

VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 22.1-209.1:6, relating to the Academic Opportunities Pilot Program.

[S 1263]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 22.1-209.1:6 as follows:

§ 22.1-209.1:6. Academic Opportunities Pilot Program created; regulations promulgated; Program criteria.

A. With such funds as may be appropriated for this purpose, there is hereby created the Academic Opportunities Pilot Program (the Program) to provide a model for school divisions to explore innovative options and creative instructional programs for the education of secondary school students with diverse educational needs within the same facility.

Such options and programs shall address the needs of two or more student populations which may include those students who are (i) educationally at risk, (ii) assigned to the regular instructional program, (iii) identified as gifted or talented or enrolled in advanced placement or honors classes, (iv) identified as having special needs, (v) enrolled in vocational and technical education programs, or who are over-age or for whom the regular instructional program is inappropriate, or (vi) have been suspended, excluded, or expelled from school attendance. The Board of Education shall promulgate regulations for the implementation of the Program, which shall be administered by the Department of Education. Such regulations shall require any school board adopting the Program to offer two or more instructional program components in the same facility, and compliance with the provisions of this section.

B. On and after July 1, 1999, the Program shall consist of no more than five pilot projects located in regions throughout the Commonwealth to provide equal geographical distribution of such projects. Priority for awarding grants shall be given to projects designed to serve students with various educational needs, including, but not limited to, instructional programs for secondary school students who are identified in subsection A.

Criteria for the projects shall include, but not be limited to:

1. A curriculum developed to meet the needs of the students, which may include intensive, accelerated instruction designed to establish high standards and academic achievement for participating students.

2. Compliance with the Standards of Quality, the Standards of Learning, and the Standards of Accreditation.

3. Compliance with federal and state laws and regulations governing the respective instructional programs, including special education, gifted education, and the regional alternative education programs.

4. Teachers, coordinators, counselors, and administrators who possess the requisite qualifications, training, and experience determined necessary by the school board, and who request assignment to such pilot project.

5. Community outreach to build strong school, business, and community partnerships.

6. An emphasis on preparation for college and work upon graduation.

7. A plan to provide and promote family participation and community support.

8. An agreement executed between the local governing body and the local school board to pilot the Program.

9. A review and evaluation of the projects, as provided in subsection C.

In addition, criteria for the projects may include, as appropriate:

1. Lower pupil/teacher ratios as appropriate for the needs of the students.

2. Opportunities for participation in cocurricular and extracurricular activities, extended day programs, mentorships, and tutorials.

3. An interagency agreement for cooperation executed by the local department of health and social services or welfare; juvenile and domestic relations district courts; law-enforcement agencies; institutions of higher education; professional and community organizations; business and religious communities; dropout prevention and substance abuse prevention programs; teenage pregnancy prevention programs; and community services boards located within the school division to provide collaboration and cooperation between the pilot program and the community agencies and for the

57 *comprehensive delivery of services as may be necessary.*

58 *Grants for all projects shall be awarded on a competitive basis to applicants responding to requests*
59 *for proposals. Upon appropriation of funds for the purposes of this section, the Board shall issue a*
60 *request for proposals for projects for the Program. Grants shall be awarded by June 1, 2000.*

61 *C. Eligible projects shall (i) satisfy the criteria in accordance with subsection B; (ii) encourage the*
62 *development of innovative teaching strategies to improve the academic achievement of students*
63 *regardless of their socioeconomic status; and (iii) promote communication between, and the exchange of*
64 *best practices among, teachers and administrators assigned to the pilot project.*

65 *The Department shall require funded projects to submit a written evaluation of the Program on such*
66 *date as it may determine. The Department shall report the data analysis of the evaluation of the projects*
67 *to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 1, 2003.*

68 **2. That this act shall expire on July 1, 2004.**