Standards and Regulations

for Public Schools in Virginia

REGULATIONS ESTABLISHING STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA

Virginia Department of Education

Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia

Preamble

The standards for accreditation of public schools in Virginia are designed to provide a foundation for quality education. Accreditation standards provide guidance and direction to assist schools in their continuing efforts to offer educational programs to meet the needs, interests, and aspirations of all students. The accreditation standards are designed to:

1. Provide educational programs of high quality for all students.
2. Encourage continuous appraisal and improvement of the school program.
3. Foster public confidence.
4. Assure recognition by other institutions of learning.
5. Assist in determining the effectiveness of schools.

Section 22.1-253.13:3.B. of the Code of Virginia requires that the Board of Education promulgate regulations establishing standards for accreditation.

The statutory authority for these regulations is delineated in Section 22.1-19 of the Code of Virginia that includes the requirement that the Board of Education shall provide for the accreditation of public elementary and secondary schools in accordance with regulations prescribed by it.

PART I.
Procedures for Accreditation

§ 1.1. Reports and Accreditation Status.

A. Schools shall be accredited biennially. In the interim year following one in which a full accreditation process is conducted, the principal and superintendent shall certify to the Department of Education that each school continues to meet standards reported as met in the previous year, and shall submit information on actions taken to correct any warnings or advisements cited in the previous year. The principal of each school shall submit as required school accreditation reports, through the division superintendent, to the Department of Education. Report forms will be provided by the Department of Education. Failure to submit the reports on time will constitute grounds for withholding accreditation.

B. Information included in the reports, as well as that obtained through other records and through visits by Department of Education personnel or other designated representatives of the Board of Education, will be used to determine the accreditation status of each school in accordance with tolerances approved by the Board of Education. Schools will be accredited, accredited with advisement, or accredited with a warning, depending on the extent of existing deficiencies. Each school division shall develop by July first of the next school year a written corrective action plan, acceptable to the Board of Education, for any school that is accredited

with a warning. A school division not implementing the approved corrective action plan as specified for any such school will lose accreditation status for that school and will be in violation of state law. No school in the warned category shall be permitted to maintain accreditation for more than one year.

C. The Board of Education may require immediate corrective action or change of accreditation status whenever significant deficiencies are reported by representatives of the Department of Education. Schools that lose their accredited status shall be considered for reaccreditation when subsequent reports and visits by Department of Education personnel reveal that prescribed standards are being met. The local school board shall review annually in public session the implementation of accreditation standards.

D. A school with the number of deficiencies that would place it in the warned status will not be accepted for initial accreditation.

§ 1.2. Application of the Standards.

A. These standards shall become effective beginning with the 1992-93 school year. Graduation requirements for students shall be those in effect at the time the student entered the ninth grade. The last high school attended by the student during regular session shall award the diploma or certificate unless otherwise agreed by the principals of the two schools.

B. These standards apply to schools for all grade levels, K-12, as listed below:
1. Schools with grades K-5 shall meet elementary school standards;
2. Schools with grades 6-8 shall meet middle school standards;
3. Schools with grades 9-12 shall meet secondary school standards.

C. Schools with grade patterns other than those listed above shall meet elementary, middle, or secondary school standards as determined by the Department of Education.

D. Standards that are not appropriate to special education or to vocational and alternative programs housed in separate facilities will not be applied so long as state regulations governing services to the students enrolled are met.

E. In keeping with provisions of the "Standards of Quality," and in conjunction with the six-year plan of the division, each school shall prepare and implement a biennial school plan which shall be available to students, parents, staff and the public. Each biennial school plan shall be evaluated as part of the development of the next plan. Except for the biennial school plan, written divisionwide plans available in and applicable to each school may be used to satisfy all other written plans required in these standards.

F. Experimental and innovative programs that are not congruent with accreditation standards shall be submitted to the Department of Education for approval prior to implementation. The request must include the purpose, objectives, anticipated outcomes, outline, length, and evaluation procedures for the programs which have been recommended by representatives of faculty, staff, administration, and parents and approved by the local school board. However, no program may be approved which violates the provisions of the "Standards of Quality."

