

*Standards
for Accrediting
Public Schools
in Virginia*

July 1988

*Commonwealth of Virginia
Department of Education
Richmond, VA 23216-2060*

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**Adopted by the Board of Education
June 19, 1987**

Amended May 27, 1988

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Foreword

School accreditation is one of the most important programs that we have for improving the quality of public education throughout Virginia.

The authority for the program resides in the provision of the State Code which states that the Board of Education "shall provide for the accreditation of public elementary and secondary schools in accordance with standards prescribed by it."

The standards included in this bulletin represent a vital part of the Board of Education's program to provide quality education for students in the public schools.

The new standards require, among other things, greater accountability for the quality of education provided by each public school; greater emphasis on Virginia, U.S. and World Geography; guidance and counseling for elementary school students who need such services; literacy testing; and an additional unit of credit in either fine or practical arts for high school graduation.

Most of the new standards became effective on July 1, 1988. Standards that were in effect since July 1, 1984, continued to be applicable until July 1, 1988.

The requirements for literacy testing for sixth-grade students and several other major revisions in the standards reflect recommendations made in the fall of 1986 by the Governor's Commission on Excellence in Education.

Special appreciation is expressed to the members of the Statewide Planning Council who assisted in developing the recommendations that were presented to the Board, to the professional educators and citizens who offered suggestions, and to staff personnel of the Department of Education who contributed in many ways during the lengthy process of revising the standards.

S. JOHN DAVIS

Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Introduction

These standards, with certain exceptions as cited in this document, shall become effective beginning with the 1988-89 school year. Localities may implement these standards immediately with the exception of those that increase graduation requirements for students and with the exception of Standard C/11 that allows for alternatives to the standard school year of 180 days. Students who complete the ninth grade prior to 1988-89 may earn a diploma by meeting the graduation requirements in effect when they entered the ninth grade. Students who completed ninth, tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grade courses before the ninth grade under the 1983 Standards shall be awarded credit for those courses under the provisions of these standards. These standards will be reviewed again in 1990 or sooner, if deemed necessary, by the Board of Education.

Purpose of Accreditation

The standards for accreditation of public schools in Virginia are designed to provide a foundation for quality education. Accreditation standards provide guidance and direction to assist schools in their continuing efforts to offer educational programs to meet the needs, interests, and aspirations of all students. The accreditation standards are designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. Seek to ensure that schools provide educational programs of high quality for all students.
2. Encourage continuous appraisal and improvement of the school program.
3. Foster public confidence.
4. Assure recognition by other institutions of learning.
5. Assist in determining the effectiveness of schools.*

*The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall develop and the Board of Education shall approve criteria for determining the effectiveness of the Commonwealth's public schools. Such criteria, when approved, shall become an integral part of the accreditation process and shall include student outcome measurements. In the 1990-91 school year or one year following the approval by the Board of such criteria, whichever is later, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall annually identify to the Board those schools that exceed or do not meet the approved criteria. From such funds as are identified in the appropriations act for this purpose, a program of one-time grants shall be established by the Board to assist local school boards in the implementation of corrective action plans for those schools that are designated as not meeting the approved criteria.

Requirements for Accreditation

Section 22.1-19 of the Code of Virginia includes the requirement that the Board of Education shall provide for the accreditation of public elementary and secondary schools in accordance with standards prescribed by it.

The *Standards of Quality* specify that each school division shall maintain schools which meet those requirements for accreditation prescribed by the Board of Education.

Procedures for Accreditation

Reports and Accreditation Status

The principal of each school shall submit school accreditation reports, through the division superintendent, to the Department of Education. A Summer School Accreditation Report shall be submitted for each summer program conducted and shall be a part of the accreditation report for the regular school session immediately following the summer session. Report forms will be provided by the Department of Education. Failure to submit the reports on time will constitute grounds for withholding accreditation.

Information included in the reports, as well as that obtained through other records and through visits by Department of Education personnel or other designated representatives of the Board of Education, will be used to determine the accreditation status of each school in accordance with tolerances approved by the Board of Education. Schools will be accredited, accredited with advisement, or accredited with a warning, depending on the extent of existing deficiencies. Each school division shall develop by July first of the next school year a written corrective action plan, acceptable to the Board of Education, for any school that is accredited with a warning. A school division not implementing the approved corrective action plan as specified for any such school will lose accreditation status for that school and will be in violation of state law. No school in the warned category shall be permitted to maintain accreditation for more than one year.

