

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: E.

Date: May 21, 2007

Topic: First Review of a Request for Increased Graduation Requirements from Halifax County Public Schools

Presenter: Ms. Anne Wescott, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications
Mr. Paul Stapleton, Superintendent of Halifax 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: _____

Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action

Previous review/action
date _____
action _____

Background Information: The Standards of Quality (SOQ), in § 22.1-253.13:4 of the *Code of Virginia*, require local school boards to "...award diplomas to all secondary school students, including students who transfer from nonpublic schools or from home instruction, who earn the units of credit prescribed by the Board of Education, pass the prescribed tests, and meet such other requirements as may be prescribed by the local school board and approved by the Board of Education."

Standard 8 VAC 20-131-50 of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (Standards of Accreditation) addresses graduation requirements. The regulation says, in part: "The requirements for a student to earn a diploma and graduate from a Virginia high school shall be those in effect when that student enters the ninth grade for the first time. Students shall be awarded a diploma upon graduation from a Virginia high school.... 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...."

The Board's *Guidance Document Governing Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards of Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, adopted by the Board on October 26, 2006, gives school divisions guidance in prescribing additional credit requirements for the Standard and Advanced Studies diplomas. The guidance document 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.

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.

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....

Summary of Major Elements: Halifax County Public Schools is requesting approval to require students to have successfully completed a one semester course in finance, incorporating the Board's objectives in economic education and financial literacy, in order to graduate with a Standard, Advanced Studies, or Modified Standard Diploma.

The Halifax County School Board voted to request approval from the Board of Education on February 9, 2008. This requirement would become effective for the students entering the ninth grade for the first time in the 2008-2009 school year, as specified in both the Standards of Accreditation and the guidance document. The student would satisfy the requirement by earning a one semester standard credit from the Career and Technical Education financial concentration sequence.

The current graduation requirements for Halifax County Public Schools for the Standard, Advanced Studies, and Modified Standard Diplomas are consistent with the requirements set forth in the Standards

of Accreditation. Halifax County Public Schools has not previously requested approval for any graduation requirement that exceeds what is required in the Standards of Accreditation.

In accordance with Board guidance, Halifax County Public Schools will not deny a 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.

Superintendent's Recommendation: The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board waive first review and approve Halifax County Public School's request to increase graduation requirements.

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

Timetable for Further Review/Action: Upon approval of the request, Department of Education staff will notify Halifax County Public Schools of the Board's action.

Halifax County Public Schools

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May 8, 2008

Dr. Mark Emblidge, Board President
Virginia Board of Education
P.O. Box 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

Dear Dr. Emblidge:

The Halifax County School Board at its February 9, 2008, meeting voted to request approval from the Board of Education to require students to successfully complete a course in personal finance, incorporating the Board's objectives in economic education and financial literacy. The school board received positive public comment and reviewed current research supporting this additional course requirement.

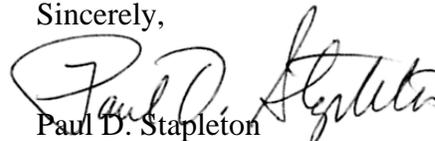
Currently the graduation requirements in Halifax County do not exceed the Standards of Accreditation for the Standard, Advanced Studies, and Modified Standard Diplomas.

This requirement would become effective for the students entering the ninth grade for the first time in the 2008-2009 school year, as specified in both the Standards of Accreditation and the guidance document.

Halifax County High School operates under a 4x4 block schedule. Students would complete a one semester standard credit course from the finance concentration sequence in Career and Technical Education. Transfer students would take advantage of the opportunity to earn eight credits per school year. However, Halifax County Public Schools will not deny either the Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma to any transfer student who has otherwise met the requirements contained in the standards.

The Halifax County School Board requests that the State Board of Education waive first review and approve this request for personal finance to become a graduation requirement for the ninth grade class of 2008-09.

Sincerely,



Paul D. Stapleton

Superintendent of Schools

PDS/rcm
c: Anne Wescott