



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

November 6, 2015

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: *Guidelines for Graduation Requirements: Local Alternative Paths to Standard Units of Credit (Alternatives to the 140-Clock-hour Requirement)*

The 2015 Virginia General Assembly passed [House Bill \(HB\) 1675](#) (Greason) and [Senate Bill \(SB\) 982](#) (Garrett) which amended and reenacted §§ 22.1-79.1 and 22.1-253.13:4 of the *Code of Virginia*. The amendments to:

- [§ 22.1-79.1](#) eliminate the prohibition of reduced instructional time in the core academics of English, mathematics, social studies, and science; and
- [§ 22.1-253.13:4](#) permit local school divisions to waive the requirement that students receive 140 clock hours of instruction to earn a standard unit of credit.

The Virginia Board of Education (BOE) was directed by the legislation to develop guidelines defining how school divisions will provide satisfactory proof that the students who receive the 140-clock-hour waiver have learned the content and skills included in the relevant course standards, competencies, or learning objectives. At its meeting on October 22, 2015, the BOE approved *Guidelines for Graduation Requirements: Local Alternative Paths to Standard Units of Credit (Alternatives to the 140-Clock-hour Requirement)*. The approved guidelines are included as [Attachment A](#) to this memorandum. (Additional background information is included in the October 2015 [BOE agenda item](#).)

Please note that the changes provided in the 2015 General Assembly legislation and the recently-approved fast-track revisions to the [Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia](#) (SOA), effective October 8, 2015, **supersede** all previous requirements pertaining to alternatives to 140 clock hours of instruction for a standard unit of credit. School division policy pertaining to clock-hour waivers must comport with the recently-approved BOE guidelines, and each school division must annually provide reporting and compliance information related to waivers to the Virginia Department of Education. The guidelines are effective with students enrolled in the 2015-2016 school year and beyond.

If you need additional information or have questions about the guidelines, please contact John W. "Billy" Haun, Ed.D., chief academic officer, Division of Instruction, by e-mail at Billy.Haun@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone at (804) 225-2034.

SRS/JWH/rt

Attachment:

- A. [Guidelines for Graduation Requirements: Local Alternative Paths to Standard Units of Credit \(Alternatives to the 140-Clock-hour Requirement\)](#) (PDF)