Schools shall be accredited annually. The Board of Education may require immediate corrective action or change of accreditation status whenever significant deficiencies are reported by representatives of the Department of Education. Schools that lose their accredited status shall be considered for reaccreditation when subsequent reports and visits by Department of Education personnel reveal that prescribed standards are being met. The local school board shall review annually in public session the implementation of accreditation standards.

When a school applies for initial accreditation, a representative of the Department of Education shall visit the school to review the accreditation standards and procedures with the principal. A school with the number of deficiencies that would place it in the warned status will not be accepted for initial accreditation.

Self-Study and Review

A self-study followed by a review by the Department of Education is required for all schools every 10 years. The process shall be conducted using criteria developed or approved by the Department of Education and shall be followed by a written progress report and a review within five years. School divisions that have their own procedure for the process may request approval to use it in lieu of the state process for the five year report.

Application of the Standards

These standards apply to schools for all grade levels, K-12, as listed below:

1. Schools with grades K-5 shall meet elementary school standards;
2. Schools with grades 6-8 shall meet middle school standards;
3. Schools with grades 9-12 shall meet secondary school standards.

Schools with grade patterns other than those listed above shall meet elementary, middle, or secondary school standards as determined by the Accreditation Service of the Department of Education.

Standards that are not appropriate to special education or to vocational and alternative programs housed in separate facilities will not be applied so long as state regulations governing services to the students enrolled are met.

Except for the biennial school plan required by Standard D.8, written division-wide plans available in and applicable to each school may be used to satisfy all other written plans required in these standards.

School and Community Relations

STANDARD A

Each school shall have in effect a written plan that promotes interaction with the community and that fosters mutual understanding in providing a quality educational program.

Criteria:

1. Parents, citizens, and representatives from business and industry shall be provided opportunities to participate on advisory committees, in curriculum studies, and in evaluating the educational program.
2. A written plan shall be provided for interpreting the school program to the community.
3. A close working relationship shall be maintained between the school and other community agencies that provide services to students.
4. Schools shall have written plans for cooperating with business and industry in formulating educational programs and conducting joint enterprises involving personnel, facilities, training programs, and other resources.
5. The staff shall be responsible for using the resources of the community and involving parents and citizens in the following:
 - a. Evaluating the school program, and
 - b. Developing the biennial school plan.
6. The school shall encourage and support the establishment of a Parent-Teacher Association/Organization and shall work cooperatively with it.

Philosophy, Goals, and Objectives

STANDARD B

Each school shall have current written statements of its philosophy and objectives that shall serve as the basis for all school policies and practices.

Criteria:

1. The philosophy and objectives shall be developed with the advice of concerned and interested professional and lay people who represent the various populations served by the school.
2. The school's philosophy and objectives shall be consistent with the *Standards of Quality* and the philosophy and objectives of the school division.
3. The school's philosophy and objectives shall be based on a realistic and systematic needs assessment.
4. The objectives for students shall be stated in terms of skills, abilities, and attitudes to be developed.
5. The school staff and community representatives shall review biennially the philosophy and objectives of the school and shall revise them as needed.
6. Copies of the school's philosophy and objectives shall be available to staff members, students, and parents.
7. The school's philosophy and objectives shall be the basis for the biennial school plan.

Instructional Program

STANDARD C

Each school shall provide a planned and balanced program of instruction that is in keeping with the abilities, interests, and educational needs of students and that promotes individual student achievement.

Criteria:

1. Each elementary school shall provide instruction in the following subjects:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Art | Music |
| Health | Physical Education |
| Language Arts | Science |
| Mathematics | Social Studies (to include Virginia and U.S. Geography) |

In grades 1–3, reading, writing, spelling, listening, speaking, and mathematics shall be the core of the program. Phonics shall be taught in reading. All other subjects shall be taught emphasizing reading and the other language skills.

Students not reading at or above grade level after grade 3, as determined by local or state assessment, shall receive additional instruction in reading.

2. Each middle level school shall provide a program of learning experiences organized to meet the needs of early adolescence and shall provide instruction in the following subjects:

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Art | Music |
| Health | Physical Education |
| Language Arts | Science (Laboratory) |
| Mathematics | Social Studies (to include World Geography) |
| Vocational Education | |
| Foreign Language* | |

The eighth grade shall provide a minimum of eight offerings in five academic areas (language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and electives), health and physical education, fine arts, and vocational education.

