



#062-21

Commonwealth of Virginia
Virginia Department of Education
Superintendent's Memo #062-21

DATE: March 12, 2021
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Diploma Seals Distribution Process and Criteria for 2021 Graduates**

The purpose of this memo is to inform school divisions of the diploma seals distribution process for 2021 and transmit the requirements for each Board of Education-established diploma seal. The criteria for awarding diploma seals can also be found on the [Diploma Seals webpage](#). Graduation requirements for Virginia students can be found on the [Graduation Requirements webpage](#).

Please note that the criteria for the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Seal and the Excellence in Civics Education Seal has been revised for the 2020-2021 cohort. Diploma seal requirements remain unchanged for future graduating cohorts.

Diploma Seals Distribution Process

Beginning last year, school divisions no longer place orders for diploma seals. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) issues an appropriate amount of each diploma seal to each division. The number of seals issued is determined by the number of diploma seals awarded in each division over the past three years, as reflected in the Student Record Collection, plus growth.

The diploma seals will be shipped to the school division's central office mailing address, as reflected in SSWS, by **May 1, 2021**. The individual designated as the School Counseling Director in SSWS for each division will be the point of contact for diploma seals for

communications with VDOE. The package of diploma seals will be addressed to the attention of that individual. Please ensure that this information in SSWS is accurate and up to date.

Any division requiring more diploma seals in order to meet the needs of the 2020-2021 graduating class must contact the Office of Policy at VDOE for additional seals at policy@doe.virginia.gov.

Criteria for Awarding Diploma Seals

In accordance with sections [8VAC20-131-50](#) and [8VAC20-131-51](#) of the Board of Education's [Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia](#) (referred to as the [Standards of Accreditation](#)), students who meet the requirements for graduation and demonstrate academic excellence and outstanding achievement may be eligible for one or more of the following awards. Please note that the criteria for the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Seal and the Excellence in Civics Education Seal has been revised for the 2020-2021 cohort.

Governor's Seal

- The **Governor's Seal** shall be awarded to students who complete the requirements for an Advanced Studies Diploma with an average grade of "B" or better, and successfully complete college-level coursework that will earn the student at least nine transferable college credits in Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge, or dual enrollment courses.

Board of Education Seal

- The **Board of Education Seal** shall be awarded to students who complete the requirements for a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma with an average grade of "A."

CTE Seal

- The Board of Education's **Career and Technical Education Seal** shall be awarded to students who earn a Standard Diploma or an 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. The board shall approve all professional licenses and examinations used to satisfy these requirements.

STEM Seal

- The Board of Education's **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Seal** shall be awarded to students who earn either a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma and (i) satisfy all Math and Science requirements for the Advanced Studies diploma with a "B" average or better in all course work; and (ii) successfully complete a **50 25** hour or more work-based learning opportunity in a STEM area; and (iii) satisfy all requirements for a Career and Technical Education concentration (a concentration is a coherent sequence of two or more state-approved courses as identified in the course listing within the CTE Administrative Planning Guide); and (iv) pass either a Board of Education CTE STEM-H credential examination or an examination approved by the Board that confers a college-level credit in a STEM field.
 - The Board's STEM seal was established in 2018 ([HB167](#)) to replace the Board's Seal of Advanced Mathematics and Technology. The STEM seal is available to graduating seniors in the Class of 2019 and beyond; the Seal of Advanced Mathematics and Technology remains available to students that entered the ninth grade prior to the 2018-2019 school year.
 - For those students graduating in the 2020-2021 cohort, the work-based learning opportunity hour requirement for the STEM seal has been reduced from 50 hours to 25 hours.

Seal of Advanced Math and Technology

- The Board of Education's **Seal of Advanced Mathematics and Technology** shall be awarded to students who earn either a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma and (i) satisfy all of the mathematics requirements for the Advanced Studies Diploma (four units of credit including Algebra II; two verified units of credit) with a

"B" average or better; and (ii) either (a) pass an examination in a career and technical education field that confers certification from a recognized industry, trade, or professional association; (b) acquire a professional license in a career and technical education field from the Commonwealth of Virginia; or (c) pass an examination approved by the board that confers college-level credit in a technology or computer science area. The board shall approve all professional licenses and examinations used to satisfy these requirements.

- The Board's Seal of Advanced Math and Technology is being replaced by the Board's STEM Seal; however, the Seal of Advanced Math and Technology remains available to students who entered the ninth grade prior to the 2018-2019 school year.

Civics Seal

- The Board of Education's **Seal for Excellence in Civics Education** shall be awarded to students who earn either a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma and (i) complete Virginia and United States history and Virginia and United States government courses with a grade of "B" or higher; (ii) have good attendance and no disciplinary infractions as determined by local school board policies; and (iii) complete ~~50~~ **25** hours of voluntary participation in community service or extracurricular activities. Activities that satisfy the requirements of clause (iii) of this subdivision include: (a) volunteering for a charitable or religious organization that provides services to the poor, sick, or less fortunate; (b) participating in Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, or similar youth organizations; (c) participating in JROTC; (d) participating in political campaigns or government internships, or Boys State, Girls State, or Model General Assembly; or (e) participating in school-sponsored extracurricular activities that have a civics focus. Any student who enlists in the United States military prior to graduation shall be deemed to have met this community service requirement.
 - For those students graduating in the 2020-2021 cohort, the community service or extracurricular activities hour requirement for the Civics seal has been reduced from 50 hours to 25 hours.

Biliteracy Seal

- The Board of Education's **Seal of Biliteracy** will be awarded to students who earn a Board of Education-approved diploma and (i) pass all required End-of-Course Assessments in English reading and writing at the proficient or higher level; and (ii) be proficient at the intermediate-mid level or higher in one or more languages other than English, as demonstrated through an assessment from a list to be approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.
 - As the end-of-course assessments in spring 2020 were waived, students are considered to have met the Seal of Biliteracy English proficiency requirement for 2020 by successfully passing their English course for that year. For all years in which the end-of-course assessments were administered, students must have passed the English reading and writing assessment at the proficient or higher level.
 - More information on the Seal of Biliteracy can be found on the [Seal of Biliteracy webpage](#), including the [Evidence of Proficiency document](#) (DOCX), which provides a full list of assessment options for meeting the foreign language proficiency requirement.

Science and the Environment Seal

- The Board of Education's **Seal for Excellence in Science and the Environment** shall be awarded to students who (i) entered the ninth grade for the first time in the 2018-2019 school year and thereafter; (ii) earn either a Standard Diploma or Advanced Studies Diploma; (iii) complete at least three different first-level board-approved laboratory science courses and at least one rigorous advanced-level or postsecondary-level laboratory science course, each with a grade of "B" or higher; (iv) complete laboratory or field-science research and present that research in a formal, juried setting; and (v) complete at least 50 hours of voluntary participation in community service or extracurricular activities that involve the application of science such as environmental monitoring, protection, management, or restoration.
 - The Seal for Excellence in Science and the Environment is **only** available to students who entered the ninth grade for the first time in the 2018-2019 school year and thereafter.

Other Seals or Awards

Please note that local school boards determine the design and use of any other seals or awards for exceptional academic, career and technical, citizenship, or other exemplary performance in accordance with local school board criteria. VDOE only provides those seals listed in this memorandum, in accordance with the [Standards of Accreditation](#), and does not have access to any other seals used by local school boards.

For more information

Please direct questions regarding diploma seals to the Office of Policy at policy@doe.virginia.gov or (804) 225-2092.

JFL/EMC