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HOUSE BILL NO. 2674

Offered January 15, 2001

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 22.1-253.13:3 of the Code of Virginia, as it shall become effective, relating to the requirements for a standard diploma.*

Patron—Orrock

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 22.1-253.13:3 of the Code of Virginia, as it shall become effective, is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 22.1-253.13:3. (Effective July 1, 2003) Standard 3. Accreditation, other standards and evaluation.

A. The General Assembly recognizes the need for the Board of Education to prescribe requirements to ensure that student progress is measured and that school boards and school personnel are accountable.

B. The Board of Education shall promulgate regulations establishing standards for accreditation pursuant to the Administrative Process Act (§ 9-6.14:1 et seq.) which shall include, but not be limited to, student outcome measures, requirements and guidelines for instructional programs and for the integration of educational technology into such instructional programs, administrative and instructional staffing levels and positions, including staff positions for supporting educational technology, pupil personnel services, special education program standards, auxiliary education programs such as library and media services, course and credit requirements for graduation from high school, community relations, and the philosophy, goals, and objectives of public education in Virginia.

In establishing course and credit requirements for a high school diploma, the Board shall:

1. Provide for the selection of integrated learning courses meeting the Standards of Learning and approved by the Board to satisfy graduation credit requirements which shall include Standards of Learning testing, as necessary; and

2. Establish the requirements for a standard or advanced studies high school diploma which shall include one credit in fine, performing, or practical arts and one credit in United States and Virginia history. The requirements for a standard high school diploma *shall, however, include at least two sequential electives* and may include a concentration of courses selected from a variety of options that may be planned to ensure the completion of a focused sequence of elective courses, leading to further education or preparation for employment developed by the school division consistent with Board of Education guidelines and as approved by the local school board.

3. Provide, in the requirements for the verified units of credit stipulated for obtaining the standard or advanced studies diploma, that students completing elective classes into which the Standards of Learning for any required course have been integrated may take the relevant Standards of Learning test for the relevant required course and receive, upon achieving a satisfactory score on the specific Standards of Learning assessment, a verified unit of credit for such elective class that shall be deemed to satisfy the Board's requirement for verified credit for the required course; and

4. Establish a procedure to facilitate the acceleration of students that allows qualified students, with the recommendation of the division superintendent, without completing the 140-hour class, to obtain credit for such class upon demonstration of mastery of the course content and objectives. Having received credit for the course, the student shall be permitted to sit for the relevant Standards of Learning assessment and, upon receiving a passing score, shall earn a verified credit. Nothing in this section shall preclude relevant school division personnel from enforcing compulsory attendance in public schools.

In the exercise of its authority to recognize exemplary academic performance by providing for diploma seals, the Board shall establish by July 1, 2000, criteria for awarding a diploma seal for advanced mathematics and technology for the standard and advanced studies diplomas. The Board shall consider including criteria for (i) technology courses; (ii) technical writing, reading, and oral communication skills; (iii) technology-related practical arts training; and (iv) industry, professional, and trade association national certifications.

The Board shall include in the student outcome measures which are required by the Standards for Accreditation, end-of-course or end-of-grade tests for various grade levels and classes, as determined by the Board, in accordance with the Standards of Learning. These Standards of Learning assessments shall include, but need not be limited to, end-of-course or end-of-grade tests for English, mathematics, science, and social studies.

In revising the standards for accreditation, the Board shall seek to set pupil-teacher ratios for educable mentally retarded (EMR) pupils that do not exceed the pupil-teacher ratios for self-contained

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59 classes for pupils with specific learning disabilities. The Board shall review annually the accreditation
60 status of all schools in the Commonwealth.

61 The Board's regulations on accrediting schools shall include in the minimum staffing requirements,
62 according to the type of school and student enrollment, requirements for employment of (i) principals in
63 elementary schools, one half-time to 299 students, one full-time at 300 students; principals in middle
64 schools, one full-time, to be employed on a twelve-month basis; principals in high schools, one
65 full-time, to be employed on a twelve-month basis; (ii) assistant principals in elementary schools, one
66 half-time at 600 students, one full-time at 900 students; assistant principals in middle schools, one
67 full-time for each 600 students; assistant principals in high schools, one full-time for each 600 students;
68 (iii) librarians in elementary schools, one part-time to 299 students, one full-time at 300 students;
69 librarians in middle schools, one-half time to 299 students, one full-time at 300 students, two full-time
70 at 1000 students; librarians in high schools, one half-time to 299 students, one full-time at 300 students,
71 two full-time at 1000 students; (iv) guidance counselors in middle schools, one period per 80 students,
72 one full-time at 400 students, one additional period per 80 students or major fraction thereof; guidance
73 counselors in high schools, one period per 70 students, one full-time at 350 students, one additional
74 period per 70 students or major fraction thereof; (v) clerical personnel in elementary schools, part-time
75 to 299 students, one full-time at 300 students; clerical personnel in middle schools, one full-time and
76 one additional full-time for each 600 students beyond 200 students and one full-time for the library at
77 750 students; clerical personnel in high schools, one full-time and one additional full-time for each 600
78 students beyond 200 students and one full-time for the library at 750 students; and (vi) reading
79 specialists in elementary schools, one full-time in each elementary school at the discretion of the local
80 school board. A combined school, such as kindergarten through twelve, shall meet at all grade levels the
81 staffing requirements for the highest grade level in that school; this requirement shall apply to all staff,
82 except for guidance counselors, and shall be based on the school's total enrollment; guidance counselor
83 staff requirements shall, however, be based on the enrollment at the various school organization levels,
84 i.e., middle or high school. The Board of Education may grant waivers from these staffing levels upon
85 request from local school boards seeking to implement experimental or innovative programs that are not
86 consistent with these staffing levels.

