



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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October 26, 2005

Thomas M. Jackson, Jr.
President

The Honorable Mark R. Warner
Governor of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Members of the General Assembly of Virginia
State Capitol Building
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Warner and Members of the General Assembly:

I am pleased to advise you that the Board of Education is considering several revisions to the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* addressing career and technical education, in accordance with Senate Bill 1045 and Senate Joint Resolution 403, passed during the 2005 General Assembly. The changes include the following:

- Proposed revisions to 8 VAC 20-131-50 would allow students to earn a verified credit for the student-selected course if they complete a career and technical program sequence and earn an industry certification, state license, or occupational competency credential, regardless of whether the student is seeking a standard or an advanced studies diploma.

The proposed revision says: "A student may utilize additional tests for earning verified credit in computer science, technology, career and technical education or other areas as prescribed by the board in 8 VAC 20-131-110-B."

- 8 VAC 20-131-50 would also allow the student seeking a standard diploma to substitute the industry certification, state license, or occupational competency credential for the verified credit in science or history and social science when the industry certification, license, or credential confers more than one verified credit.

The proposed revision says: “Students who complete a career and technical program sequence and pass an examination or occupational competency assessment in a career and technical education field that confers certification or an occupational competency credential from a recognized industry, or trade or professional association or acquires a professional license in a career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia may substitute the certification, competency credential, or license for (1) the student selected verified credit and (2) either a science or history and social science verified credit when the certification, license, or credential confers more than one verified credit. The examination or occupational competency assessment must be approved by the Board of Education as an additional test to verify student achievement.”

- The requirements for the Board of Education’s Career and Technical Education Seal would be revised, in 8 VAC 20-131-50, to clarify that the student may pass an occupational competency exam, or earn an industry certification or state license to earn the Board of Education’s Career and Technical Education diploma

The proposed revision says: “The Board of Education's Career and Technical Education Seal will be awarded to students who earn a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma and complete a prescribed sequence of courses in a career and technical education concentration or specialization that they choose and maintain a "B" or better average in those courses; or (i) pass an examination or an occupational competency assessment in a career and technical education concentration or specialization that confers certification or occupational competency credential from a recognized industry, trade or professional association or (ii) acquire a professional license in that career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia.”

- 8 VAC 20-131-140 would require counseling of students about the opportunities for obtaining industry certifications, occupational competency credentials, or professional licenses in career and technical education fields.

The proposed revisions says, “Beginning in the middle school years, students shall be counseled on opportunities for beginning postsecondary education and opportunities for obtaining industry certifications, occupational competency credentials, or professional licenses in a career and technical education field prior to high school graduation.”

- 8 VAC 20-131-270 would require schools to provide information on the School Report Card on the number of students obtaining industry certifications and passing state licensure assessments and occupational competency assessments while still in high school.

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The proposed revision states: "...In addition, secondary schools' School Performance Report Cards shall include the following: ...information on the number of students obtaining industry certifications, and passing state licensure examinations and occupational competency assessments while still in high school..."

This information has been collected for the senior class of 2005, and will be included on the school report cards this fall.

The full text of the proposed regulations is enclosed, and may also be found at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Accountability/soa.html>. The proposed regulations are now proceeding through the regulatory process, in accordance with the Administrative Process Act. Final approval by the Board of Education is expected this winter.

I am also pleased to advise you that the Board of Education has continued to approve additional industry certifications, examinations, and occupational competency assessments from the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) examinations for the student-selected verified credit. Currently, the Board has approved almost 200 industry certifications, examinations, and NOCTI examinations.

A complete list of the industry certifications, examinations, and occupational competency assessments from the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) examinations approved by the Board of Education is enclosed, and may also be found at www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/CTE/memos/seals/certifications.doc

If you have questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me or Anne Wescott, assistant superintendent for policy and communications at (804) 225-2403 or Anne.Wescott@doe.virginia.gov.

On behalf of the Board of Education, I want to thank you for your support for career and technical education in Virginia's public schools.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. Jackson, Jr.
President
Virginia Board of Education

TMJ/MMV/jcj

Enclosures

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 403

Requesting the Board of Education to study the permanent use of industry certifications and state licensure tests for the award of verified units of credit in the public schools. Report.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 8, 2005

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 24, 2005

WHEREAS, Article VIII, Section 1 of the Constitution of Virginia requires that the Commonwealth shall provide for a "system of free public elementary and secondary schools for all children of school age throughout the Commonwealth, and shall seek to ensure that an educational program of high quality is established and continually maintained"; and

WHEREAS, essential to meeting the constitutional responsibilities for education of Virginia's children, the Commonwealth declares in Standard 1 of the Standards of Quality, (§ 22.1-253.13:1 of the Code of Virginia) that "Local school boards shall . . . implement . . . [c]ompetency-based career and technical education programs that integrate academic outcomes, career guidance and job-seeking skills for all secondary students."; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Education has authorized the substitution of industry certification examinations and state licensure examinations for Standards of Learning verified units of credit to obtain a high school diploma; and

WHEREAS, it is generally acknowledged that industry certifications and state licensure requirements are credible standards of performance that compare favorably with the goals and purposes of the Standards of Quality, the Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, and the Standards of Learning; and

WHEREAS, the economic future of Virginia and the nation will be increasingly dependent on having skilled workers with both improved academic and technical training; and

WHEREAS, our educational system will be challenged to make major changes to meet the need for skilled workers who are prepared to meet the challenges of evolving technology; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Board of Education be requested to study the permanent use of industry certifications and state licensure tests for the award of verified units of credit in the public schools.

In conducting its study, the Board of Education shall (i) examine the suitability of additional industry testing programs that could be used as substitute tests for students to earn verified units of credit for graduation; (ii) determine how to increase the emphasis on career and technical education for creating greater equity and applicability to the verified credit system, including, but not limited to, consideration of increasing the number of potential verified credits obtained through industry certifications; and (iii) consider these issues as it reviews and amends the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, commonly known as the Standards of Accreditation.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the Board of Education by all agencies of the Commonwealth for this study, upon request.

The Board of Education shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2005, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the 2006 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.