PART II.
School and Community Relations

§ 2.1 Interaction with Parents and Community.

Each school shall promote interaction with the community and foster mutual understanding in providing a quality educational program through:

1. Involving parents, citizens, community agencies and representatives from business and industry in developing, disseminating and explaining the biennial school plan, on advisory committees, in curriculum studies, and in evaluating the educational program.

2. Maintaining a close working relationship between the school and other community agencies that provide services to students.

3. Cooperating with business and industry in formulating educational programs and conducting joint enterprises involving personnel, facilities, training programs, and other resources which shall be included in the biennial school plan.

4. Encouraging and supporting the establishment of a parent-teacher association or organization and working cooperatively with it.

PART III.
Philosophy, Goals and Objectives

§ 3.1. Requirements for Philosophy, Goals, and Objectives.

Each school shall have current philosophy, goals, and objectives that shall serve as the basis for all policies and practices and shall be developed using the following criteria:

1. The philosophy, goals, and objectives shall be developed with the advice of professional and lay people who represent the various populations served by the school and shall serve as a basis for the biennial school plan.

2. The school's philosophy, goals and objectives shall be consistent with the Standards of Quality and those of the school division.

3. The philosophy, goals, and objectives shall be based on a current needs assessment.

4. Among the objectives, those for students shall be stated in terms of student outcomes including knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes.

5. The school staff and community representatives shall review biennially the philosophy, goals, and objectives of the school and shall revise them as needed.

6. Copies of the school's philosophy, goals and objectives shall be available upon request.

PART IV.
Instructional Program

§ 4.1. Program of Instruction

Each school shall provide a program of instruction that is in keeping with the abilities, interests, and educational needs of students and that promotes individual student achievement. Instruction shall be designed to accommodate all students, including those with disabilities, those identified as gifted/talented and/or those who have limited English proficiency. Students with disabilities shall have the opportunity to receive a full continuum of education services, in accordance with the "Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Handicapped Children and Youth in Virginia" and other pertinent federal/state regulations.

§ 4.2. Instructional Program in Elementary Schools.

A. Each elementary school shall provide each student a program of learning experiences organized to meet the needs of early childhood and shall provide instruction in the following disciplines:

Art	Music
Health	Physical Education
Language Arts	Science
Mathematics	History and Social Sciences

B. In grades K-3, communication (reading, writing, spelling, listening, and speaking), and mathematics shall be the core of the program.

C. Students who are unable to read the materials necessary for instruction with comprehension shall receive additional instruction in reading.

§ 4.3. Instructional Program in Middle Schools.

A. Each middle level school shall provide each student a program of learning experiences organized to meet the needs of early adolescence and each school shall provide instruction in the following disciplines:

Art	Foreign Language
Health	Music
Language Arts	Physical Education
Mathematics	Science (Laboratory)
Career and Vocational Exploration	History and Social Sciences

B. The eighth grade shall provide a minimum of eight offerings: five in academic areas (language arts, mathematics, science, history and the social sciences, and foreign language), one in health and physical education, one in fine arts, and one in career and vocational exploration. Level one of a foreign language shall be available to all eighth grade students.

§ 4.4. Instructional Program in Secondary Schools.

A. Each secondary school shall provide each student a program of learning experiences organized to meet the needs of adolescence and shall offer opportunities for students to pursue

a program of studies in several academic and vocational areas. These shall include the following:

1. Vocational education choices that prepare the student as a vocational program completer in one of three or more occupational areas and that prepare the student for technical or pre-professional postsecondary programs.

