

Virginia Board of Education Recommendations for Graduation Requirements in Support of Profile of a Graduate

In August 2014, Governor Terry McAuliffe signed executive order 23 to establish “The New Virginia Economy” Workforce Initiative. Included in the goals of the initiative are increasing postsecondary education and workforce credentials and aligning education with the needs of businesses. Meeting these goals includes re-examination of what a student graduating from high school knows and should be able to do.

Current data reveals several troubling outcomes of the existing system of diploma requirements (refer to Rapid Data Review information provided separately):

- For the Advanced Studies Diploma
 - 70% enroll in a 4 year institution immediately after high school but only 37.9% have completed a bachelor’s degree in four years.
 - Almost 1 in 5 (18%) of graduates are enrolled in a developmental English course
- For the Standard Diploma
 - Most complete math requirements by the end of Grade 10 and take no additional math courses during high school
 - Most complete their science requirements by completing year-long courses in Earth Science and Biology. Few enroll in any Chemistry, Physics, or Computer Science courses
 - 65% are enrolled in a developmental math class
 - 60% are enrolled in a developmental English class

Moreover, discussions with businesses about necessary work-ready skills and knowledge generate lists that include communication, interpersonal skills, responsibility, problem-solving, and innovation.

Through legislation introduced during this General Assembly session in support of the Standards of Learning Innovation Committee, the Governor has provided flexibility for the Board of Education to develop a new profile of a graduate that includes the 5C’s of critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and civic and community engagement. The Board of Education began review and deliberations of their regulations specifying graduation and diploma requirements in the spring of 2015, and continues to work to identify the knowledge, skills, and competencies students should attain during their K-12 experience. Specific recommendations are provided in this paper below.

Diploma and Graduation Requirements

Currently, Virginia offers three diplomas, the Standard, Advanced Studies, and Applied Studies. To graduate with a Standard Diploma, a student must earn at least 22 standard units of credit. At least six of the 22 must be verified credits earned by passing the course and the

accompanying SOL exam. A student graduating with an Advanced Studies Diploma must earn at least 26 standard units of credit of which nine must be verified credits. The Applied Studies diploma is available to students with disabilities who complete the requirements of their Individualized Education Program (IEP) and who do not meet the requirements for other diplomas.

The proposed recommended requirements in the Profile of a Graduate address these outcomes by:

- Requiring ALL students to maintain course content engagement in math, science, English and history/social studies for all four year of high school
- Better aligning high school coursework with college entrance expectations for both two- and four- year institutions
- Maintaining the option of the current traditional program of studies for students seeking immediate enrollment at four- year institution of higher education
- Refining options for students seeking immediate entrance to a two- year school or workforce employment
- Add competencies to graduation expectations to broaden Profile and better ensure college and career readiness beyond academic expectations alone

For BOE consideration during the SOA revisions, VDOE staff is recommending the Virginia Diploma, which is a merger of the current Standard and Advanced Studies diplomas. The Virginia Diploma maintains the current traditional academic rigor for students planning to attend two- or four- year post-graduation programs while providing flexibility in the program of studies for students to pursue career interests. This will create multiple pathways to graduation.

Students who demonstrate exemplary performance, academic excellence, and/or outstanding achievement will be recognized by one or more of the following awards: Governor's Seal, Board of Education Seal, Career and Technical Education Seal, Board of Education's Seal of Advanced Mathematics and Technology, Board of Education's Seal for Excellence in Civics Education, or Board of Education's Seal of Biliteracy. If the two diplomas are merged, the BOE will add a Board of Education's Advanced Studies Seal.

To earn a Virginia Diploma, students would need to earn 25 standard credits and five verified competencies. Every student would be required to earn four standard credits each in English, mathematics, laboratory sciences, and history & social sciences in addition to two standard credits of health & physical education.

Virginia Diploma		
Discipline Area	Standard Credits*	Verified Competencies
English (Note 1)	4	1
Mathematics (Note 2)	4	1
Laboratory Science (Note 3)	4	1
History & Social Science (Note 4)	4	1
Foreign Languages, Fine Arts, or Career & Technical Education	4	
Health & Physical Education	2	
Electives	3	
Applied Knowledge & Skills		1
Total	25	5

Note 1: General Courses: English 1 & English 2
Possible Focus Courses: English 3/English 4 (semester courses), Business Writing, Creative Writing, Literature Courses, Technical Writing, AP, IB Dual Enrollment

Note 2: General Courses: Algebra I & Geometry
Possible Focus Courses: Algebra II, Algebra, Functions, and Data Analysis, Courses in mathematical thinking, computer programming, engineering, accounting, finance, AP, IB, Dual Enrollment

Note 3: General Courses: Earth Science, Biology, (Year-long courses), Earth Science/Biology (semester courses), Chemistry/Physics (semester courses)
Possible Focus Courses: Chemistry, Physics, computer science, robotics, sequential career and technical education courses from associated STEM pathways, AP, IB, Dual Enrollment

Note 4: General Courses: One world course (World History I, World History II, or World Geography), U.S. and Virginia History, U.S. and Virginia Government (Year-long courses), U.S. and Virginia History/U.S. and Virginia Government (semester courses)
Possible Focus Courses: AP, IB, Dual Enrollment

(The required Economics and Personal Finance Course may be used as a Focus Course or an Elective.)

During the first two years in high school, students would earn standard credits in the four core areas by taking “general” courses that would be similar for most students. During the third and fourth years, students would earn standard credits in the four core areas by taking “focus” courses. Focus courses would allow students to follow academic and career preparation according to their interests, or post-secondary plans. Academic planning with students and parents should begin in the middle school and continue throughout the high school career.

