

## Virginia Board of Education – April 2020 Emergency Meeting Update

On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, the [Virginia Board of Education \(VBOE\)](#) met to review emergency guidance measures proposed by the Virginia Department of Education (VDoE) to assist local school divisions in finishing the 2019-2020 academic year while under order by Governor Northam to remain closed due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus pandemic. Video stream of the meeting can be found [here](#). The Virginia School Boards Association does our best to give you a concise summary of the relevant aspects of the meeting. We encourage you and your superintendent to delve deep into this information to better understand how it will impact your school division.

### **Board Business Session**

On Thursday April 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Board convened electronically for an [emergency business session](#) to deal with issues pertaining to COVID-19/Coronavirus. The electronic meeting was held pursuant to § 2.2-3708.2 of the *Code of Virginia*. Board President Dan Gecker called the emergency business session to order and provided an overview of the objectives for the meeting.

Gecker informed Board members that [Item A: Final Review of Virginia’s Perkins V State Plan \(Item A- Attachment\)](#), was stricken from the agenda because the deadline for submitting this plan has been extended until June 15, 2020. This item will be heard at a later Board of Education meeting.

Following the explanation regarding Item A, the Board proceeded to consider the following items for final review:

**[Item B- Final Review of Emergency Guidelines for Local Alternatives to Awarding Standard Units of Credit \(140-Clock Hours Requirement\) Due to COVID-19.](#)** Dr. Leslie Sale, Interim Director of Policy, VDoE, provided an overview of the Item for the Board. Dr. Sale explained that on March 23, 2020, Governor Ralph Northam ordered that all K-12 schools close for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year in an effort to control the spread of COVID-19. As such, students currently enrolled in a high school credit-bearing course are unable to complete the 140-clock hours required to earn a standard unit of credit.

Statutory and regulatory language does already permit local school boards to award standard units of credit for courses or students not meeting the 140-clock hours in some circumstances. However, the waiver process may be too restrictive given the timing and length of the current closures. In response, the *Emergency Guidelines: Local Alternatives to Awarding Standard Units of Credit* (attached) offers additional flexibility for students to earn a standard unit of credit without meeting the clock time. The *Emergency Guidelines* also recognizes the different sets of obstacles facing students scheduled to graduate with the 2019-2020 cohort and students in younger cohorts that are enrolled in high school credit-bearing courses.

By adopting the *Emergency Guidelines*, the Board of Education seeks to provide clarity to local school divisions by temporarily revising measures of completion for those courses interrupted by extended school closures. The proposed guidelines are meant to supplement the *Guidelines for Graduation Requirements: Local Alternative Paths to Standard Units of Credit (Alternatives to the 140-Clock-Hour Requirement)*. The *Guidelines for Graduation Requirements* remain in effect for the purpose of awarding standard units of credit before or beyond the spring of 2020.

Following the presentation, Mr. Gecker asked if there was discussion by the Board on Item B. The Board engaged in discussion over the criteria used to decide whether a student could receive a passing grade for enrolled classes, as well as the differentiation in students that are seniors during the 2019-2020 academic year preparing for graduation and those who will graduate in subsequent years. Technical edits were proposed to VDoE to Item B to be incorporated into the final guidance document.

With the conclusion of discussion, Board member Dr. Francisco Duran made a motion to adopt Item B with technical edits for final approval by Board President and Vice President. The motion was properly seconded and approved by the Board unanimously by roll call vote.

**Item C- Final Review of Emergency Guidelines for Local Alternatives to Awarding Standard Units of Credit (140-Clock Hours Requirement) Due to COVID-19.** Dr. Leslie Sale, Interim Director of Policy, VDoE, provided the Board context for this emergency matter. On March 23, 2020, Governor Ralph Northam ordered that all K-12 schools close for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year in an effort to control the spread of COVID-19. As such, students currently enrolled in certain high school credit-bearing courses may be unable to earn the associated verified credit, if applicable.

The Board of Education's *Regulations Establishing Standards for the Accreditation of Public Schools* - or Standards of Accreditation - establish multiple pathways for earning a verified credit, including a passing score on the associated Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment. Alternatively, students may use the locally-awarded verified credit process. Local school boards determine the process for administering locally-awarded verified credits which allows students to demonstrate achievement by alternate measures such as work samples, portfolios, etc. As established in the Standards of Accreditation, a prerequisite for a locally-awarded verified credit is that the student must have attempted, unsuccessfully, to pass the corresponding SOL test. Additionally, most students are only able to apply a certain number of locally-awarded verified credits towards their graduation requirements, based on the year he or she entered high school.

By adopting the *Emergency Guidelines: Locally-Awarded Verified Credits*, the Board seeks to provide relief to those students whose ability to earn a verified credit by passing an SOL test is hindered by interrupted instruction and delayed testing as a result of the extended closure. The proposed guidelines are meant to supplement the *Guidance Document Governing Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards For Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*. The latter document as well as the Standards of Accreditation remain in effect for the purpose of awarding locally-awarded verified credits for students enrolled in high school credit-bearing courses prior to or following spring of 2020.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Mr. Gecker asked Board members if there were any questions or discussion on the matter. Hearing none, Mr. Gecker asked for a motion to approve Item C. A motion was made by Board member Dr. Francisco Duran to approve Item C. The motion was properly seconded and was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

Having concluded review of the emergency business items, the Board proceeded to hear the following reports regarding the COVID-19/Coronavirus response in Virginia.

- [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/news/news\\_releases/2020/3-30-20-covid-waiver.docx](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/news/news_releases/2020/3-30-20-covid-waiver.docx) – News Release, March 30, 2020

- [Guidance from the Department of Special Education and Student Services](#)
- [Guidance on Graduation Requirements, Awarding Credits, and Continuity of Learning](#)
- [Guidance on Licensure of Instructional Personnel](#) (Word) – Superintendent's Memo 083-20
- [Joint Guidance for Emergency Child Care during Statewide School Closure](#) (Word)
- [Joint Guidance for Student Placements Reimbursed by the Children's Services Act](#) (Word)
- [COVID-19 Parent Guide for School-Age Children](#)
- [#GoOpenVA: COVID-19 Extended Closing Resources](#) – Resources provided by Virginia school divisions to support educational activities when schools are closed.
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#) – Updated regularly by VDOE

With all emergency business and briefings having been reviewed, the Board provided personal comments and thanks to VDoE staff for their work over the past month in response to the pandemic. With no further comments to be heard, Mr. Gecker adjourned the emergency Board meeting.

I thank you for your support as advocates for public education. The full agenda and supporting documents can be found by visiting the following [link](#). If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards,

J.T.