

*Regulations Establishing*  
***Standards for***  
***Accrediting***  
*Public Schools in Virginia*

*(8 VAC 20-131-10 et. seq.)*

**Adopted by the Board of Education**  
**September 4, 1997**

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## FOREWORD

Higher student achievement is the goal of the Virginia Board of Education's efforts to improve public education. What matters most to the public are *results* and *accountability*. With these two priorities as its central focus, the Board has adopted comprehensive revisions to the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*.

The newly revised standards contained in this document represent a new way of thinking about education in the Commonwealth: achieving simultaneous accountability of students and schools for academic performance. Localities are encouraged to offer a variety of curriculum options beyond the core subjects of mathematics, science, English, and history. With the new standards of accreditation in place, the Commonwealth will better fulfill its obligation to citizens to ensure that every student and every school meet rigorous academic standards of achievement.

The standards of accreditation place emphasis on raising achievement standards for students, increasing the requirements for graduation from high school, increasing instructional time, linking statewide accountability tests to Virginia's nationally acclaimed *Standards of Learning*, and establishing a school report card for parents and the school community.

For the first time in Virginia, schools will earn their accreditation based on students' achievement on specially developed tests as well as traditional measures such as course offerings and staffing patterns. The time schedule for implementing the new standards provides a period of transition during which schools will have ample opportunity to diagnose deficiencies and to make necessary improvements.

The new standards are the result of broad public consensus on what citizens expect from their schools. The Board of Education and the Department of Education are grateful to the many hundreds of parents, educators, and business leaders who spoke at the public hearings and the thousands of others who submitted comments and suggestions by mail.

With Virginia's new standards of accreditation, every public school student and teacher will be helped in many positive ways by the changes that will lead to improved teaching and learning.

REGULATIONS ESTABLISHING STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA.

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PART I.  
Purpose

8 VAC 20-131-10. Purpose

8 VAC 20-131-10. Purpose.

The standards for accreditation of public schools in Virginia are designed to ensure that an effective educational program is established and maintained in Virginia's public schools. The mission of the public education system, first and foremost, is to educate students in the essential academic knowledge and skills in order that they may be equipped for citizenship, work, and a private life that is informed and free. The accreditation standards are designed to:

1. Provide an essential foundation of educational programs of high quality in all schools for all students.
2. Encourage continuous appraisal and improvement of the school program for the purpose of raising student achievement.
3. Foster public confidence.
4. Assure recognition of Virginia's public schools by other institutions of learning.
5. Establish a means of 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

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that the Board of Education shall provide for the accreditation of public elementary and secondary schools in accordance with regulations prescribed by it.

PART II  
Philosophy, Goals, and Objectives

8 VAC 20-131-20. Philosophy, Goals, and Objectives

8 VAC 20-131-20. 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:

A. 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 in consideration of the needs of the community, and shall serve as a basis for the creation and review of the biennial school plan.

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

C. The goals and objectives shall (1) be written in plain language so as to be understandable to non-educators, including parents, (2) to the extent possible, be stated in measurable terms, and (3) consist primarily of measurable objectives to raise student and school achievement in the core Standards of Learning disciplines, to improve student and staff attendance, to reduce student drop-out rates, and to increase the quality of instruction through professional staff development and licensure.

D. The school staff and community representatives shall review biennially the extent to which the school has met its prior goals and objectives, analyze the school's student performance data including data by grade level or academic department as necessary, and report these outcomes to the school community and the division superintendent. A report delivered in writing or given orally in accordance with local school board policy during a regularly scheduled parent-teacher meeting at the school may be used to satisfy the reporting requirement of this section. This report shall be in addition to the school report card required by 8 VAC 20-131-270 B.

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

PART III  
Student Achievement

8 VAC 20-131-30. Student Achievement Expectations

8 VAC 20-131-40. Literacy Tests

8 VAC 20-131-50. Requirements for Graduation

8 VAC 20-131-60. Transfer of Credits

8 VAC 20-131-30. Student Achievement Expectations.

A. Each student should learn the relevant grade level subject matter before promotion to the next grade. For grades in which the SOL tests are given, achievement of a passing score on the SOL tests shall be considered in promotion/retention policies adopted by the local school board. Achievement expectations and participation in SOL testing of students with disabilities will be guided by provisions of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan. Participation of students identified as limited English Proficient shall be determined by a committee convened to make such determinations. Limited English proficient students may be exempted from the SOL tests for one grade level only in grades 3, 5, and 8. In order to be granted verified credit, all students must meet the clock hour and testing requirements set forth in these regulations.

B. Each student at grades 3, 5, and 8 shall take and be expected to achieve a passing score on the SOL tests for the student's respective grade. Schools shall use the SOL test results as part of a multiple set of criteria for determining advancing or retaining students in grades 3, 5, and 8. No promotion/retention policy shall be written in a manner as to systematically exclude students from membership in a grade or participation in a course in which SOL tests are to be administered.

