# Agenda Item: C

## Date: March 23, 2023

## Title: First and Final Review of Request from Buena Vista City Public Schools to Discontinue a Local Graduation Requirement

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## Presenter: Jim Chapman, Regulatory and Legal Coordinator

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## Purpose of Presentation:

Action required by Board of Education regulation (i.e., a change in Board regulation necessitates a change in a guidance document).

## Executive Summary:

In June 2018, the Board of Education approved a request to add a local graduation requirement from Buena Vista City Public Schools (BVCPS). The request was to require all 9th grade students to take Information Technology Fundamentals (“IT Fundamentals”) unless an Individualized Education Program team determined otherwise. The course would not be required of transferring students. Students could choose to use the IT Fundamentals course as an elective to satisfy requirements of the Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma.

BVCPS is now requesting that the Board approve BVCPS discontinuing this local graduation requirement beginning with the 2023–2024 school year. Over the four years that the local graduation requirement has been in place, BVCPS has found that not all students have an interest in IT Fundamentals and feel that they are being forced to take the course. In 2019–2020, the student failure rate for the IT Fundamentals course was 22 percent. In 2020–2021, the failure rate was 27.5 percent. In 2021–2022, the failure rate was 14 percent. Through the first semester of the current year, the failure rate is 28 percent. By contrast, data from the CTE Annual Performance Report indicates a 97 percent pass rate.

Further, BVCPS has found that requiring all students to take IT Fundamentals in 9th grade—regardless of interest—is negatively impacting enrollment in other business and information technology courses. This year, BVCPS did not have enough student interest in AP Computer Science or Computer Information Systems to offer the course. When BVCPS asked students why they had not signed up for the course, some students specifically cited that IT Fundamentals was too hard.

Additionally, BVCPS has found that by having IT Fundamentals as a local graduation requirement, the course cannot be counted as a completer course toward the Business and Information Technology pathway. Students are then at a disadvantage to schedule and complete two different sequences.

## Action Requested:

Final review: Action requested at this meeting.

## Superintendent’s Recommendation

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education waive first review and approve the request from BVCPS to discontinue the local graduation requirement.

## Rationale for Action:

## BVCPS, through its request in 2018, sought to attend and care for the development of students in its division by imposing the local graduation requirement. BVCPS has found that the requirement does not work as intended, and the local graduation requirement is not in the best interest of BVCPS students.

## Previous Review or Action:

Previous review or action. Specify date and action taken below:

**Date:** June 18, 2018

**Action:** First and Final Review

## Background Information and Statutory Authority:

Subsection A of § [22.1-253.13:4](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter13.2/section22.1-253.13%3A4/) of the *Code of Virginia* states, in part, that “[e]ach local school board shall award diplomas to all secondary school students, including students who transfer from nonpublic schools or from home instruction, who meet the requirements prescribed by the Board and meet such other requirements as may be prescribed by the local school board and approved by the Board.”

Board regulation 8VAC20-131-51 states, in part, that “[a]ll additional requirements prescribed by local school boards that have been approved by the board remain in effect until such time as the local school board submits a request to the board to amend or discontinue them.”

## Timetable for Further Review/Action:

Once the Board approves the request, BVCPS will discontinue the local graduation requirement for the 2023-2024 school year and beyond.

## Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

In this section, state the projected impact of the action on the Department of Education’s resources, both fiscal and staff impact. If there will be an impact on local school divisions’ resources that should also be noted.