Students not reading at or above grade level, as determined by local or state assessment, shall receive additional instruction in reading.

*Level one of a foreign language shall be available to all 8th-grade students. An exploratory foreign language offering is encouraged for students below grade 8, but will not be required until electronic classroom technology makes this program available.

3. Each secondary school shall offer options for students to pursue a program of studies in several academic and vocational areas. These options shall include the following:
 - a. Vocational education choices that prepare the student with a marketable skill in one of three or more occupational areas;
 - b. Academic choices that prepare the student for technical or pre-professional programs of higher education;
 - c. Liberal arts choices that prepare the student for college-level studies in the arts and sciences;
 - d. Access to at least two Advanced Placement courses or two college-level courses for credit;
 - e. Preparation for Scholastic Aptitude Tests, including as a minimum, a review of appropriate English and mathematics principles and instructions in taking the tests, shall be available for students.

Minimum course offerings for each secondary school shall be as follows:

| | <u>9-12</u> |
|--|-------------|
| Academic Subjects | 23 |
| English | (4) |
| Mathematics | (4) |
| Science (Laboratory) | (4) |
| Social Studies (to include World History | (4) |
| and World Geography) | |
| Foreign Language | (3) |
| Electives | (4) |
| Vocational Education | 11 |
| Fine Arts | 2 |
| Health and Physical Education | <u>2</u> |
| Total Units | 38 |

Students not reading at or above grade level, as determined by local or state assessment, shall receive additional instruction in reading.

When health and physical education are taught as a combination class, at least 40 percent of the instructional time shall be devoted to health education. Classroom driver education may count for 36 class periods of health education. Students should not be removed from classes in required courses other than health and physical education for the in-car phase of driver education.

The social studies offering shall include at least one-half unit in economics.

4. The standard unit of credit for graduation shall be based on a minimum of 150 clock hours of instruction. When credit is awarded in less than whole units, the increment awarded must be no greater than the fractional part of the 150 hours of instruction provided. If a school division elects to award

credit on a basis other than the standard unit of credit, the locality shall develop a written policy approved by the superintendent and school board which ensures:

- a. that the content of the course for which credit is awarded is comparable to 150 clock hours of instruction; and
 - b. that upon completion, the student will have met the aims and objectives of the course as validated by passing an appropriate test.
5. The summer school program shall be equal in quality to the program offered during the regular school term:
- a. One unit of new credit per summer session shall be the maximum for which a student may enroll unless prior approval is obtained from the principal to enroll in more than one.
 - b. Credit for repeated work ordinarily will be granted on the same basis as that for new work. With prior approval of the principal, certain students may be allowed to enroll in two repeat subjects to be completed in not less than 75 clock hours of instruction per unit of credit.
 - c. Summer school instruction which is provided as part of a remedial program shall be designed to improve specific identified student deficiencies.
6. Locally developed elective courses offered for credit toward high school graduation shall be approved by the division superintendent and school board. When suitable course code numbers for reporting purposes cannot be found in the *School Administrators Handbook of Course Codes and Endorsement Codes*, they will be assigned, upon request, through the Accreditation Service of the Department of Education.
7. Beginning in the middle-school years, students shall be counseled as to opportunities for beginning postsecondary education prior to high school graduation. Students taking advantage of such opportunities shall not be denied participation in school activities for which they are otherwise eligible. Wherever possible, students shall be encouraged and afforded opportunities to take college courses simultaneously for high school graduation and college degree credit, under the following conditions:
- a. prior written approval of the high school principal for the cross-registration must be obtained;
 - b. the college must accept the student for admission to the course(s); and
 - c. the course must be given by the college for degree credit (hence, no remedial courses will be accepted).

Schools that comply with this standard shall not be penalized in receiving state appropriations. Schools and colleges are strongly encouraged to

provide such opportunities to the secondary school students at no tuition cost to the individual or his or her family.

