



The regulations state in part:

8 VAC 20-280-20. Organization and operating procedures.

Two or more school boards, by individual resolution, may establish a joint board to manage and control schools or programs jointly owned and operated in accordance with the following requirements:

1. Membership. . . . When more than three school boards agree to establish a joint board, its membership shall consist of one member from each of the participating school boards. . . .

3. Authority. The joint board shall be authorized to employ the staff required to operate the joint school and programs; purchase supplies; purchase, sell, or dispose of equipment or appliances; determine policies concerning instruction; approve the curriculum in keeping with the general laws, and with regulations, and requirements of the Virginia Board of Education; maintain jointly owned school buildings; and in general to manage, operate, and conduct joint schools and programs.

Except as otherwise provided, all meetings and procedures of the committees for control shall be in accordance with provisions of §§ [22.1-72](#) through [22.1-75](#) of the Code of Virginia.

Any action by the joint committee shall be action by the school boards jointly owning such school, within the provisions of § [22.1-87](#) of the Code of Virginia.

4. Authority of the division superintendent. The division superintendents representing the counties or cities of the school boards which form the joint board shall constitute a Committee of Superintendents and shall jointly exercise the same authority that they have in the counties or cities for which they are appointed. . . .

The Standards of Quality for Public Schools (SOQ) in § 22.1-253.13:4 of the *Code of Virginia* require local school boards to award diplomas to all secondary school students who earn the units of credit prescribed by the Board of Education and meet such other requirements as may be prescribed by the local school board and approved by the Board of Education.

The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, at 8 VAC 20-131-50, state in part:

...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....

In order to graduate from the Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School program, a student must satisfy requirements as defined by the Regional Board and approved by the Virginia Board of Education. The diplomas are awarded by the student’s home school division, but presented to the students in a ceremony at the Governor’s School.

At its meeting on April 24, 2002, the Virginia Board of Education approved a request from the Regional Board to require that students earn a minimum of 29 standard units of credit to be awarded an Advanced Studies Diploma. The 29 credits were distributed as follows:

**Diploma Requirements for Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School**  
Approved by State Board April 24, 2002

<b>English</b> (Four units of credit must include World Literature I and II, American Literature 11 and British Literature 12)	4 units
<b>Mathematics</b> (Four units of credit through a minimum of trigonometry/analysis)	4 units
<b>Science</b> (Four units of credit that must include Biology, Chemistry, and Physics)	4 units
<b>Social Studies</b> (Four units of credit that must include Global Studies I, II, U.S. and VA History, and U.S. and VA Government)	4 units
<b>International Language</b> (Six units of credit with a minimum of four credits in one language (the primary language) and 2 credits in another language (the secondary language))	6 units
<b>Health and PE</b> (9 and 10)	2 units
<b>Fine Arts</b> (Art, drama, music)	1 unit
<b>Foundations of Independent Research and Communication</b> (FIRC)	1 unit
<b>Electives</b>	1 unit
<b>Community Service</b> (Minimum of 140 hours in 4 years. Only 70 hours of credit from one organization will count toward the minimum requirements, although all the hours will be shown on the final transcript)	1 unit
<b>Senior Seminar/Mentorship</b> (Must be completed post-junior year)	1 unit
<b>Total Units Of Credit</b>	<b>29 units</b>

In October 2006, the Virginia Board of Education adopted the *Guidance Document Governing Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*. The guidance document addresses approval of requests from local school boards for additional graduation requirements.

The guidance says in part:

**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.

### **Summary of Major Elements:**

On November 9, 2006, the Regional Board for Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies approved a proposal to increase the number of standard credits required for an Advanced Studies Diploma from 29 to 30, by adding an additional credit in history and social science. The intent was for the requirement to become effective with the ninth-grade class of 2008-2009, however, it became evident recently that the proposal had not been presented to the Virginia Board of Education for approval.

As described above and in the attached documentation, the Regional Board of Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies (MLWGS) is seeking approval from the Virginia Board of Education to require, beginning with the ninth-grade class of 2009-2010, a minimum of 30 standard units of credit, in addition to the 9 required verified credits, in order to be awarded an Advanced Studies Diploma. Such information has already been shared with prospective applicants for 2009-2010 in the *MLWGS Admissions Handbook 2008-2009*. A student who does not satisfy those requirements, but who meets requirements for a Standard Diploma would be awarded that diploma.

Noting that the number of required standard credits for the Advanced Studies Diploma in Virginia will increase effective with the ninth-grade class of 2010-2011, the Regional Board would then increase the required number of credits for an Advanced Studies Diploma from Maggie L. Walker Governor's School from 30 to 31, effective with the ninth-grade class of 2010-2011. The additional standard credit will be for economics and personal finance.

The following table outlines the proposed requirements for ninth-graders entering Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School in 2009-2010, and then compares the proposed increased requirements for entering ninth-graders in 2010-2011 with the increased requirements for an Advanced Studies Diploma.