2. Course work and experiences that prepare the student for college-level studies including access to at least two Advanced Placement courses or two college-level courses for credit; and

3. Preparation for Scholastic Aptitude Tests.

B. Minimum course offerings for each secondary school, grades 9-12, shall provide that students can meet the graduation requirements stated in this document and must include:

Academic Subjects	23
English	(4)
Mathematics	(4)
Science (Laboratory)	(4)
History and Social Sciences	(4)
Foreign Language	(3)
Electives	(4)
Vocational Education	11
Fine Arts	2
Health and Physical Education	2
Total Units	**38**

C. When health and physical education are taught as a combination class, at least 40 percent of the instructional time shall be devoted to health education. Classroom driver education may count for 36 class periods of health education. Students shall not be removed from classes in required courses other than health and physical education for the in-car phase of driver education.

D. The social sciences offering shall include at least one half unit in economics.

§ 4.5. Standard Unit of Credit.

The standard unit of credit for graduation shall be based on a minimum of 150 clock hours of instruction. When credit is awarded in less than whole units, the increment awarded must be no greater than the fractional part of the 150 hours of instruction provided. If a school division elects to award credit on a basis other than the standard unit of credit, the locality shall develop a written policy approved by the superintendent and school board which ensures:

1. that the content of the course for which credit is awarded is comparable to 150 clock hours of instruction; and

2. that upon completion, the student will have met the aims and objectives of the course.

§ 4.6. Summer School Program.

The summer school program shall be equal in quality to the program offered during the regular school term.

A. Credit for repeated work ordinarily will be granted on the same basis as that for new work. With prior approval of the principal, certain students may be allowed to enroll in two repeat subjects to be completed in not less than 75 clock hours of instruction per unit of credit.

B. Summer school instruction which is provided as part of a remedial program shall be designed to improve specific identified student deficiencies.

§ 4.7. Elective Courses.

Locally developed elective courses offered for credit toward high school graduation shall be approved by the division superintendent and school board. When suitable course code numbers for reporting purposes cannot be found in the *School Administrators Handbook of Course Codes and Endorsement Codes*, they will be assigned, upon request, through the Department of Education.

§ 4.8. Opportunities for Postsecondary Credit.

Beginning in the middle-school years, students shall be counseled as to opportunities for beginning postsecondary education prior to high school graduation. Students taking advantage of such opportunities shall not be denied participation in school activities for which they are otherwise eligible. Wherever possible, students shall be encouraged and afforded opportunities to take college courses simultaneously for high school graduation and college degree credit, under the following conditions:

1. prior written approval of the high school principal for the cross-registration must be obtained;

2. the college must accept the student for admission to the course(s); and

3. the course(s) must be given by the college for degree credits (hence, no remedial courses will be accepted).

Schools that comply with this standard shall not be penalized in receiving state appropriations.

§ 4.9. College Preparation Program.

Each middle and secondary school shall provide for the early identification and enrollment of students in a college preparation program with a range of educational and academic experiences in and outside the classroom, including an emphasis on experiences that will motivate disadvantaged and minority students to attend college.

§ 4.10. Standard School Year and School Day.

A. The standard school year shall be 180 days. The standard school day for students in grades 1-12 shall average at least 5 1/2 hours, excluding intermissions for meals and a minimum of 3 hours for kindergarten. School divisions may develop alternative schedules for meeting these requirements as long as a minimum of 990 hours of instructional time is provided

for grades 1-12 and 540 hours for kindergarten. Such alternative plans must be approved by the local school board and by the Board of Education, under guidelines established by the Board of Education.

B. All students in grades 1-12 shall maintain a full-day schedule of classes (5 1/2 hours), unless a waiver is granted by the local superintendent of schools.

§ 4.11. Additional Reading Instruction.

Each school shall ensure that students who are unable to read with comprehension the materials necessary for instruction receive additional instruction in reading, which may include summer school.

§ 4.12. Writing Instruction.

Each school shall teach appropriate writing skills at every grade level culminating with a research paper in grade 11 or 12. Further, each student shall be required to make an oral presentation on the research paper before an adult and/or student audience.

§ 4.13. Teachers of Gifted Programs.

Each school shall provide students identified as gifted with instructional programs taught by teachers with special training or experience in working with gifted students.

§ 4.14. Computer Literacy.

By graduation, each student shall receive instruction designed to help him or her achieve computer literacy as outlined in *Computer Literacy for Students in Virginia* issued by the Department of Education.