C. Each student in middle and secondary schools shall take all applicable end-of-course SOL tests following course instruction. Students who achieve a passing score on an end-of-course SOL test shall be awarded a verified unit of credit in that course. Students may earn verified credits in any courses for which end-of-course SOL tests are available. Middle and secondary schools may consider the student's end-of-course SOL test score in determining the student's final course grade.

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D. Students with disabilities for whom participation in the SOL testing program is deemed inappropriate according to their IEP or 504 plan and who cannot participate in the SOL tests shall be expected to demonstrate proficiency on an alternative assessment prescribed by the Board in accordance with federal laws and regulations beginning with school year 2000-2001.

## 8 VAC 20-131-40. Literacy Passport Test.

The SOL assessments shall constitute the primary evaluation of student academic achievement for the purpose of these regulations. Students shall also 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 students with disabilities who are progressing according to the objectives of their individualized education program (IEP) or 504 Plan. 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.

## 8 VAC 20-131-50. Requirements for Graduation.

To receive a high school diploma, 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 one of the two diplomas outlined below for grades 9-12. These shall be the only requirements for a diploma, except that a local school board may prescribe additional requirements for a diploma if such requirements have been approved by the Board of Education. All additional requirements prescribed by local school boards and in effect as of June 30, 1997, are approved to continue through June 30, 1999, without further action by the Board.

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## A. Requirements for a Standard Diploma

1. Beginning with the ninth-grade class of 1998-99 (graduating class of 2001-02), students shall earn the standard credits outlined in Section 2 below. Beginning with the ninth-grade class of 2000-01 (graduating class of 2003-04), students shall earn standard units of credit described in Section 2 below, and of the standard units of credit earned, students shall earn the following number of verified units of credit (see 8 VAC 20-131-110): English—two; math—one; science—one; history/social science—one; and one additional verified unit of credit of the student's own choosing.

## 2. Credits Required for Graduation

Discipline Area	Units of Credit	# of these Required to be Verified
English	4	2
Mathematics <sup>1</sup>	3	1
Laboratory Science <sup>2</sup>	3	1
History and Social Sciences <sup>3</sup>	3	1
Health and Physical Education	2	
Fine Arts or Practical Arts	1	
Electives	6	
Student Selected Test		1
Total	22	6

<sup>1</sup> Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall be at or above the level of Algebra and shall include at least two course selections from among: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, or other mathematics courses above the level of Algebra and Geometry. The Board of Education may approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.

<sup>2</sup> Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include course selections at least two different science disciplines: Earth Sciences, Biology, Chemistry, or Physics. The Board of Education may approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.

<sup>3</sup> Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include U.S. and Virginia History, U.S. and Virginia Government, and one World History/Geography course. Courses which satisfy the World History/Geography course are: (a) World History; (b) World Geography; (c) World History and Geography to 1000 A.D.; (d) World History and Geography 1000 A.D. to the Present; or (e) a semester course of World

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History to 1000 A.D. and a semester course of World Geography. The Board of Education may approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.

Students completing the requirements for the standard diploma may be eligible to receive a Board of Education Seal and/or other honor deemed appropriate by the local school board as described in Section D below.

## B. Requirements for an Advanced Studies Diploma.

1. Beginning with the ninth-grade class of 1998-99 (graduating class of 2001-02), students shall earn the standard credits outlined in Section 2 below. Beginning with the ninth-grade class of 2000-01 (graduating class of 2003-04), students shall earn the standard credits outlined in Section 2 below, and of the total credits earned, students shall earn the following number of verified units of credits (see 8 VAC 20-131-110): English—two; Mathematics—two; Science—two; History/Social Science—two; and one additional verified unit of credit of the student's own choosing.

## 2. Credits Required for Graduation

Discipline Area	Units of Credit	# of these Required to be Verified
English	4	2
Mathematics <sup>1</sup>	4	2
Laboratory Science <sup>2</sup>	4	2
History and Social Sciences <sup>3</sup>	4	2
Foreign Language <sup>4</sup>	3	
Health and Physical Education	2	
Fine Arts or Practical Arts	1	
Electives	2	
Student Selected Test		1
Total	24	9

<sup>1</sup>Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall be at or above the level of Algebra and shall include at least three different course selections from among: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, or other mathematics courses above the level of Algebra II. The Board of Education may approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.



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<sup>2</sup>Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include course selections from at least three different science disciplines from among: Earth Sciences, Biology, Chemistry, or Physics. The Board of Education may approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.

<sup>3</sup>Courses completed to satisfy this requirement shall include U.S. and Virginia History, U.S. and Virginia Government, and two World History/Geography courses. Acceptable courses to satisfy the World History/Geography requirements include: (a) World History, and World Geography; (b) World History and Geography to 1000 A.D., and World History and Geography from 1000 A.D. to the Present; or (c) a semester course of World Geography, a semester course of World History to 1000 A.D., and a year-long course of World History 1000 A.D. to the Present. The Board of Education may approve additional courses to satisfy this requirement.