**Proposed Diploma Requirements for Maggie L. Walker Governor’s School**

	<b>Proposed graduation requirements for 9<sup>th</sup> graders entering MLWGS in 2009-2010</b>	<b>Va. Board of Education requirements for an Advanced Studies Diploma, effective with the 9<sup>th</sup>-grade class of 2010-2011</b>	<b>Proposed graduation requirements for 9<sup>th</sup> graders entering MLWGS in 2010-2011</b>
<b>English</b> (Four units of credit must include World Literature I and II, American Literature 11 and British Literature 12)	4 units	4 units	4 units
<b>Mathematics</b> (Four units of credit through a minimum of trigonometry/analysis)	4 units	4 units	4 units
<b>Science</b> (Four units of credit that must include Biology, Chemistry, and Physics)	4 units	4 units	4 units
<b>Social Studies</b> ( <del>Four</del> Five units of credit that must include Global Studies I, II, U.S. and VA History, and U.S. and VA Government, and one elective)	4-5 units	4 units	5 units
<b>International Language</b> (Six units of credit with a minimum of four credits in one language (the primary language) and 2 credits in another language (the secondary language))	6 units	3 units	6 units
<b>Health and PE (9 and 10)</b>	2 units	2 units	2 units
<b>Fine Arts (for MLWGS) (Art, drama, music)</b>	1 unit	---	1 unit
<b>Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education (for Advanced Studies Diploma)</b>	---	1 unit	---
<b>Economics and Personal Finance</b>	---	1 unit	1 unit
<b>Foundations of Independent Research and Communication (FIRC)</b>	1 unit	--	1 unit
<b>Electives</b>	1 unit	2 units	1 unit
<b>Community Service</b> (Minimum of 140 hours in 4 years. Only 70 hours of credit from one organization will count toward the minimum requirements, although all the hours will be shown on the final transcript)	1 unit	--	1 unit
<b>Senior Seminar/Mentorship</b> (Must be completed post-junior year)	1 unit	--	1 unit
<b>Total Units of Standard Credit</b>	<b>29 30 units</b>	<b>26 units</b>	<b>31 units</b>
<b>Total Units of Verified Credit as Prescribed by 8 VAC 20-131-50 of the Standards of Accreditation</b>	<b>9 units</b>	<b>9 units</b>	<b>9 units</b>

While students who entered the program as ninth-graders in 2008-2009 have received advance notice of the increased requirements, they will graduate under the requirements in effect at their

time of entry (29 credits), since the increased requirement had not yet been approved by the Board of Education.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board waive first review and approve the request to increase the graduation requirements for Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies by requiring students to earn 30 standard credits, including 5 credits in history and social science, and nine verified credits beginning with the ninth-grade class of 2009-2010. Effective with the entering ninth-grade class of 2010-2011, one credit in economics and personal finance will be added as required by the Board of Education, for a total of 31 standard credits and 9 verified credits required to graduate from Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies.

**Impact on Resources:**

There is no impact on resources at the Department of Education.

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**

Staff at the Department of Education will notify the Regional Board of Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies of the Board of Education's action.



## GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL for Government & International Studies

April 16, 2009

Dr. Patricia I. Wright  
Superintendent  
Department of Education  
P O Box 2120  
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120



Dear Dr. Wright,

Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies (MLWGS) is seeking approval to add a one credit requirement beyond the statewide social studies graduation requirements for the Advanced Studies Diploma. The increased course requirement would be added to the 29 credits approved by the Board of Education on April 24, 2002 (Attachment A - page 52). This new requirement in social studies is an additional "area requirement" rather than a new "course requirement."

### **Background Information:**

The Virginia Department of Education full-site evaluation of MLWGS (October 2005) recommendations "tend to center on reviewing the mission statement of the school to provide leadership in government and international studies." These recommendations include that "MLWGS offer a wider variety of global history and international studies electives to support the mission of the school as a government and international studies program." The MLWGS advanced study diploma requirements approved in 2002 exceed the state requirements in the following areas: (1) International Languages (3 credits), (2) Foundations of Interdisciplinary Research and Communication (1 credit), (3) Senior Seminar/Mentorship (1 credit), and (4) Community Service (1 credit). The required four credits in history and social studies remained at the minimum for the Virginia Advanced Studies Diploma. A student who does not satisfy the MLWGS advanced study requirements but meets those of the State Board of Education are awarded a Standard Diploma at MLWGS.

In analyzing the transcripts for the last three graduating classes, it was found that 70-80% of the students completed at least five credits in the social studies area. Additionally, it was found that the majority of freshmen entering MLWGS bring two or more high school credits with them that count towards the 29 required credits. With the eight period schedule, students complete the 28 credits (with one independent study period each year) to 32 additional credits during the four year period. The majority of students have the opportunity to take five or more electives during the four years. The number and variety of social studies electives, as well as number of faculty in this area, have been increased over

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the past five years. The proposed graduation requirement increase was shared and discussed with faculty, parents, and students during the spring of 2006.

During the fall of 2006, the proposal was considered and supported by the Regional Planning Committee (Gifted Program Administrators for 11 participating school divisions) and the Superintendent's Steering Committee. They recommended that the change in requirements be advertized as applying to the students entering MLWGS in school years 2008-09 (Class of 2012) and beyond. The proposal was shared with the Regional Board at their September meeting. On November 9, 2006 the Regional Board "approved the proposal for the change of the graduation requirements by adding one social studies credit required for graduation for the class of 2012" (Attachment B).

Advanced notice of the change in graduation requirements was provided to all applicants for the MLWGS Class of 2012 through the MLWGS *Admissions Handbook 2008-09* (Attachment C - page 4) and all public presentations to perspective students and their parents. A student who does not satisfy those requirements but meets those of the State Board of Education will still be awarded a Standard Diploma at MLWGS.

**Request:**

The Regional Board of Maggie L. Walker Governor's School for Government and International Studies respectively requests the approval of the Virginia Board of Education to change the graduation requirement approved in 2002 by adding one social studies credit required for graduation beginning with the class of 2012.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If there are questions or other documentation needed, please contact me at (804) 354-6800 Ext. 2180 or [dhunt@gsgis.k12.va.us](mailto:dhunt@gsgis.k12.va.us).

Sincerely,



N. Douglas Hunt, Director



Ivan Mattox, Chair  
MLWGS Regional Board

Cc: Mark Emblidge, President  
Virginia Board of Education