

# Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: E.

Date: May 30, 2007

Topic: Final Review of a Request for Increased Graduation Requirements from Botetourt County Public Schools

Presenters: 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: \_\_\_\_\_

## Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action

Previous review/action

date April 27, 2007

action First review

**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* 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:** Currently, Botetourt County Public School's graduation requirements are exactly the same as the minimum required in the *Regulations Establishing Standards of Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*. Botetourt County is requesting approval to require students to have successfully completed four additional electives to earn a Standard, Advanced Studies, or Modified Standard Diploma. The Board of Education's guidance document does not provide for increased requirements to the Modified Standard Diploma.

The additional electives would be phased in over a four-year period, so that:

- First-time ninth graders in the 2007-2008 school year would need one additional elective, compared to the current graduation requirements;
- First-time ninth graders in the 2008-2009 school year would need two additional electives;
- First-time ninth graders in the 2009-2010 school year would need three additional electives; and
- First-time ninth graders in the 2010-2011 school year would need four additional electives.

Botetourt County Public Schools is making the request to enable its students to be competitive with students in nearby school divisions. The chart below summarizes the number of standard credits required for graduation in neighboring school divisions:

School Division	Standard Diploma	Advanced Studies Diploma
Botetourt County (9 <sup>th</sup> grade class of 2010-2011)	26	28
Pulaski County	26	28
Craig County	25	27
Smyth County	25	27
Franklin County	24	26
Floyd County	23	24

Botetourt County Public Schools would not prescribe the electives that a student must take in order to graduate, but would allow students, their parents, and the school counselor to plan a program of study for each student. This would enable students to “build their resume” to prepare for post-secondary education and the workplace. Students could choose from a variety of options, including courses in career and technical education, art, music, languages, and other academic subjects.

Botetourt County Public Schools would have a policy in place to accommodate transfer students, as required by the *Regulations Establishing Standards of Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*. Transfer students would not be denied a diploma if they would otherwise meet the graduation requirements in the Standards of Accreditation, but could meet the requirements for additional electives only by taking a heavier than normal course load, attending summer school, or taking courses after the time when the student otherwise would have graduated, as determined on a case-by-case basis.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:** The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board approve Botetourt County Public Schools 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 Botetourt County Public Schools of the Board’s action.

Standard Diploma						
	Verified Credits	Standard Credits				
	Current	Current	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2007-2008	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2008-2009	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2009-2010	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2010-2011
English	2	4	4	4	4	4
Mathematics	1	3	3	3	3	3
Laboratory Science	1	3	3	3	3	3
History and Social Sciences	1	3	3	3	3	3
Health and Physical Education		2	2	2	2	2
Fine Arts or CTE		1	1	1	1	1
<b>Electives</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
Student Selected	1					
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>

Advanced Studies Diploma						
	Verified Credits	Standard Credits				
	Current	Current	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2007-2008	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2008-2009	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2009-2010	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2010-2011
English	2	4	4	4	4	4
Mathematics	2	4	4	4	4	4
Laboratory Science	2	4	4	4	4	4
History and Social Sciences	2	4	4	4	4	4
Foreign Language		3	3	3	3	3
Health and Physical Education		2	2	2	2	2
Fine Arts or CTE		1	1	1	1	1
<b>Electives</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Student Selected	1					
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>

Modified Standard Diploma						
	Standard Credits					
	Current	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2007-2008	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2008-2009	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2009-2010	9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Class of 2010-2011	
English	4	4	4	4	4	4
Mathematics	3	3	3	3	3	3
Laboratory Science	2	2	2	2	2	2
History and Social Sciences	2	2	2	2	2	2
Health and Physical Education	2	2	2	2	2	2
Fine Arts or CTE	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>Electives</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>