8. The secondary school vocational education program shall be competency-based so that students can develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for employment and/or advanced occupational preparation.
9. Each middle and secondary school shall provide for the early identification and enrollment of students in a college preparation program with a range of educational and academic experiences in and outside the classroom, including an emphasis on experiences that will motivate disadvantaged and minority students to attend college.
10. Each school shall have a program designed to improve the academic achievement and aspirations of culturally disadvantaged students.
11. The standard school year shall be 180 days. The standard school day for students in grades 1–12 shall average at least 5½ hours, excluding intermissions for meals and a minimum of 3 hours for kindergarten. School divisions may develop alternative schedules for meeting these requirements as long as a minimum of 990 hours of instructional time is provided for grades 1–12 and 540 hours for kindergarten. Such alternative plans must be approved by the local school board and by the Board of Education, under guidelines established by the Board of Education.
12. All students in grades 1–12 shall maintain a full-day schedule of classes (5½ hours), unless a waiver is granted by the local superintendent of schools.
13. Each school shall implement *Standards of Learning Objectives* or locally developed objectives that are equivalent to or exceed Board of Education requirements.
14. Each school shall make available a remediation program, which may include summer school, to reduce the number of students who score in the bottom national quartile on Virginia State Assessment Program Tests and/or those who fail the state's literacy tests.
15. Each school shall prepare and adhere to a written plan to teach appropriate writing skills at every grade level which shall include specific requirements and which culminates with a research paper in grade 11 or 12. Further, each student shall be required to make an oral presentation on the research paper before an adult and/or student audience.
16. Each school shall implement career education that promotes students' awareness and/or knowledge of careers and the consequences and implications of leaving school without marketable skills.
17. Each school shall provide for the early identification of gifted students and enrollment of such students in challenging instructional programs taught by teachers with special training or experience in working with gifted students.

18. Each school shall provide for the early identification of handicapped students and enrollment of such students in appropriate instructional programs, as required by law.
19. By graduation, each student shall receive instruction designed to help him or her achieve the objectives outlined in *Computer Literacy for Students in Virginia* issued by the Department of Education.
20. Each school shall implement the Standards of Learning for the Family Life Education program promulgated by the Board of Education or a Family Life Education program consistent with the guidelines developed by the Board of Education in December, 1987.
21. Homebound instruction shall be made available to students who are confined for periods that would prevent normal educational progress. Homebound instruction shall be approved for credit, provided Board of Education regulations governing such instruction are met.
22. When approved by the principal, students may be allowed to enroll in supervised correspondence courses in subjects not available to them through the school's schedule. Credit may be awarded for the successful completion of such courses when the work is done under the supervision of a certified teacher approved by local school authorities.
23. Homework shall be governed by a written school board policy developed with the advice of parents and teachers. The policy shall include guidelines for the amount and timing of homework and shall outline the responsibility of students, teachers, and parents.
24. Experimental and innovative programs that are in conflict with accreditation standards shall be submitted to the Department of Education for approval prior to implementation. The request must include the purpose, objectives, outline, and evaluation procedures for the programs and must be approved by the local school board.
25. Each school shall provide a variety of materials and equipment to support the instructional program.
26. School-sponsored extracurricular activities shall be under the direct supervision of the staff and shall contribute to the educational objectives of the school. Extracurricular activities must be organized to avoid interrupting the instructional program. Extracurricular activities shall not be permitted to interfere with the student's required instructional activities. Extracurricular activities and eligibility requirements shall be established and approved by the superintendent and the school board. Activities which help a student meet the objectives of the course may be considered part of the instructional program; they are not considered extracurricular activities as long as they do not interfere with instruction in other courses.
27. Competitive sports of a varsity nature (scheduled league games) shall be prohibited as a part of the elementary school program.

Instructional Leadership

STANDARD D

The principal shall be responsible for instructional leadership and effective school management that promotes achievement of individual students.

Criteria:

1. An atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy shall be a primary goal of the school, and the administrative staff shall make every effort to achieve it.
2. The principal shall establish and include in the teachers' handbook procedures to protect instructional time from interruptions and intrusions.
3. The principal or his/her designee shall prepare and adhere to a written plan involving greater use of aides, volunteers, part-time instructors, and technology to assist teachers.
4. The regular school day shall be limited to teaching and learning activities.
5. The principal or his/her designee shall monitor and evaluate the quality of instruction through the following:
 - a. The establishment of written objectives for each teacher, developed cooperatively by the teacher and the administrator;
 - b. A systematic program of classroom observation and follow-up consultation with each teacher;
 - c. In-service training and professional assistance and support designed to improve instruction;
 - d. Analysis and use of data on pupil achievement;
 - e. An evaluation of each teacher at least every two years or in accordance with a schedule approved by the Department of Education.
6. At least 40 percent of the time of the principal and an average of 40 percent of the time of the assistant principal(s) shall be devoted to supervision of instruction and curriculum development.
7. The principal shall analyze test scores and develop plans to improve them when needed. Plans shall be submitted to the local school division superintendent.
8. The principal or his/her designee shall prepare and adhere to a written biennial school plan, approved by the division superintendent.
9. The principal or his/her designee shall be responsible for using the resources of the community and for involving parents and citizens in the educational program, as indicated in Standard A.