<sup>4</sup>Three years of one language or two years of two languages

Students completing the requirements for the advanced studies diploma may be eligible to receive a Governor's Seal and/or other honor deemed appropriate by the local school board as described in Section D below.

C. When students below the ninth grade successfully complete courses offered for credit in grades 9 through 12, credit shall be counted toward meeting the standard units required for graduation provided the courses meet SOL requirements or are equivalent in content and academic rigor as those courses offered at the secondary level, or verified units provided students achieve a passing score on end of course SOL tests.

D. Awards for Exemplary Performance

1. Students who complete the requirements for a standard diploma with an average grade of "B" or better in the required courses will receive a Board of Education Seal on the diploma.

2. Students who complete the requirements for an advanced studies diploma 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.

3. Students may receive other seals or awards for exceptional academic, vocational, citizenship, or other exemplary

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performance in accordance with criteria defined by the local school board.

E. 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.

F. Students who complete a prescribed course of study as defined by the local school board but who do not qualify for diplomas shall be awarded a Certificate of Program Completion by the local school board.

G. Students who complete honors, advanced, Advanced Placement, college-level or courses required for an International Baccalaureate Diploma shall be deemed to have completed the requirements for graduation under these standards provided they have passed the end-of-course tests required to earn verified credits as required of students earning either a standard or an advanced studies diploma, or, in the case of a complete International Baccalaureate Diploma program, the number of verified credits required for an Advanced Studies Diploma.

## 8 VAC 20-131-60. 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 the minimum units of standard or verified credit earned and required for graduation with a standard or advanced studies diploma.

D. Students transferring into a Virginia school division shall be required to earn a minimum of 22 standard credits (6 of which must

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be verified credits) for graduation. Each student's prior record shall be evaluated to determine the number of credits previously earned and the number 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. Students transferring after the beginning of their senior or 12th grade year shall be given every opportunity to earn a standard or advanced studies diploma. If it is not possible for the student to meet the requirements for a diploma, arrangements should be made for the student's previous school to award the diploma. If this arrangement cannot be made, a waiver of the verified credit requirements may be available to the student. The Department of Education may grant such waivers upon request by the local school board.

PART IV.  
School Instructional Program

- 8 VAC 20-131-70. Program of Instruction and Learning Objectives
- 8 VAC 20-131-80. Instructional Program in Elementary Schools
- 8 VAC 20-131-90. Instructional Program in Middle Schools
- 8 VAC 20-131-100. Instructional Program in Secondary Schools
- 8 VAC 20-131-110. Standard and Verified Units of Credit
- 8 VAC 20-131-120. Summer School
- 8 VAC 20-131-130. Elective Courses
- 8 VAC 20-131-140. College Preparation Programs and Opportunities for Postsecondary Credit
- 8 VAC 20-131-150. Standard School Year and School Day
- 8 VAC 20-131-160. Additional Reading Instruction
- 8 VAC 20-131-170. Family Life Education.
- 8 VAC 20-131-180. Off-Site Instructional Programs
- 8 VAC 20-131-190. Library Media, Materials and Equipment
- 8 VAC 20-131-200. Extracurricular and Other School Activities

8 VAC 20-131-70. Program of Instruction and Learning Objectives.

A. Each school shall provide a program of instruction that promotes individual student academic achievement in the essential academic disciplines and shall provide additional instructional opportunities that meet the abilities, interests, and educational needs of students. Each school shall establish learning objectives to

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be achieved by students at successive grade levels that meet or exceed the knowledge and skills contained in the Standards of Learning for English, mathematics, science, and history/social science adopted by the Board of Education in June 1995 and shall continually assess the progress of each student in relation to the objectives.

B. 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. Each school shall provide students identified as gifted with instructional programs taught by teachers with special training or experience in working with gifted students. 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 Children with Disabilities in Virginia," the "Special Education Program Standards" and other pertinent federal/state regulations.

## 8 VAC 20-131-80. Instructional Program in Elementary Schools.

A. Each elementary school shall provide each student a program of instruction which corresponds to the Standards of Learning for English, mathematics, science, and history/social science. In addition, each school shall provide instruction in art, music, and physical education and health.

B. In grades K-3, reading, writing, spelling, and mathematics shall be the core of the program. Schools shall maintain, in a manner prescribed by the Board, an early skills and knowledge achievement record in reading and math each student in grades K-3 to monitor student progress and to promote successful achievement in the third grade SOL tests. This record shall be included with the student's records if the student transfers to a new school.

C. Instructional Time. To provide students with sufficient opportunity to learn, a minimum of 75% of the annual instructional time of 990 hours shall be given to instruction in the disciplines of English, mathematics, science, and history/social science. Students who are not successfully progressing in early reading proficiency and/or who are unable to read the materials necessary for instruction with comprehension shall receive additional instructional time in reading.