§ 4.15. Family Life Education.

Each school shall implement the Standards of Learning for the Family Life Education program promulgated by the Board of Education or a Family Life Education program consistent with the guidelines developed by the Board of Education.

§ 4.16. Homebound Instruction.

Homebound instruction shall be made available to students who are confined for periods that would prevent normal school attendance based upon certification of need by a licensed physician or licensed clinical psychologist. For students eligible for special education and/or related services, the Individualized Education Program committee must revise the IEP, as appropriate. Credit for the work shall be awarded when it is done under the supervision of a certified teacher, a person eligible to hold a Virginia certificate, or other appropriately licensed professional, employed by the local school board.

§ 4.17. Correspondence Courses.

Students may enroll in and receive credit for supervised correspondence courses in subjects not available to them through the school's schedule with prior approval of the principal. Credit shall be awarded for the successful completion of such courses when the work is done under the supervision of a certified teacher, or a person eligible to hold a Virginia certificate, approved by local school authorities.

§ 4.18. Homework Policy.

Homework shall be governed by a written school board policy developed with the advice of parents and teachers.

§ 4.19. Materials and Equipment.

Each school shall provide a variety of materials and equipment to support the instructional program.

§ 4.20. Extracurricular Activities.

School-sponsored extracurricular activities shall be under the direct supervision of the staff and shall contribute to the educational objectives of the school. Extracurricular activities must be organized to avoid interrupting the instructional program. Extracurricular activities shall not be permitted to interfere with the student's required instructional activities. Extracurricular activities and eligibility requirements shall be established and approved by the superintendent and the school board. Activities which help a student meet the objectives of the course may be considered part of the instructional program and thus they are not considered extracurricular activities; however, these activities must not interfere with instruction in other courses.

§ 4.21. Varsity Sports at the Elementary Level.

Competitive sports of a varsity nature (scheduled league games) shall be prohibited as a part of the elementary school program.

PART V.
Instructional Leadership

§ 5.1. Role of Principal.

The principal shall be responsible for instructional leadership and effective school management that promotes positive student outcomes, including achievement of individual students. As part of this responsibility, the principal shall ensure the development and implementation of the biennial school plan, approved by the superintendent. The principal shall:

1. Work to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy and the staff shall make every effort to achieve it.

2. Establish and include in the teachers' handbook procedures to protect instructional time from interruptions and intrusions.

3. Include in the biennial plan the use of teacher assistants, volunteers, part-time instructors, and technology to assist teachers.

4. Limit the regular school day to teaching and learning activities.

5. Monitor and evaluate the quality of instruction and provide for in-service training, professional assistance and support designed to improve instruction.

6. Analyze information on student outcomes, including achievement, and incorporate plans for improvement into the biennial school plan.

7. Be responsible for using the resources of the community and for involving parents and citizens in the educational program.

8. Recognize and reward the scholastic achievements of students.

9. Maintain records of dropouts, including actions taken to prevent students from dropping out of school and their reasons for leaving school, and be responsible for the development and implementation of a program, as a part of the biennial school plan, designed to reduce the number of students who drop out of school which shall include:

   a. Alternative programs with emphasis on basic skills for students who are not successful in regular instructional programs;

   b. Interviews with potential dropouts and with students who are dropping out of school and counseling services that motivate students to stay in school;

   c. Contact with parents of potential dropouts; and

   d. Other activities deemed appropriate by local school authorities.

10. Develop, with the advice of parents and appropriate professionals, a written procedure for referring for treatment students identified as involved in substance abuse.

11. Maintain and disseminate a current student handbook of policies and procedures that includes the school division's standards of student conduct and procedures for enforcement, along with other matters of interest to parents and students.

12. Maintain records of receipts and disbursements of all funds handled. These records shall be audited annually by a professional accountant approved by the local school board.

13. Maintain a current record of certification, endorsement, and in-service training of the staff.

PART VI.
Delivery of Instruction

§ 6.1. Role of Staff.