10. Each school shall prepare and adhere to written procedures to recognize and reward the scholastic achievements of students.
11. The principal or his/her designee shall demonstrate high expectations for all students.
12. The principal or his/her designee shall act to reduce the number of students who drop out of school by:
 - a. Including dropout prevention programs in the biennial school plan and implementing these programs;
 - b. Providing alternative programs with emphasis on basic skills for students who are not successful in regular instructional programs;
 - c. Providing counseling services that motivate students to stay in school;
 - d. Establishing and maintaining close contact with parents of potential dropouts;
 - e. Conducting interviews with potential dropouts and with students who are dropping out of school;
 - f. Maintaining records of dropouts, including actions taken to prevent students from dropping out of school, and their reasons for leaving school;
 - g. Other activities deemed appropriate by local school authorities.
13. The principal or his/her designee, with the advice of parents, shall develop a written procedure for referring for treatment students identified as involved in substance abuse.
14. Each member of the administrative staff shall participate annually in state and/or local in-service programs designed specifically for administrators.
15. Each school shall maintain a current handbook of policies and procedures that includes the school division's standards of student conduct and procedures for enforcement, along with other matters of interest to parents and students.
16. Each school shall maintain records of receipts and disbursements of funds handled. These records shall be audited annually by a professional accountant approved by the local school board.
17. Each school shall maintain a current record of certification, endorsement, and in-service training of the staff.
18. Fund-raising activities that involve elementary students in door-to-door solicitation shall be prohibited and so stated in the school handbook.
19. Each school shall have a written procedure to be followed when students or staff are injured or become ill and keep documentation of all injuries that occur at school and on school buses.

20. Each school shall have at least two full-time staff members who have attended and successfully completed courses approved by the State Board of Health in all of the following: cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), Heimlich maneuver, and basic first aid.

Delivery of Instruction

STANDARD E

The staff shall provide instruction that is educationally sound in an atmosphere conducive to learning and in which students are expected to achieve.

Criteria:

1. Mutual respect, courtesy, and a genuine concern for all students shall be evident in the learning environment.
2. Staff members shall serve as models for effective oral and written communication with special attention to correct use of language and spelling.
3. Teachers of all subjects shall strive to strengthen the basic skills of students.
4. Daily teaching objectives shall be established to achieve the following:
 - a. Identify what students are expected to learn;
 - b. Inform students of the learning expected and keep them engaged in learning tasks;
 - c. Enable the teacher to spend the maximum time possible in the teaching/learning process by keeping to a minimum disruptions, clerical responsibilities, and the time students are out of class.
5. The staff shall provide for individual differences of students through the use of varied materials and activities suitable to their interests and abilities.
6. The staff shall assess the progress of students and report promptly and constructively to them and their parents.
7. The staff shall demonstrate a high expectation of learning for all students.
8. The staff should demonstrate the qualities of patriotism, honesty, and fair play and expect the same of all students.
9. Classroom activities shall be structured and monitored to minimize disruptive behavior.
10. Inappropriate behavior by a student shall be responded to quickly and consistently without demeaning the student responsible for the behavior.
11. Each school shall establish a broad-based process for determining the particular guidance and counseling needs of its students and for planning how best to meet these needs. Guidance and counseling shall be provided for all students as needed to achieve the following:
 - a. Ensure that individual curriculum planning is provided at the middle and secondary level to assist each student in selecting appropriate and challenging courses;