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## 8 VAC 20-131-90. Instructional Program in Middle Schools.

A. Each middle level school shall provide each student a program of instruction which corresponds to the Standards of Learning for English, mathematics, science, and history/social science. In addition, each school shall provide instruction in art, music, foreign language, physical education and health, and career and vocational exploration.

B. The middle school shall provide a minimum of eight offerings to students in eighth grade: four required courses (English, mathematics, science, and history/social science), and four elective courses (one in foreign language, one in health and physical education, one in fine arts, and one in career and vocational exploration).

C. Credit-bearing Course Opportunities. Level one of a foreign language shall be available to all eighth-grade students. In any high school credit-bearing course taken in middle school, parents may request that grades be omitted from the student's transcript and the student not earn high school credit for the course. Notice of this provision must be provided to parents with a deadline and format for making such a request. Nothing in these regulations shall be construed to prevent a middle school from offering any appropriate credit bearing course for graduation.

D. Instructional Time. To provide students a sufficient opportunity to learn, each student shall be provided 140 clock hours per year of instruction in each of the four disciplines of English, math, science, and history/social science. Sixth-grade students may receive an alternative schedule of instruction provided each student receives at least 560 total clock hours of instruction in the four academic disciplines.

## 8 VAC 20-131-100. Instructional Program in Secondary Schools.

A. Each secondary school shall provide each student a program of instruction in the academic areas of English, mathematics, science, and history/social science that enables each student to meet the graduation requirements described in 8 VAC 20-131-50, and shall offer opportunities for students to pursue a program of studies in several academic and vocational areas including:

1. Vocational education choices that prepare the student as a vocational program completer in one of three or more occupational

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areas and that prepare the student for technical or pre-professional post secondary 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. Classroom driver education may count for 36 class periods of health education. Students shall not be removed from classes other than health and physical education for the in-car phase of driver education.

8 VAC 20-131-110. Standard and Verified Units of Credit.

A. The standard unit of credit for graduation shall be based on a minimum of 140 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 140 hours of instruction provided. If a school division elects to award credit in a non-core academic course 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 140 clock hours of instruction; and

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

B. A verified unit of credit for graduation shall be based on a minimum of 140 clock hours of instruction and the achievement by the student of a passing score on the end-of-course Standards of Learning test for that course.

C. A school employing a scheduling configuration of less than 140 clock hours per course in the 1996-97 school year may retain that scheduling configuration provided such school is rated "Fully Accredited." Schools rated "Accredited with Warning may be required to address their scheduling configuration in their corrective action plan required by 8 VAC 20-131-310 D.

## 8 VAC 20-131-120. Summer School.

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.

## 8 VAC 20-131-130. Elective Courses.

Locally developed elective courses offered for credit toward high school graduation shall be approved by the division superintendent and school board.

## 8 VAC 20-131-140. College Preparation Programs and Opportunities for Postsecondary Credit.

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.

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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.

## 8 VAC 20-131-150. 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. No alternative plan which reduces the instructional time in the core academics shall be approved.

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. Conditions of such waivers shall be defined by the local school board.

## 8 VAC 20-131-160. 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.



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## 8 VAC 20-131-170 Family Life Education.

Each school may 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 which shall have the goals of reducing the incidence of pregnancy and/or sexually-transmitted diseases and substance abuse among teenagers.

## 8 VAC 20-131-180. Off-Site Instruction.

A. 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 or 504 Plan 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.

B. Correspondence Courses. Students may enroll in and receive a standard or verified unit of 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 course is equivalent to that offered in the regular school program and the work is done under the supervision of a licensed teacher, or a person eligible to hold a Virginia license, approved by local school authorities. Verified credit may be earned when the student has passed the SOL test associated with the correspondence course completed.

## 8 VAC 20-131-190. Library Media, Materials and Equipment.

A. Library Media Services. Each school shall maintain an organized 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 contain hard copy, electronic technological resources, materials and equipment which are sufficient to meet research, inquiry, and reading requirements of the instructional program and general student interest.

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

## 8 VAC 20-131-200. Extracurricular and Other School Activities.

A. 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.

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

PART V.  
School and Instructional Leadership

8 VAC 20-131-210 Role of the Principal

8 VAC 20-131-220 Role of Professional Teaching Staff

8 VAC 20-131-230 Role of Support Staff

8 VAC 20-131-240 Administrative and Support Staff Required

8 VAC 20-131-250 Alternative Staffing Plan

## 8 VAC 20-131-210. Role of the Principal.

A. The principal shall be responsible for instructional leadership and effective school management that promotes positive student achievement, a safe and secure environment in which to teach and learn, and efficient use of resources. As part of this responsibility, the principal shall ensure the development and implementation of the biennial school plan, approved by the superintendent.