A. The staff shall be responsible for providing instruction that is educationally sound in an atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy, which is conducive to learning and in which all students are expected to achieve. The staff shall:

1. Serve as models for effective oral and written communication with special attention to correct use of language and spelling.

2. Strive to strengthen the basic skills of students in all subjects.

3. Establish teaching objectives to achieve the following:

   a. Identify what students are expected to learn;

   b. Inform students of the learning expected and keep them engaged in learning tasks;

   c. Enable the teacher to spend the maximum time possible in the teaching/learning process by keeping to a minimum disruptions, clerical responsibilities, and the time students are out of class.

4. Provide for individual differences of students through the use of varied materials and activities suitable to their interests and abilities.

5. The staff shall assess the progress of students and report promptly and constructively to them and their parents.

§ 6.2. Acceptable Student Behavior.

The staff shall define acceptable student behavior and develop a system of discipline that minimizes disruption without demeaning the student responsible for the behavior, consistent with the policies of the local school board. These school-level policies shall be distributed to each student and the student's parent or guardian.

§ 6.3. Guidance and Counseling.

Staff shall establish a broad-based process for determining the particular guidance and counseling needs of students and for planning how best to meet these needs. Guidance and counseling shall be provided for all students as needed to achieve the following:

1. Ensure that individual curriculum planning is provided at the middle and secondary level to assist each student in selecting appropriate and challenging courses;

2. Provide opportunities for parents, teachers, and other adults to participate in planned activities that encourage the personal, social, educational, and career development of students;

3. Provide employment counseling and placement services to furnish information about employment opportunities available to students graduating from or leaving school;

4. Provide for the coordination of a testing program that includes orientation to test-taking, use of test data, and the interpretation and use of student records data;

5. Provide for the evaluation of the guidance program by the principal, counselor(s), staff, and parents;

6. Ensure that at least 60% of the time of each member of the guidance staff shall be devoted to counseling of students;

7. Ensure that each student has a program of studies each year that contributes to meeting graduation requirements.

§ 6.4. Library Media Services.

The staff shall organize the library media center as the resource center of the school and provide a unified program of media services and activities for students and teachers before, during, and after school. The library media center shall have the following:

1. An average monthly circulation of print and nonprint materials equal to at least 70% of the school membership;

2. A schedule that provides for library media center use by all students;

3. A written policy for the selection, evaluation, withdrawal, and disposal of all instructional materials purchased by the school division, with clearly stated procedures for handling challenged, controversial materials;

4. Cataloging of all library media in the school, which promotes accessibility and ease of retrieval, including a functional loan system, an annual inventory of materials and equipment, and a procedure for screening and discarding media;

5. An information file that reflects curriculum needs and contains pamphlets, clippings, pictures, and information about local resources;

6. A minimum of two complete sets of encyclopedias, one of which has been copyrighted within the last five years;

7. An unabridged dictionary and abridged dictionaries;

8. Newspaper subscription(s) providing daily, local, state, and national news;

9. Fifteen subscriptions to periodicals for elementary schools and 25 subscriptions for middle and secondary schools that are pertinent to the school program;

10. A current and accessible professional library in each school, or in a centralized instructional media center in the school division;

11. Materials such as prints, charts, posters, recordings (disc and tape), filmstrips, multimedia kits, models, study prints, slides, transparencies, videotapes, videodiscs, computer software, and maps and globes that are carefully selected to meet the needs of the instructional program;

12. Collection requirements (20% of which may be nonprint instructional material) for each library media center shall be as follows:

    a. Ten books per student in elementary schools;

b. In middle and secondary schools, a basic collection of 1,000 well-selected titles. In schools with more than 150 students there shall be a minimum of seven books per student;

c. Fifty percent of the minimum basic collection shall be available for circulation during the first semester in a new school.

13. Library media specialists involved with teachers and administrators in planning the school curriculum;

14. Functional equipment to support the use of audiovisual materials.

PART VII.
Student Achievement

§ 7.1. Learning Goals.