- b. Provide opportunities for parents, teachers, and other adults to participate in planned activities that encourage the personal, social, educational, and career development of students;
 - c. Provide employment counseling and placement services to furnish information about employment opportunities available to students graduating from or leaving school;
 - d. Provide for the coordination of a testing program that includes orientation to test-taking, use of test data, and the interpretation and use of student records data;
 - e. Provide for the evaluation of the guidance program by the principal, counselor(s), staff, and parents;
 - f. Ensure that at least 60 percent of the time of each member of the guidance staff shall be devoted to counseling of students;
 - g. Ensure that each student has a balanced program of studies each year, including at least one mathematics or laboratory science course in grade 11 or 12.
12. The library media center shall be organized as the resource center of the school and shall provide a unified program of media services and activities for students and teachers before, during, and after school. The library media center shall have the following:
- a. An average monthly circulation of print and nonprint materials equal to at least 70 percent of the school membership;
 - b. A schedule that provides for library use by all students;
 - c. A written policy for the selection, evaluation, withdrawal, and disposal of all instructional materials purchased by the school division, with clearly stated procedures for handling challenged, controversial materials;
 - d. Cataloging of all library media in the school, which promotes accessibility and ease of retrieval, including a functional loan system, an annual inventory of materials and equipment, and a procedure for screening and discarding media;
 - e. An information file that reflects curriculum needs and contains pamphlets, clippings, pictures, and information about local resources;
 - f. A minimum of two complete sets of encyclopedias, one of which has been copyrighted within the last five years;
 - g. An unabridged dictionary and abridged dictionaries;
 - h. Newspaper subscription(s) providing daily, local, state, and national news;

- i. Fifteen subscriptions to periodicals for elementary schools and 25 subscriptions for middle and secondary schools that are pertinent to the school program;
- j. A current and accessible professional library in each school, or in a centralized instructional media center in the school division;
- k. Materials such as prints, charts, posters, recordings (disc and tape), filmstrips, multimedia kits, models, study prints, slides, transparencies, videotapes, videodiscs, computer software, and maps and globes that are carefully selected to meet the needs of the instructional program;
- l. Collection requirements (20% of which may be nonprint instructional material) for each library media center shall be as follows:
 - (1) Ten books per student in elementary schools;
 - (2) In middle and secondary schools, a basic collection of 1,000 well-selected titles. (In schools with more than 150 students there shall be a minimum of seven books per student);
 - (3) Fifty percent of the minimum basic collection shall be available for circulation during the first semester in a new school.
- m. Librarians involved with teachers and administrators in planning the school curriculum;
- n. Functional equipment to support the use of audiovisual materials.

Student Achievement

STANDARD F

Each school shall provide learning objectives to be achieved by students at successive levels of development and shall continually assess the progress of each student in relation to these objectives and the goals of education in Virginia.

The goals of public education in Virginia are to aid each pupil to the full extent of his or her abilities to accomplish the following:

- Develop competence in the basic learning skills;
- Develop the intellectual skills of rational thought and creativity;
- Acquire knowledge and process skills of science and technology;
- Acquire broad knowledge and understanding of the Humanities;
- Progress on the basis of achievement;
- Graduate from high school and qualify for further education and/or employment;
- Develop personal standards of ethical behavior and moral choice;
- Participate in society as a responsible family member and citizen;
- Develop a positive and realistic concept of self and others;
- Acquire an appreciation for and a sensitivity to people of various races;
- Practice sound habits of personal health and physical fitness;
- Enhance the quality of the environment;
- Develop skills, knowledge, and attitudes regarding the arts;
- Acquire a basic understanding and appreciation of democracy and the free enterprise system.

Criteria:

1. Students shall pass literacy tests in reading, writing, and mathematics in order to be promoted to the 9th grade except for identified handicapped students who are progressing according to the objectives of their individualized education program (IEP). Students transferring to a Virginia public school prior to the 9th grade shall also be required to pass the literacy tests in order to be promoted to the 9th grade. Students who are not promoted shall be enrolled in alternative programs leading to one or more of the following:
 - a. Passing the literacy tests;
 - b. High School Graduation;

- c. General Educational Development (GED) Certificate;
 - d. Certificate of Program Completion;
 - e. Job-entry skills.
2. To graduate from high school, a student shall meet the minimum requirements for the 21-credit diploma outlined below for grades 9–12. Students who graduate with an average grade of “B” or better will receive a Board of Education Seal on the diploma.

| | <u>9–12</u> |
|--|-------------|
| English | 4 |
| Mathematics* | 2 |
| Laboratory Science* | 2 |
| Math or Science** | 1 |
| Social Studies: | 3 |
| Virginia and United States History-1, Virginia and United States Government-1, World Studies, (World Cultures, World History, or World Geography)-1 | |
| Health and Physical Education | 2 |
| Fine Arts or Practical Arts* | 1 |
| Electives | <u>6</u> |
| Total Units | 21 |

*Must be selected from a list of courses approved for graduation requirements by the Board of Education. Only one year of a course in general mathematics may be used to meet the mathematics requirement.

