

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: _____ F. _____

Date: April 20-21, 2005

Topic: First Review of a Request for Increased Graduation Requirements from a Local School Board

Presenters: Dr. N. Wayne Tripp, Superintendent, Salem City Schools
Ms. Anne Wescott, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications

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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. In addition, the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* adopted on September 4, 1997, include a provision that requires Board of Education approval of all additional requirements above those prescribed in the standards. Those standards further stipulate that local school boards that had increased requirements in effect as of June 30, 1997 would be granted approval through June 30, 1999. Those approvals have since been extended indefinitely.

In November 2000, the Board of Education adopted the *Guidance Document Re Requests For Additional Graduation Credit Requirements And Requests To Allocate Electives From Local School Boards* for use in considering future requests. The guidance document may be found at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Accountability/SOAguidelinesA.pdf> and 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 (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 studies)... 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 SOA if the credits are in the discipline areas of English, mathematics, science, history/social studies, fine arts (including performing arts) or practical arts (option), or foreign language. The Board will consider credits outside these disciplines on a case-by-case basis.”

Summary of Major Elements:

In July 2000 the school board of the City of Salem received grandfathered approval to require all students to complete one-half unit of credit in computer literacy/computer studies as a condition of graduation. The requirement was in place prior to the adoption of new accrediting standards in the summer of 2000 and guidelines for adding additional local requirements for graduation in November 2000. The school board has submitted a request via the division superintendent to modify the additional requirement to require all students to complete a one-half unit of credit course in personal finance and basic economics. The school board believes the previous requirement of a course in computer literacy/computer skills is no longer necessary as those concepts are now taught at the elementary level or that students acquire the skills from personal experiences.

Superintendent's Recommendation: The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board waive first review and approve the request.

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 the school division of the Board’s action.