Each school shall provide learning goals to be achieved by students at successive levels of development and shall continually assess the progress of each student in relation to these goals and the goals of education in Virginia as promulgated by the Board of Education.

§ 7.2. Literacy Tests.

Students shall pass the literacy tests prescribed by the Board of Education in reading, writing, and mathematics in order to be promoted to the ninth grade except for identified handicapped students who are progressing according to the objectives of their individualized education program (IEP). Students transferring to a Virginia public school prior to the 9th grade shall also be required to pass the literacy tests in order to be promoted to the 9th grade. Students who are not promoted shall be enrolled in alternative programs leading to one or more of the following:

1. Passing the literacy tests;

2. High School Graduation;

3. General Educational Development (GED) Certificate;

4. Certificate of Program Completion; and

5. Job-entry skills.

§ 7.3. Requirements for Graduation.

A. These regulations elaborate the credit requirements of Standards of Quality Standard 4.C., which gives full diploma requirements.

B. To graduate from high school, a student shall pass all components of the Literacy Passport Test as required by the "Standards of Quality" and prescribed by the Board of Education and meet the minimum requirements for the 21-credit diploma outlined below for

grades 9-12. Students who graduate with an average grade of "B" or better will receive a Board of Education Seal on the diploma.

Discipline Areas	**Units of Credit**
English	4
Mathematics	2
Laboratory Science	2
Math or Science	1
History and Social Sciences:	
Virginia and United States History	1
Virginia and United States Government	1
World Studies (World Cultures, World History, or World Geography)	1
Health and Physical Education	2
Fine Arts or Practical Arts	1
Electives	6
Total Units of Credit	**21**

C. Math, Lab Science, and Fine Arts and Practical Arts courses must be selected from a list of courses approved for graduation requirements by the Board of Education. Only one year of a course in general mathematics may be used to meet the mathematics requirement. The single credit in Math or Science must be selected from a list of courses approved for graduation requirements by the Board of Education or, as an alternative, this requirement may be met by completing an appropriate sequence of courses in vocational education or Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp (JROTC).

D. Each secondary school shall offer as an elective for students, an Advanced Studies Program which requires a minimum of 23 units of credit as outlined below for grades 9-12. Students who graduate with an average grade of "B" or better and successfully complete at least one advanced placement course (AP) or one college-level course for credit will receive a Governor's Seal on the diploma.

Discipline Areas	**Units of Credit**
English	4
Mathematics	3
Laboratory Science	3
History and Social Sciences:	
Virginia and United States History	1
Virginia and United States Government	1
World Studies (World Cultures, World History, or World Geography)	1
Foreign Language	3
(3 years of one language or 2 years each of 2 languages)	
Health and Physical Education	2
Fine Arts or Practical Arts	1
Electives	4
Total Units of Credit	**23**

1. To earn an Advanced Studies Diploma, students must complete a mathematics sequence that includes Algebra I and two courses above the level of Algebra I, and a science sequence that includes units of credit in at least three of the following subjects: the earth sciences, Biology, Chemistry and Physics.

2. Fine Arts or Practical Arts courses must be selected from a list of courses approved for graduation requirements by the Board of Education.

E. When students below the ninth grade successfully complete courses offered for credit in grades 9 through 12, credit shall be counted toward meeting the units required for graduation.

F. Students who are graduating from a secondary school, and do not intend to continue their education shall have identified marketable skills. Effective 1994-95, students who are graduating from a secondary school and do not intend to continue their education shall have completed a vocational program.

G. Students completing graduation requirements in a summer school accredited under these standards shall be eligible for a diploma. The last school attended by the student during the regular session shall award the diploma unless otherwise agreed upon by the principals of the two schools.

§ 7.4. Transfer of credits.

A. A secondary school shall accept credits received from other accredited secondary schools, including summer schools, special sessions, schools accredited through the Virginia Council for Private Education, and educational programs operated by the state. Credit also shall be accepted for courses satisfactorily completed in accredited colleges and universities when prior written approval of the principal has been granted.