B. Instructional Leadership. The principal, responsible for ensuring students are provided an opportunity to learn, shall:

1. Protect the academic instructional time from unnecessary interruptions and disruptions and enable the professional teaching staff to spend the maximum time possible in the teaching/learning process by keeping to a minimum clerical responsibility and the time students are out of class;

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2. Ensure that the school division's student code of conduct is enforced and that the school environment is safe and secure;

3. Analyze the school's test and subtest scores annually by grade and by discipline to:

a. direct and require appropriate remediation/intervention to those students performing below grade level or not passing the SOL tests;

b. involve the staff of the school in identifying the types of staff development needed to improve student achievement and ensure that the staff participate in those activities; and

c. analyze classroom practices and methods for improvement of instruction.

4. Ensure that students' records are maintained and that criteria used in making placement and promotion decisions, as well as any instructional interventions used to improve the student's performance, are included in the record;

5. Monitor and evaluate the quality of instruction and provide for in-service training, professional assistance and support designed to improve instruction, and ensure successful attainment of the knowledge and skills required for students by the SOLs; and

6. Maintain records of students who drop out of school, including their reasons for dropping out and actions taken to prevent students from dropping out.

C. School Management Leadership. The principal, responsible for effective school management, shall:

1. Work with staff to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy and to facilitate constructive communication by establishing and maintaining a current handbook of personnel policies and procedures;

2. Work with the community to involve parents and citizens in the educational program and facilitate communication with parents by maintaining and disseminating a current student handbook of policies and procedures that includes the school division's standards of student

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conduct and procedures for enforcement, along with other matters of interest to parents and students;

3. Maintain a current record of licensure, endorsement, and in-service training completed by staff; and

4. 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.

## 8 VAC 20-131-220. Role of Professional Teaching Staff.

The professional teaching 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 objectives of the Standards of Learning for the appropriate grade level or discipline. The staff shall:

A. Serve as leadership models of effective oral and written communication with special attention to the correct use of language and spelling.

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

C. Establish teaching objectives to achieve the following:

1. Identify what students are expected to learn; and

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

D. Provide for individual differences of students through the use of differentiated instruction, varied materials, and activities suitable to their interests and abilities.

E. Assess the progress of students and report promptly and constructively to them and their parents.

## 8 VAC 20-131-230. Role of Support Staff.

The school's support staff shall work with the principal and professional teaching staff to promote student achievement and successful attainment of the school's goals.

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## 8 VAC 20-131-240. Administrative and Support Staff Required.

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

1. Position: principal; elementary: one half-time to 299, one full-time at 300; Middle: one full-time; secondary: one full-time.

2. Position: assistant principal; elementary: one half-time at 600, one full-time at 900; middle: one full-time each 600; secondary: one full-time each 600.

3. Position: librarian; elementary: part time to 299, one full-time at 300; middle: one half-time to 299, one full-time at 300, two full-time at 1000; secondary: one half-time to 299, one full-time at 300, two full-time at 1000.

4. Position: guidance counselors or reading specialists; elementary: one hour per day per 100, one full-time at 500, one hour per day additional time per 100 or major fraction.

5. Position: guidance counselor: middle: one period per 80, one full-time at 400, one additional period per 80 or major fraction; secondary: one period per 70, one full-time at 350, one additional period per 70 or major fraction.

6. Position: clerical; elementary: part time to 299, one full-time at 300; middle: one full-time and one additional full-time for each 600 beyond 200 and one full-time for the library at 750; secondary: one full-time and one additional full-time for each 600 beyond 200 and one 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.

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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. Guidance counseling shall be provided for students to ensure that a program of studies contributing to the student's academic achievement and meeting the graduation requirements specified in 8 VAC 20-131-50 are being followed. In addition, the counseling program shall provide for a minimum of 60% of the time of each member of the guidance staff devoted to such counseling of students.

E. Middle school teachers in schools with a seven-period day may teach 150 student periods per day or 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 as necessary to promote academic achievement.

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## 8 VAC 20-131-250 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 VI.  
School Facilities and Safety

8 VAC 20-131-260. School Facilities and Safety

8 VAC 20-131-260. School Facilities and Safety.

A. Each school shall be maintained in a manner ensuring compliance with the Uniform Statewide Building Code and regulations of the Board of Education pertaining to facilities. In addition, the school administration shall:

1. Maintain a physical plant that is accessible, barrier-free, safe, and clean;

2. Provide for the proper outdoor display of flags of the United States and of the Commonwealth of Virginia;

3. Provide suitable space for classrooms, administrative staff, pupil personnel services, library and media services, and for the needs and safety of physical education; and

4. Provide adequate, safe, and properly-equipped laboratories to meet the needs of instruction in the sciences, computer, fine arts, and vocational programs.

