



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

Mark R. Warner
Governor

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PROJECT GRADUATION SUMMER PROGRAMS EXPAND TO MORE LOCATIONS TO HELP MORE STUDENTS GRADUATE

~ Nearly 3,000 students get extra help at Summer Academies to pass SOLs and earn diplomas ~

RICHMOND – Governor Mark R. Warner today announced the significant expansion of Project Graduation into 22 regional academies offered at 57 sites across Virginia. The announcement was made at the Project Graduation summer academy at Clover Hill High School in Chesterfield County. The expanded availability of Project Graduation provides greater convenience for students, focused instruction, and retesting opportunities for rising seniors and members of the class of 2005 who need additional support to meet the Standards of Learning (SOL) requirements for graduation that took effect in 2004.

The Virginia Department of Education estimates that about 3,000 students are taking part in Project Graduation academies this summer. Summer Academies started as a pilot project in 2003 as part of Project Graduation, and moved to a regional system in 2004. This year, the program expanded from eight to 22 regional academies in 57 sites across Virginia.

“We are not letting up in the progress we’ve made with Project Graduation,” said Governor Warner. “Our resolve to ‘walk the extra mile’ with students is just as strong now as it was when we were getting ready for 2004. The students in Project Graduation are putting forth an extra effort to earn a diploma, and we’re going to be with them every step of the way.”

Governor Warner launched Project Graduation in 2003 to identify and assist students at risk of not meeting the SOL graduation requirements that became effective in 2004 – the first consequences of Virginia’s SOL program, put in place in 1995. The initiative includes regional academies for seniors and rising seniors, and online tutorials developed specifically to prepare students for success on the SOL reading test and Algebra I SOL assessment. The academies are funded through state grants to individual school divisions or regional cooperatives.

The 2005 Project Graduation Summer Academies are reporting early successes. Forty-four of the 53 students receiving remedial writing instruction at Clover Hill High School in Chesterfield County have passed the WorkKeys writing assessment, an approved substitute credit toward graduation. At Sherando High School in Frederick County, 12 of 15 writing students have earned a verified writing credit needed for graduation. At a regional academy at

Massaponax High School in Spotsylvania County, all ten students receiving remedial reading instruction passed the SOL reading test.

Last year, 2,178 of the 2,893 students who were at risk of not graduating, and then participated in Project Graduation earned a Standard Diploma.

During 2004-05, more than 7,500 juniors and seniors received remedial reading instruction through the online Project Graduation SOL Reading Tutorial. Teachers' reports indicate that 84 percent of these students subsequently passed the high school SOL reading test and earned one of the six verified units of credit needed for a Standard Diploma.

The new graduation standards require students to earn at least six verified units of credit by passing their courses and SOL tests, or other approved tests, to earn a Standard Diploma. Two of the verified units of credit must be in English reading and writing. Students in the classes of 2005 and 2006 may lean on their strongest subjects, including career and technical education, in earning the other four verified units of credit. There is no limit on how many times a student may retake a test needed for graduation.

For more information about Project Graduation, call 1-866-835-6039 or visit <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/2plus4in2004/>.

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