, pass the prescribed literacy tests and meet such other requirements as may be prescribed by the local school board and approved by the Board of Education.

The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, at 8 VAC 20-131-50, says in part:

*"...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 of Education. All additional requirements prescribed by local school boards that have been approved by the Board of Education, remain in effect until such time as the local school board submits a request to amend or discontinue them...."*

On October 25, 2006, the Board of Education adopted the *Guidance Document Governing Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, which addresses approval of requests from local school boards for additional graduation requirements. The guidance says in part:

**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 credit requirements in the core discipline areas of the Standards of Learning (English, mathematics, science or history/social science).... 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 contained in the standards if the credits are in the discipline areas of English, mathematics, science, history/social studies, fine arts (including performing arts), career and technical education, or foreign language. The Board will consider credits outside these disciplines 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 course load 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.

### **Summary of Major Elements:**

On November 8, 2007, the Roanoke County School Board granted approval to request an increase in the graduation requirements for all students pursuing the Standard, Advanced Studies, and Modified Standard Diplomas.

Beginning with the ninth grade class of 2008-2009, all students would be required to take and pass a one semester course in personal finance. The required number of electives would be reduced by one semester, resulting in no net change in the number of standard and verified credits required to graduate.

Transfer students would be afforded the opportunity to take the course, but would not be required to take it if it would require the student to take a heavier than normal course load.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:** The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board waive first review and approve the request to increase the graduation requirements for Roanoke County Public Schools by requiring students to earn 0.5 standard credit in personal finance, beginning with the ninth grade class of 2008-2009.

**Impact on Resources:** There is no impact on resources at the Department of Education.

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:** Staff of the Department of Education will notify Roanoke County Public Schools of the Board's action.