B. Each school shall maintain records of regular safety, health and fire inspections that have been conducted and certified by local health and fire departments. The frequency of such inspections shall be determined by the local school board in consultation with the local health and fire departments. In addition, the school administration shall:

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1. Equip all exit doors with panic hardware as required by the Uniform Statewide Building Code; and

2. Conduct fire drills at least 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.

C. Each school shall have contingency plans for emergencies that includes staff certified in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation, the Heimlich maneuver, and emergency first aid. In addition, the school administration shall ensure that the school has:

1. Written procedures to follow in emergencies such as fire, injury, illness, and violent or threatening behavior. The plan shall be outlined in the student handbook and discussed with staff and students during the first week of each school year;

2. Space for the proper care of students who become ill;  
and

3. A written procedure, in accordance with guidelines established by the local school board, for responding to violent, disruptive or illegal activities by students on school property or during a school-sponsored activity.

## PART VII.

## School and Community Communications

8 VAC 20-131-270 School and Community Communications

8 VAC 20-131-270. School and Community Communications.

Each school shall promote communication and foster mutual understanding with parents and the community. Each school shall:

A. Involve 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.

B. Provide annually a School Performance Report Card, in a manner prescribed by the Board and beginning with data from the 1997-98 school



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year, to the parents of children attending the school and to the community that includes, but is not limited to:

1. School-wide test scores on the SOL tests; statewide averages and division averages for the most recent three-year period for which such data are available; students with disabilities and limited-English-proficient students' participation in those tests; the performance of children with disabilities on the SOL tests or alternate assessments as appropriate; the percent of students with disabilities and the percent of limited English proficient students exempted from SOL testing; and the percent of the school population eligible to participate in the SOL testing program.

2. Attendance rates for students for the most recent three-year period for which such data are available;

3. Incidents of physical violence and weapon possession occurring at the school reported by the school division to the Department of Education under §22.1-280.1 of the Code of Virginia for the most recent three-year period for which such data are available;

4. Secondary schools shall include the following:

a. The number and percentage of students taking Advanced Placement courses and the number and percentage of those earning a score of 3 or better on the Advanced Placement test; and the number and percentage of students taking college-level courses and the number and percentage of those students passing at least one such course; and

b. The number of Standard, Advanced Studies, Special and International Baccalaureate Diplomas, as well as the number and percentage of students awarded Certificates of Program Completion and GED certificates, the most recent three-year period for which such data are available; and,

c. Dropout rates for the current and previous three years.

5. The accreditation rating awarded to the school for the current and previous three years.

C. Cooperate with business and industry in formulating vocational educational programs and conduct joint enterprises involving personnel, facilities, training programs, and other resources.

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D. Encourage and support the establishment of a parent-teacher association or other organization and work cooperatively with it.

E. At the beginning of each school year, schools shall provide to its students' parent(s) and/or guardian(s):

1. the academic objectives to be achieved at their child's grade level, or, in high school, a copy of the syllabus for each of their child's courses;

2. a copy of the Standards of Learning applicable to the child's grade or course requirements and the approximate date and potential impact of the child's next SOL testing; and

3. annual notice to students at all grade levels of all requirements for Standard and Advanced Studies diplomas.

PART VIII.  
School Accreditation

8 VAC 20-131-280.	Expectations for School Accountability
8 VAC 20-131-290.	Procedures for Certifying Accreditation Eligibility
8 VAC 20-131-300.	Application of the Standards
8 VAC 20-131-310.	Improvement Planning for Schools that are Accredited with Warning
8 VAC 10-131-320.	School Improvement Levels
8 VAC 20-131-330.	Waivers
8 VAC 20-131-340.	Effective Dates
8 VAC 20-131-280.	Expectations for School Accountability.

A. Each school shall be accredited based, primarily, on achievement of the criteria established in 8 VAC 20-131-30 of these regulations as specified below:

1. Elementary schools shall be evaluated by the percentage of the school's eligible students in grades three and five who achieve a passing score on the SOL tests in the four core academic areas for their respective grades.

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2. Middle schools shall be evaluated by achievement of eligible students on the SOL tests in the four core academic areas for 8th grade and end-of-course tests where applicable.

3. Secondary schools shall be evaluated by student achievement on the end-of-course SOL tests taken.

4. Schools with grade configurations other than those identified in 8 VAC 20-131-290 E of these regulations for elementary, middle, or secondary schools shall be evaluated by student achievement on state SOL tests for the grades identified above that are housed in the school.

5. Schools with grade configurations that do not house a grade or courses for which SOL tests are administered will be paired with another school in the division housing one or more of the grades in which SOL tests are administered. The pairing of such schools will be made upon the advice/recommendation of the local superintendent. The schools should have a "feeder" relationship and the grades should be contiguous.

6. For purposes of accreditation, eligible students shall be the total number of students enrolled in the school at the grade level of the SOL tests except for those students whose IEP or 504 Plan or LEP committee excludes them from participating in the testing program.

