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Contact: Charles B. Pyle, Director of Communications, (804) 371-2420
Julie C. Grimes, Communications Manager, (804) 225-2775

VDOE, SCHEV & VCCS Agree on College & Career Ready Performance Expectations for English and Mathematics *Agreement Seen as Key Step in Strategy to Increase College Graduation*

The Virginia agencies responsible for secondary and postsecondary education have approved an agreement on the performance expectations in English and mathematics high school graduates must meet to be successful in freshman-level college courses or career training.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright of the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), State Council of Higher Education Interim Director Andrew B. Fogarty and Virginia Community College System Chancellor Glenn DuBois signed the “Joint Agreement on Virginia’s College and Career Ready Mathematics and English Performance Expectations” this month.

“This agreement will help prepare our young people for postsecondary success, whether that be in college or in a career,” said Governor Bob McDonnell. “It exemplifies the close collaboration between K-12 and higher education that will be necessary to meet my goal of increasing the number of college degrees awarded in Virginia by 100,000 over the next 15 years.”

The agreement signifies the endorsement by all three agencies of specific English and mathematics achievement and performance levels developed by VDOE at the direction of the Board of Education and in collaboration with high school educators, college and university faculty and the business community.

“Students who graduate from high school meeting these expectations will be prepared for freshman-level, credit-bearing courses without remediation,” Wright said. “And young men and women who enter the work force after meeting these expectations will be ready for the training opportunities that will help them advance in a trade or technical career.”

“There is a bipartisan call from our federal and state leaders to produce more college graduates. Elevating the college readiness of high school graduates is critical in both ensuring their individual success as well as our collective ability to meet this challenge and help more people earn postsecondary credentials,” said DuBois.

President Barack Obama also has identified increasing college graduation as a key education policy objective.

The performance expectations are aligned with the commonwealth’s revised Standards of Learning (SOL) for both subjects. These recently revised English and mathematics standards are endorsed by the College Board, ACT, the American Diploma Project and the Southern Regional Education Board as comprising the content knowledge and skills necessary for success in college.

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The performance expectations also are aligned with the national Common Core State Standards developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association and promoted by the U.S. Department of Education.

“The SOLs describe what teachers are expected to teach and what students are expected to learn,” Wright explained. “The performance expectations capture the level of achievement high school students must reach by graduation to be prepared for college-level work.”

The English performance expectations comprise 51 specific objectives organized in strands related to reading, writing, and oral and visual communications skills.

The mathematics expectations consist of 36 objectives grouped in the following strands: problem solving, decision making and integration; understanding and applying functions; procedure and calculation; and verification and proof.

The signing of the agreement is a milestone in the Board of Education and VDOE’s College and Career Readiness Initiative. The initiative also includes the identification of college-and-career-ready benchmark scores on SOL tests in English and mathematics and the development of “capstone courses” for those students who are on track to earn a diploma but are not fully prepared for success in freshman-level college courses.

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