B. Records of transferred students shall be sent directly to the school receiving the student upon request of the receiving school in accordance with the provisions of the "Management of the Student's Scholastic Records in Virginia."

C. The transcript of a student who graduates or transfers from a Virginia secondary school shall show that a minimum of 21 units of credit courses in grades 9-12 are required for graduation.

D. Students transferring into a Virginia school division shall be required to earn 21 units of credit or the equivalent for graduation. Each student's prior record shall be evaluated to determine the number and content of additional credits required for graduation. Specified courses normally taken at lower grade levels shall not be required, provided the student has completed the courses required at those grade levels by the school division or state from which he or she transferred. Students transferring from states not giving credit for health and physical education shall not be required to repeat these courses.

grades 9-12. Students who graduate with an average grade of "B" or better will receive a Board of Education Seal on the diploma.

Discipline Areas	Units of Credit
English	4
Mathematics	2
Laboratory Science	2
Math or Science	1
History and Social Sciences:	
Virginia and United States History	1
Virginia and United States Government	1
World Studies (World Cultures, World History, or World Geography)	1
Health and Physical Education	2
Fine Arts or Practical Arts	1
Electives	6
Total Units of Credit	**21**

C. Math, Lab Science, and Fine Arts and Practical Arts courses must be selected from a list of courses approved for graduation requirements by the Board of Education. Only one year of a course in general mathematics may be used to meet the mathematics requirement. The single credit in Math or Science must be selected from a list of courses approved for graduation requirements by the Board of Education or, as an alternative, this requirement may be met by completing an appropriate sequence of courses in vocational education or Junior Reserve Officer Training Corp (JROTC).

D. Each secondary school shall offer as an elective for students, an Advanced Studies Program which requires a minimum of 23 units of credit as outlined below for grades 9-12. Students who graduate with an average grade of "B" or better and successfully complete at least one advanced placement course (AP) or one college-level course for credit will receive a Governor's Seal on the diploma.

Discipline Areas	Units of Credit
English	4
Mathematics	3
Laboratory Science	3
History and Social Sciences:	
Virginia and United States History	1
Virginia and United States Government	1
World Studies (World Cultures, World History, or World Geography)	1
Foreign Language	3
(3 years of one language or 2 years each of 2 languages)	
Health and Physical Education	2
Fine Arts or Practical Arts	1
Electives	4
Total Units of Credit	**23**

PART VIII.
Staffing

§ 8.1. Staff Required.

A. Each school shall have the required staff with proper certification and endorsement. The following shall be the minimum staffing according to type of school and student enrollment:

Position	Elementary	Middle	Secondary
Principal	1 half-time to 299 1 full-time at 300	1 full-time	1 full-time
Assistant Principal	1 half-time at 600 1 full-time at 900	1 full-time each 600	1 full-time each 600
Librarian	Part-time to 299 1 full-time at 300	1 half-time to 299 1 full-time at 300 2 full-time at 1,000	1 half-time to 299 1 full-time at 300 2 full-time at 1,000
Guidance Counselors	1 hour per day per 100 1 full-time at 500 1 hour per day additional time per 100 or major fraction	1 period per 80 1 full-time at 400 1 additional period per 80 or major fraction	1 period per 70 1 full-time at 350 1 additional period per 70 or major fraction
Clerical	Part-time to 299 1 full-time at 300	1 full-time and 1 additional full-time for each 600 beyond 200 and 1 full-time for the library at 750	1 full-time and 1 additional full-time for each 600 beyond 200 and 1 full-time for the library at 750

B. A combined school, such as K-12, shall meet at all grade levels the staffing requirements for the highest grade level in that school. This requirement shall apply to all staff, except the guidance staff, and shall be based on the school's total enrollment. The guidance staff requirement shall be based on the enrollment at the various school organization levels as defined in these regulations.

C. The principal of each middle and secondary school shall be employed on a twelve-month basis.

D. Each secondary school with 350 or more students and each middle school with 400 or more students shall employ at least one member of the guidance staff for 11 months.