B. Special purpose schools such as regional or stand-alone special education, alternative, or vocational schools that serve as the student's school of principal enrollment shall be evaluated on standards appropriate to the school's program and approved by the Board of Education. Every school that awards a diploma shall meet the requirements for secondary schools and for graduation as defined in Parts III and IV.

C. Evaluating the performance of schools shall take into consideration the percentage of eligible students who achieve a passing score on the prescribed SOL tests or, for those students with disabilities who cannot participate in the SOL tests, a proficient level score on an alternative assessment prescribed by the Board (beginning with school year 2000-2001), and the school's annual improvement during the implementation years toward the established standard school expectations at the various levels as described in 8 VAC 20-131-300 D. Schools with large numbers of transient students and/or non-English-speaking immigrant students may receive additional accommodations according to tolerances established by the Board of Education.

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Such schools shall be evaluated according to the Individual School Accreditation Plan approved by the Board.

D. Pre-accreditation requirements: As a prerequisite to the awarding of an accreditation rating as defined in 8 VAC 20-131-300, Application of the Standards, each new or existing school shall document, in a manner prescribed by the Board, its compliance with the requirements to offer courses that will allow students to complete the graduation requirements in 8 VAC 20-131- 50, the ability to offer the instructional program prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-70 through 8 VAC 20-131-100, the leadership and staffing requirements of 8 VAC 20-131-210 through 8 VAC 20-131-240 and the facilities and safety provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-260.

8 VAC 20-131-290. Procedures for Certifying Accreditation Eligibility.

A. Schools will be initially accredited under these standards annually based on compliance with the pre-accreditation criteria described in 8 VAC 20-131-280 D above.

B. To be eligible for accreditation, the principal and superintendent shall certify to the Department of Education the extent to which each school meets standards reported as met in the previous year described in 8 VAC 20-131-280 D 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, pre-accreditation eligibility reports in a manner prescribed by the Board, through the division superintendent, to the Department of Education. Failure to submit the reports on time will constitute grounds for denying accreditation to the school.

C. 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 division-wide plans available in and applicable to each school may be used to satisfy all other written plans required in these standards.

D. With the approval of the local school board, local schools seeking to implement experimental and/or innovative programs that are not consistent with accreditation standards or other regulations promulgated by the Board shall submit a waiver request, on forms provided, to the

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Board of Education for evaluation and approval prior to implementation. The request must include the purpose and objectives of the experimental/innovative programs, description and duration of the programs, anticipated outcomes, outline, length, number of students affected, and evaluation procedures and mechanisms for measuring goals, objectives, and student academic achievement. Except as specified below, the Board may grant, for a period up to five years, a waiver of any regulations promulgated by the Board that are not mandated by state law or federal law or designed to promote health or safety. The Board may grant all or a portion of the request. Waivers of requirements in 8 VAC 20-131-30 (Student Achievement Expectations), 8 VAC 20-131-50 (Requirements for Graduation), 8 VAC 20-131-70 (Program of Instruction and Learning Objectives), and 8 VAC 20-131-280 through 8 VAC 20-131-340 shall not be granted, and no waiver may be approved for a program which would violate the provisions of Standards of Quality.

E. These standards apply to schools for all grade levels, K-12, as listed below:

1. Schools with grades K-5 shall be classified as elementary schools;
2. Schools with grades 6-8 shall be classified as middle schools;
3. Schools with grades 9-12 shall be classified as secondary schools.

8 VAC 20-131-300. Application of the Standards.

A. Existing schools which meet pre-accreditation requirements prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-280 D may be assigned one of the following ratings: Fully Accredited, Provisionally Accredited, Accredited with Warning, or Accreditation Denied.

B. New schools will be awarded the status of Conditionally Accredited pending an evaluation of the school's achievement performance and when pre-accreditation requirements prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-280 D have been met.

C. Compliance with the student academic achievement expectations shall be documented to the Board directly. Compliance with other standards will be documented in accordance with procedures prescribed by the Board.

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## D. Accreditation Ratings.

1. Fully Accredited: A school will be Fully Accredited when the prescribed levels of eligible student performance identified below on SOL tests are met and the school meets pre-accreditation requirements prescribed in 8 VAC 20-131-280 D of these regulations.

a. For purposes of school accreditation, at third grade the percent of students passing shall be as follows: 70% for English/reading; 70% for mathematics; 50% for science; and 50% for history.

b. At the fifth and eighth grades, the percent of students passing shall be 70% in each of the four core disciplines.

c. At the secondary school level, the percent of students passing shall be 70% in each of the four core disciplines.

2. Provisionally Accredited. A school will be Provisionally Accredited during the period of implementation of these accrediting procedures when the student achievement requirements for full accreditation are not met, and yet there is annual improvement in the percentage of the school's eligible students who earn a passing score on the SOL tests. The Provisionally Accredited rating will cease to exist at the end of the 2002-2003 school year.

All schools will be rated as Provisionally Accredited on July 1, 1998.