Students would earn five verified competencies, one each in English, mathematics, laboratory sciences, history & social sciences, and applied knowledge & skills. Having students earn competencies in applied knowledge creates the opportunity to add competencies in the five Cs – critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and civic/community engagement. Verified competencies in English, mathematics, and science would be earned by passing an end-of-course standards of learning (SOL) test in any course for which end-of-course SOL tests are available. Verified competencies in History and Social Science would be earned by meeting implementing locally developed criteria which meets BOE guidelines that defines criteria for work such as independent study, work sample portfolio, demonstrated performance, community service or internships, or approved locally develop performance assessments.

Applied Knowledge and Skills Competency

- Demonstrated application of knowledge in the 5 Cs in subject areas of the student’s choice within the domains established by the BOE—preferably in a researched career pathway as part of an Academic Plan.
- A combination of applied knowledge and learning credentials leads to the earning of a Verified Competency.
- The Academic Plan of the student should be initiated in middle school and include the work-based experiences, internships, independent studies, student projects, civic engagement, and other experiences designed to demonstrate applied knowledge and learning.
- Students will earn the Applied Knowledge & Skills competency by earning identified credentials in the College & Career Readiness areas of **Content Knowledge, Career Pathways, Community Engagement, and Workplace Skills** (Including use of effective communication, collaboration, critical and creative thinking, and citizenship).

Discipline Area	Standard Diploma		Advanced Diploma		Virginia Diploma	
	Standard Credits	Verified Credits	Standard Credits	Verified Credits	Standard Credits	Verified Competencies
English	4	2	4	2	4	1
Mathematics	3	1	4	2	4	1
Laboratory Science	3	1	4	2	4	1
History & Social Sciences	3	1	4	2	4	1
Health & Physical Education	2		2		2	
Foreign Languages			3			
Fine Arts or Career & Technical Education			1			
Foreign Language, Fine Arts or Career & Technical Education	2				4	
Economics and Personal Finance	1		1		(*Note 1)	
Electives	4		3		3	
Student Selected Test		1		1		
Applied Knowledge & Skills						1
Total	22	6	26	9	25	5

*Note 1 Economics and Personal Finance is a required course for graduation but may be used to satisfy one of the History & Social Sciences credits.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Background

Appendix B - Engagement Thus Far

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Appendix A

Background

The idea of defining Career and College Ready is not new to Virginia. In January 2007, the Board of Education authorized the Virginia Department of Education to conduct studies to determine factors contributing to success in postsecondary education. In 2009 and 2010, respectively, the Virginia Board of Education adopted revised Standards of Learning in mathematics and English. The revised standards reflected the substantial input and recommended changes provided by college faculty and other experts from the College Board, ACT, the American Diploma Project, and the business community. These groups supported Virginia's revisions and have validated the standards as college and career ready.

The Virginia College and Career Readiness Initiative was designed to:

- 1) Ensure that college and career ready learning standards in reading, writing, and mathematics are taught in every Virginia high school classroom; and
- 2) Strengthen students' preparation for college and the work force before leaving high school.

In August 2014, Governor Terry McAuliffe signed Executive Order 23 establishing "**The New Virginia Economy**" Workforce Initiative. This initiative seeks to overhaul Virginia's economy in four ways: increasing postsecondary education and work force credentials, securing employment for veterans, aligning education with the needs of businesses, and diversifying the economy.

Based on current estimates, by 2022, about 500,000 new jobs will be created in Virginia. Many of these jobs will be in scientific, technical, or healthcare careers, and will require postsecondary education or work force credentials. Careers in these fields are readily accessible for those who are trained, credentialed, and ready to work.

The Standards of Learning Innovation Committee is charged with examining a variety of educational issues, including those related to instruction, assessment, and accountability. The Committee's focus is to ensure Virginia has an educational system that is fair and balanced as the Commonwealth prepares all students to become engaged citizens and to succeed in the New Virginia Economy.

The Committee's Vision states that Virginia's educational system should include expectations for students in preschool through high school that ensure Virginia's graduates have mastered the necessary skills and knowledge to be active participants in the economy and the community. In the 2015 Recommendations, the Committee recommends the Board of Education, in collaboration with stakeholders representing K-12 education, institutions of higher education, business and industry, policymakers, and community leaders should develop a Profile of a Virginia Graduate.

The 2016 General Assembly has introduced Senate Bill No. 336 and House Bill No. 895 which remove existing provisions related to standard and advanced studies diplomas and standard and verified units of credit and requires the Board of Education to develop and implement a Profile of a Virginia Graduate.

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Appendix B

Engagement Thus Far

In an effort to gather input and feedback for developing a Portrait of a Graduate, staff at the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has engaged two stakeholder groups. In the spring of 2015, VDOE staff met three times to develop an updated draft definition and set of standards for college and career readiness. The new definition and standards include applied skills that focused on Workplace Skills, Community Engagement, and Career Pathways as well as maintaining a focus on Content Knowledge that was included in the 2010 document. This draft was presented to the BOE in October.

In February 2016, VDOE staff engaged a working group of stakeholders to provide feedback and input on the draft college and career ready standards and definition. The second stakeholder group included representation from BOE, Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals (VASSP), VDOE, SOL Innovation Committee, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), Virginia Community College System (VCCS), and the Virginia School Board Association (VSBA). (The Attachment 1 for the notes from the February meeting.)

The feedback from these two stakeholder groups will begin to inform the BOE as they continue to work on their revisions to the SOA. It will take time and more input from other stakeholders around the Commonwealth to create a final document describing the Portrait of a Graduate. As a Portrait of a Graduate and College and Career Ready standards are developed, the information will be collected by BOE to identify knowledge, skills, and competencies students should attain during their K-12 experience and guide the BOE as they revise graduation requirements and diplomas.