87 C. The Board shall also establish requirements for licensure of teachers, principals, supervisors and
88 other professional staff and determine eligibility for appointment as a local division superintendent.

89 D. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall develop and the Board of Education shall approve
90 criteria for determining and recognizing educational performance in the Commonwealth's public school
91 divisions and schools. Such criteria, when approved, shall become an integral part of the accreditation
92 process and shall include student outcome measurements. One year following the approval by the Board
93 of such criteria, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall annually identify to the Board those
94 school divisions and schools that exceed or do not meet the approved criteria. Such identification shall
95 include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of public education programs in the various school
96 divisions in Virginia and recommendations to the General Assembly for further enhancing student
97 learning uniformly across the Commonwealth. In recognizing educational performance in the school
98 divisions, the Board shall include consideration of special school division accomplishments, such as
99 numbers of dual enrollments and students in Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate
100 courses, and participation in academic year Governor's Schools.

101 The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall assist local school boards in the implementation of
102 action plans for increasing educational performance in those school divisions and schools that are
103 identified as not meeting the approved criteria. The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall monitor
104 the implementation of and report to the Board of Education on the effectiveness of the corrective actions
105 taken to improve the educational performance in such school divisions and schools.

106 The Department of Education shall conduct technical assistance visits for local school divisions.
107 Schools accredited with a warning shall be given priority for such assistance, which shall include an
108 analysis of relevant school data and the development and implementation of improvement plans to assist
109 such schools in improving their accreditation status.

110 E. In order to assess the educational progress of students, the Board of Education shall also (i)
111 develop appropriate assessments, which may include criterion-referenced tests and alternative assessment
112 instruments which may be used by classroom teachers and (ii) prescribe and provide measures, which
113 may include nationally normed tests, to be designated as the Virginia State Assessment Program, which
114 shall be used to identify students who score in the bottom quartile at selected grade levels. The Board of
115 Education is authorized to pursue all available civil remedies for breaches in test security.
116 Notwithstanding any other provision of state law, no test or examination authorized by this section,
117 including the Standards of Learning assessments, shall be released or required to be released as
118 minimum competency tests, if, in the judgment of the Board, such release would breach the security of
119 such test or examination or deplete the bank of questions necessary to construct future secure tests.

120 With such funds as may be appropriated, the Board of Education may provide, through an agreement

with vendors having the technical capacity and expertise to provide computerized tests and assessments, and test construction, analysis, and security, for (i) web-based computerized tests and assessments for the evaluation of student progress during and after remediation and (ii) the development of a remediation item bank directly related to the Standards of Learning.

F. Each local school board shall maintain schools which meet the standards of accreditation as prescribed by the Board of Education. The accreditation status of all schools in each local school division shall be reviewed annually in public session. Within the time specified by the Board of Education, each school board shall submit corrective action plans for any schools within its school division that have been designated as not meeting the criteria for determining effectiveness as approved by the Board.

G. Each local school board shall also provide teachers and principals with (i) periodic in-service training in preparing tests and other assessment measures and (ii) methods for assessing the progress of individual students, including Standards of Learning assessment materials or other criterion-referenced tests which match locally developed objectives.

H. In order to assess the educational progress of students as individuals and as groups, each local school board shall require the administration of appropriate assessments, which may include criterion-referenced tests, teacher-made tests and alternative assessment instruments and shall include the Virginia State Assessment Program, the Virginia State Literacy Testing Program, the Standards of Learning Assessments, and the National Assessment of Educational Progress state-by-state assessment. Each school board shall analyze and report annually, in compliance with any criteria which may be established by the Board of Education, the results from the Virginia State Assessment Program and the Standards of Learning Assessments to the public.

I. To assist school divisions in implementing those programs and practices that will enhance pupil academic performance and improve family and community involvement in the public schools, and from such funds as may be appropriated for such purpose, there shall be established within the Department of Education a unit to conduct evaluative studies and to provide the resources and technical assistance to increase the capacity of school divisions to deliver quality instruction. Such unit shall identify and analyze effective instructional programs and practices and professional development initiatives; evaluate the success of programs encouraging parental and family involvement; assess changes in student outcomes prompted by family involvement; and collect and disseminate among school divisions information regarding effective instructional programs and practices, initiatives promoting family and community involvement, and potential funding and support sources. Such unit may also provide resources supporting professional development for administrators and teachers. In providing such information, resources, and other services to school divisions, the unit shall give priority to those divisions demonstrating a less than seventy percent passing rate on (i) all three Literacy Passport tests by students taking these tests for the first time or (ii) the Standards of Learning assessment tests.