**Must be selected from a list of courses approved for graduation requirements by the Board of Education or, as an alternative, this requirement may be met by completing an appropriate sequence of courses in vocational education or JROTC.

3. Each secondary school shall offer as an elective for students, an Advanced Studies Program which requires a minimum of 23 units of credit as outlined below for grades 9–12. Students who graduate with an average grade of “B” or better and successfully complete at least one advanced placement course (AP) or one college-level course for credit will receive a Governor’s Seal on the diploma.

| | <u>9–12</u> |
|--|-------------|
| English | 4 |
| Mathematics | 3 |
| Laboratory Science | 3 |
| Social Studies: | 3 |
| Virginia and United States History-1, Virginia and United States Government-1, World Studies, (World Cultures, World History, or World Geography)-1 | |

| | |
|---|----------|
| Foreign Language | 3 |
| (3 years of one language or 2 years each of 2 languages) | |
| Health and Physical Education | 2 |
| Fine Arts or Practical Arts* | 1 |
| Electives | <u>4</u> |
| Total Units | 23 |

To earn an Advanced Studies Diploma, students must complete a mathematics sequence that includes Algebra I and two courses above the level of Algebra I, and a science sequence that includes three units from earth science, biology, chemistry, and physics.

*Must be selected from a list of courses approved for graduation requirements by the Board of Education.

4. When students below the 9th grade successfully complete 9th-, 10th-, 11th-, or 12th-grade subjects, credit shall be counted toward meeting the units required for graduation in grades 9–12. Students shall be encouraged to take advantage of this option.
5. Students who are graduating from a secondary school, and do not intend to continue their education should have identified marketable skills.
6. Students completing graduation requirements in a summer school accredited under these standards shall be eligible for a diploma. The last school attended by the student during the regular session shall award the diploma.
7. A secondary school shall accept credits received from other accredited secondary schools, including summer schools, special sessions, schools accredited through the Virginia Council for Private Education, and educational programs operated by the state. Credit also shall be accepted for courses satisfactorily completed in accredited colleges and universities when prior written approval of the principal has been granted.
8. Records of transferred students shall be sent directly to the school receiving the student upon request of the receiving school.
9. The transcript of a student who graduates or transfers from a Virginia secondary school shall show that a minimum of 21 units of credit courses in grades 9–12 are required for graduation.
10. Students transferring into a Virginia school division shall be required to earn 21 units of credit or the equivalent for graduation. Each student's prior record shall be evaluated to determine the number and content of additional credits required for graduation. Specified courses normally taken at lower grade levels shall not be required, provided the student has completed the courses required at those grade levels by the school division or state from which he or she transferred. Students transferring from states not giving credit for health and physical education shall not be required to repeat these courses.

11. Students who have met the requirements and conditions set forth in these standards and have met such other requirements as may be prescribed by the local school board and approved by the Board of Education, and handicapped students who have completed the requirements of an individualized education program shall be awarded the appropriate diploma or certificate. The last school attended by the student during regular session shall award the diploma or certificate unless otherwise determined by the two superintendents.

Staffing

STANDARD G

Each school shall have the required staff with proper certification and endorsement.

Criteria:

- The following shall be the minimum staffing according to type of school and student enrollment:

| <u>Position</u> | <u>Elementary</u> | <u>Middle</u> | <u>Secondary</u> |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| Principal | 1 half-time to 299 1 full-time at 300 | 1 full-time | 1 full-time |
| Assistant Principal | 1 half-time at 600 1 full-time at 900 | 1 full-time each 600 | 1 full-time each 600 |
| Librarian | Part-time to 299 1 full-time at 300 | 1 half-time to 299 1 full-time at 300 2 full-time at 1000 | 1 half-time to 299 1 full-time at 300 2 full-time at 1000 |
| Guidance Counselors | *1 hour per day per 100 *1 full-time at 500 *1 hour per day additional time per 100 or major fraction | 1 period per 80 1 full-time at 400 1 additional period per 80 or major fraction | 1 period per 70 1 full-time at 350 1 additional period per 70 or major fraction |
| Clerical | Part-time to 299 1 full-time at 300 | 1 full-time and 1 additional full-time for each 600 beyond 200 and 1 full-time for the library at 750 | 1 full-time and 1 additional full-time for each 600 beyond 200 and 1 full-time for the library at 750 |

A combined school, such as K-12, shall meet at all grade levels the staffing requirements for the highest grade level in that school. This requirement shall apply to all staff, except the guidance staff, and shall be based on the school's total enrollment. The guidance staff requirement shall be based on the enrollment at the various school organization levels as defined in application of standards, page 3.