E. Middle school teachers with a seven-period day may teach 30 class periods per week, provided all teachers with more than 25 class periods per week have one period per day unencumbered of all teaching and/or supervisory duties.

F. The secondary classroom teacher's standard load shall be no more than 25 class periods per week. One class period each day, unencumbered by supervisory or teaching duties, shall be provided for every full-time classroom teacher for instructional planning. Teachers of block programs with no more than 120 student periods per day may teach 30 class periods per week. Teachers who teach very small classes may teach 30 class periods per week, provided the teaching load does not exceed 75 student periods per day. If a classroom teacher teaches 30 class periods per week with more than 75 student periods per day (120 in block programs) an appropriate contractual arrangement and compensation shall be provided.

G. Middle or secondary school teachers shall teach no more than 750 student periods per week; however, physical education and music teachers may teach 1,000 student periods per week.

H. Each school shall report the extent to which an unencumbered lunch is provided for all classroom teachers.

I. The number of students in special and vocational education classrooms shall comply with regulations of the Board of Education.

J. Pupil personnel services, including visiting teachers/school social workers, school psychologists, and guidance counselors, shall be available to all students as necessary to promote academic achievement and provide assistance in preventing dropouts and substance abuse.

§ 8.2. Alternative Staffing Plan.

At the discretion of local school authorities, an alternative staffing plan may be developed which ensures that the services set forth in these standards are met. Any alternative staffing plan shall be submitted to the Department of Education for approval. An alternative staffing plan that reduces the number of staff positions will not be acceptable.

PART IX.
Buildings and Grounds

§ 9.1. School Plant.

The school building shall accommodate an educational program that will meet the needs of the students and ensure the health and safety of students and staff as follows:

1. The school site and physical plant shall be accessible, barrier-free, safe, clean, and free from excessive noise and other distractions, and shall be adequate in size to meet the needs of the students enrolled.

2. Each school shall prepare and adhere to a written procedure for vehicular traffic control designed to promote safe and prompt movement of students, staff, and visitors.

3. Each school shall have a written procedure to follow in emergencies. The plan shall be outlined in the student handbook and discussed with staff and students during the first week of each school year.

4. All exit doors in a school shall be equipped with panic bars that are usable while the building is occupied.

5. Records shall be maintained to show that fire drills are held once a week during the first month of school and at least once each month for the remainder of the school term. Evacuation routes for students shall be posted in each room.

6. The principal shall be responsible for providing a safe environment to include:

   a. Conducting one fire inspection during each semester in accordance with regulations contained in the *Fire Inspection Guide for Schools*.

   b. Prohibiting fund-raising activities that involve elementary students in door-to-door solicitation and so state in the student handbook.

   c. Implementing a written procedure to be followed when students or staff are injured or become ill and keep documentation of all injuries that occur at school and on school buses.

   d. Ensuring that staff knowledgeable in safety procedures such as cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR), Heimlich maneuver, and basic first aid are available.

   e. Implementing a written procedure for responding to violent, disruptive or illegal behavior by students including possession of a weapon or illegal substance on school property or during a school sponsored activity.

   f. Implementing a written procedure for ensuring the integrity of the building against unauthorized intruders.

7. Each school shall have provisions for the proper outdoor display of the flags of the United States and of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

8. Each school plant shall have a maintenance and housekeeping program designed to ensure a healthful and pleasant learning environment.

9. The administrative unit shall have space for a principal's office, secretarial assistance, and record storage.

10. Suitable space shall be made available for student personnel services.

11. The library media center shall have adequate space to provide for the collection and circulation of instructional materials, and adequate seating for group activities.

12. Adequate, safe, and properly-equipped laboratories shall be provided to meet the needs of instruction in the sciences, computer, fine arts, and vocational programs.

13. Each school shall have appropriate areas and facilities for the physical education program offered. Secondary schools shall have locker rooms and showers.

14. Adequate and properly-equipped classroom space shall be provided.

15. The school plant and grounds shall be kept safe and clean with the responsibility for the care of buildings and grounds shared by staff and students.

16. Space shall be provided for the proper care of students who become ill.