3. Accredited with Warning. A school will be Accredited with Warning when the requirements for the Fully Accredited rating are not met and, in school years prior to 2003-04, the school fails to meet the requirements for the Provisionally Accredited rating.

a. Schools that are Accredited with Warning shall develop a corrective action plan as described in 8 VAC 20-131-310 designed to improve student achievement on the SOL tests for the grade levels identified in 8 VAC 20-131-280 over two years.

b. No school may be Accredited with Warning for more than three consecutive years.

4. Accreditation Denied. A school will be denied accreditation when the requirements for the rating of Fully Accredited

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are not met and when, after three years of being rated Accredited with Warning and despite corrective action, the school has failed to meet the specified achievement level.

8 VAC 20-131-310. Improvement Planning for Schools that are Accredited with Warning.

A. Schools that are Accredited with Warning must undertake improvement planning targeted to increasing student achievement as measured by the SOL tests.

B. A corrective action plan must be developed by each school Accredited with Warning upon receipt of notification of the awarding of this rating. The plan must be signed by the principal and the local superintendent and approved by the local school board and submitted to the Board of Education for approval. The plan shall be developed with the assistance of parents and teachers and made available to the public. During the implementation years from 1998-2002, a school that is Accredited with Warning shall develop and implement an improvement plan approved by the local school board and designed to assist the school to meet the student achievement standard to be Fully Accredited as outlined in 8 VAC 20-131-300 (D.1). If a school continues to be Accredited with Warning during the 2001-02 school year, the school shall submit, by October 1, 2002, an improvement plan to the Board of Education, with the components outlined in 8 VAC 20-131-310 (D) in a manner prescribed by the Board of Education. The plan shall be implemented not later than the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.

C. The Board of Education shall establish a Peer Educator Advisory Group to provide technical assistance in evaluating corrective action plans. The advisory group shall consist of fifteen (15) educators with five (5) representatives each from urban, suburban, and rural schools. Representatives shall be academic classroom teachers and principals from elementary, middle, and secondary schools and shall be selected from among the top ten percent of schools in each category on the state SOL tests. Each member of the committee shall serve for no more than two years. Terms of service shall be designed to provide continuity to the group as a whole.

D. The plan shall include specific measures for achieving and documenting student academic improvement, amount of time in the school day devoted to instruction in the core academic areas, instructional practices designed to remediate currently failing students, intervention strategies designed to prevent future students from experiencing similar

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failure, staff development required, assistance needed, and flexibility or waivers to state or local regulations necessary to meet the objectives of the plan. As part of its approval of the corrective action plan, the Board of Education may grant a local school board a waiver from the requirements of any regulations promulgated by the Board when such a waiver is available.

E. Schools in this rating shall document to their community that appropriate and effective instructional intervention and/or remediation and additional instructional time is being provided for those students (1) not achieving a score of proficient on the SOL tests or (2) not passing the Literacy Passport Tests.

## 8 VAC 20-131-320 School Improvement Levels.

The Board of Education will set the minimum acceptable level of annual school improvement required for a school Accredited with Warning. In no event shall a school be awarded the status of Fully Accredited if the minimum student pass-rate established by the Board is not met.

## 8 VAC 20-131-330. Waivers.

Waivers of some of the requirements of these regulations may be granted by the Board based on submission of a request from the division superintendent and chairman of the local school board. The request shall include documentation of the need for the waiver. In no event will waivers be granted to the requirements of Part III-Student Achievement.

## 8 VAC 20-131-340. Effective Dates.

A. With the exception of certain provisions identified below, these regulations are effective upon adoption.

B. The units of credit requirements for graduation described in 8 VAC 20-131-50 are effective with the ninth-grade class of 1998-99 for the graduating class of 2002. Only standard units of credit will be available until the implementation of the requirement of verified units of credit. Students entering the ninth grade prior to the implementation date of these regulations shall meet the requirements of standards adopted by the Board in October 1992.

C. The requirement for verified units of credit based on student performance on the SOL tests related to courses will become effective



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for graduation with the ninth-grade class of 2000-01 for the graduating class of 2004.

D. Each school that does not meet the requirements to be rated Fully Accredited will be rated as Provisionally Accredited during the implementation period of 1998-1999 through 2002-2003 provided there is annual improvement in the percentage of the school's eligible students who earn a passing score on each of the SOL tests and the school continues to meet the pre-accreditation requirements of 8 VAC 20-131-280 D. If there is no improvement or there is a decline in the SOL test result percentages over the previous year, the school will be rated Accredited with Warning. Schools that meet the requirements to be rated Fully Accredited will be upgraded to that rating.

E. Beginning with the 2003-2004 accrediting cycle, each school will be expected to meet the level of performance established for a Fully Accredited rating in accordance with the provisions of 8 VAC 20-131-300. Schools not meeting this requirement will be rated Accredited with Warning.