At the discretion of local school authorities, an alternative staffing plan may be developed which ensures that the services set forth in these standards are met. Any alternative staffing plan shall be submitted to the Accreditation and Evaluation Service, Department of Education, for approval. An alternative staffing plan that reduces the number of staff positions will not be acceptable.

*To become effective for the 1989-90 school year.

- The principal of each middle level and secondary school shall be employed on a 12-month basis.

3. Each secondary school with 350 or more students and each middle level school with 400 or more students shall employ at least one member of the guidance staff for 11 months.
4. The maximum number of students in Average Daily Membership per certified classroom teacher for grades K-3 shall be the number required by the *Standards of Quality*.
5. The maximum number of students in Average Daily Membership per certified classroom teacher for grades 4-7 in elementary schools shall not exceed 35.
6. Each middle and secondary school shall have a student-teacher ratio (based on full-time equivalent teachers and excluding administrators, librarians, and guidance personnel) that does not exceed 25-1.
7. In grade 1 and in English classes (grades 6-12), the number of students per teacher shall not exceed the number required by the *Standards of Quality*.
8. Middle level school teachers with a seven period day may teach 30 class periods per week, provided all teachers with more than 25 class periods per week have one period per day unencumbered of all teaching and/or supervisory duties.
9. The secondary classroom teacher's standard load shall be no more than 25 class periods per week. One class period each day, unencumbered by supervisory or teaching duties, shall be provided for every full-time classroom teacher for instructional planning. Teachers of block programs with no more than 120 student periods per day may teach 30 class periods per week. Teachers who teach very small classes may teach 30 class periods per week, provided the teaching load does not exceed 75 student periods per day. If a classroom teacher teaches 30 class periods per week with more than 75 student periods per day (120 in block programs) an appropriate contractual arrangement and compensation must be provided.
10. Middle level or secondary school teachers shall teach no more than 750 student periods per week; however, physical education and music teachers may teach 1,000 student periods per week.
11. Every effort shall be made to provide staff members with an unencumbered lunch period.
12. The number of students in special and vocational education classrooms shall comply with regulations of the Board of Education.
13. Custodial services shall be available to keep the school plant and grounds safe and clean.
14. Pupil personnel services, including visiting teachers/school social workers, school psychologists, and guidance counselors, shall be available to all students as necessary, especially to provide assistance in preventing dropouts and substance abuse.

Buildings and Grounds

STANDARD H

The school building shall accommodate an educational program that will meet the needs of the students and ensure the health and safety of students and staff.

Criteria:

1. The school site and physical plant shall be accessible, barrier-free, safe, clean, and free from excessive noise and other distractions, and shall be adequate in size to meet the needs of the students enrolled.
2. Each school shall prepare and adhere to a written plan of vehicular traffic control designed to promote safe and prompt movement of students, staff, and visitors.
3. Each school shall have a written plan to follow in emergencies. The plan shall be outlined in the student handbook and discussed with staff and students during the first week of each school year.
4. All exit doors in a school shall be equipped with panic bars that are usable while the building is occupied.
5. Records shall be maintained to show that fire drills are held once a week during the first month of school and at least once each month for the remainder of the school term. Evacuation routes for students shall be posted in each room.
6. The principal shall be responsible for conducting one fire inspection during each semester in accordance with regulations contained in the *Fire Inspection Guide for Schools*.
7. Each school shall have provisions for the proper outdoor display of the flags of the United States and of the Commonwealth of Virginia.
8. Each school plant shall have a maintenance and housekeeping program designed to ensure a healthful and pleasant learning environment.
9. The administrative unit shall have space for a principal's office, secretarial assistance, and record storage.
10. Suitable space shall be made available for student personnel services.
11. The school media center shall have adequate space to provide for the collection and circulation of instructional materials, and adequate seating for group activities.
12. Adequate, safe, and properly-equipped laboratories shall be provided to meet the needs of instruction in the sciences, computer, fine arts, and vocational programs.

13. Each school shall have appropriate areas and facilities for the physical education program offered. Secondary schools shall have locker rooms and showers.
14. Adequate and properly-equipped classroom space shall be provided.
15. The school plant and grounds shall be kept safe and clean with the responsibility for the care of buildings and grounds shared by staff and students.
16. Space shall be provided for the proper care of students who become ill.



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