

ARTICLE IV: STUDENT CLASSIFICATION AND ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

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POLICY 6-4.1 GRADE PLACEMENT

Elementary Schools

Entrance

Age 5 - A pupil who will be age five on or before September 30 may enroll in the Poquoson City Public Schools and be classified as a kindergarten student.

A pupil entering school who is not age six on or before September 30 and who has prior kindergarten experience may be classified as a kindergarten or first grade student based on his performance on the school division's reading and mathematics basal placement tests, Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) results, and evaluations from other schools.

Age 6 - A pupil entering school who is age six on or before September 30 without prior kindergarten experience may be classified as a kindergarten or first grade student based on his performance on the school division's reading and mathematics basal placement test, and Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) results.

Transfer

After age six, students who transfer from other elementary schools, either within or outside the school division, shall be placed in the grade which has been recommended by the previous school. The principal shall require a continuous evaluation of the capabilities and adjustment of the student and, if necessary, shall reassign such student at the earliest possible opportunity to the appropriate grade as determined by the evaluation.

Middle and High Schools

A student who transfers to Poquoson City Public Schools and who is not deficient in any subject requirements in the school division from which he/she transfers shall receive the same grade classification status in the middle and high schools in Poquoson City. The student shall not be required to take courses to erase deficiencies that are normally required of 8th grade students enrolled in the Poquoson City Public Schools.

Transfer students shall meet any and all accreditation standards for graduation requirements.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-70, 22.1-78, 22.1-199; Virginia Board of Education Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, 8 VAC 20-131-10, et. seq.

Adopted: November 2002

POLICY 6-4.2 PLACEMENT OF TWINS AND HIGHER ORDER MULTIPLES

Parents of twins or higher order multiples who are enrolled in the Poquoson City Public Schools in the same grade may request that the children be placed in the same classroom or separate classrooms if they are in the same elementary school. Such request must be made in writing to the school's principal no later than three (3) days after the first day of each school year or three (3) days after the first day of attendance of the children during a school year. The principal may recommend classroom placement to a parent, but placement shall be made in accordance with the parent's request, unless the division superintendent or his or her designee makes a classroom placement determination following the school principal's request in accordance with this Policy. At the end of the initial grading period, if the school principal, in consultation with the children's classroom teacher, determines that the requested classroom placement is disruptive to the school or is harmful to the children's educational progress, the school principal may request that the division superintendent or his or her designee determine the children's classroom placement.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-79.3(D)

Adopted: June 2009

POLICY 6-4.3 GROUPING FOR INSTRUCTION

The grouping of students within individual public schools in Poquoson City for instructional purposes shall be based solely on:

1. the best interests of the student;
2. the educational or achievement level of the student;
3. the availability of space;
4. the best educational climate for learning; and
5. the student's best chance for success.

Grouping shall remain flexible in order to take advantage of the best educational research currently available.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-70, 22.1-78.

Adopted: November 2002

POLICY 6-4.4 PROMOTION AND RETENTION

Generally

The State Board of Education charges school principals with the ultimate responsibility of assigning pupils to classes, programs, and activities that are designed to promote maximum learning. In accordance with this provision, the school principal is the final authority in all matters of promotion and retention.

Grade Placement

Primary School and Elementary School (grades K-5)

Promotion or retention of Poquoson City Public School elementary students shall be based on what best serves the educational welfare of the individual student. In making the determination for placement, the student's teacher and principal shall take into consideration several factors regarding the individual student's performance, including but not limited to:

1. Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) results;
2. Standards of Learning (SOL) test scores;
3. Division-wide quarterly and summative assessments;
4. Attendance;
5. Academic performance;
6. Evaluation of interventions;
7. Reading development;
8. Intellectual ability;
9. Journal samples/writing assessments;
10. Work study habits;
11. Chronological age;
12. Physical, social and emotional development; and
13. Parent conference information.

All students are expected to demonstrate proficiency on the Standards of Learning (SOL) objectives for the respective grades and in the core content areas of English, mathematics, history, social science and science. Students who demonstrate satisfactory classroom performance and achieve at the proficient level on English and mathematics SOL assessments (grades 3-5 only) will be promoted. Students who do not demonstrate satisfactory performance may be retained in their current grade level placement. Decisions regarding retention are made by the principal with input from the teacher(s), other staff members such as the assistant principal, school counselor, or Child Find Committee member, and the student's parent/guardian. Specific guidelines for the retention of a student can be found in the Superintendent's Regulation 6-4.4.

In any grade in which SOL tests are administered, any student who fails all of his/her SOL tests shall participate in a remediation program before the student is placed in the next grade level, including summer school as required by applicable Virginia law. The student must successfully complete summer school before being promoted. If a student fails to do so, then the principal may retain the student.

Middle School

It is the belief of the middle school staff that failure in any of the core academic classes (i.e., science, social studies, mathematics, and language arts) significantly impacts a student's ability to be successful in the next level of the same subject curriculum. Therefore, remediation is available during summer school.

Any middle school student who fails all of his/her SOL tests must successfully complete summer school prior to being promoted. If a student fails to do so, then the principal may retain them in grade.

A final determination of promotion will consider such factors as reading and math achievement, social maturation and other qualifications and predictor of success at the next level.

Decisions regarding retention are made by the principal with input from the teacher(s), other staff members such as the assistant principal, school counselor, or Child Find Committee member, and the student's parent/guardian. Specific guidelines for the retention of a student can be found in the Superintendent's Regulation 6-4.4.

Promotion to 7th grade – A sixth grade student must successfully complete all four academic core subjects: reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies. In addition, a sixth grade student must complete at least two elective/PE courses.

Promotion to 8th grade – A seventh grade pupil must successfully complete all four academic core subjects: language arts, math, science, and social studies. In addition, seventh graders must successfully complete two elective/PE courses.

Promotion to 9th grade – An eighth grade pupil must successfully complete all four academic core classes: language arts, math, science, and social studies. In addition, an eighth grade student must successfully complete two elective/PE courses.

High School

Directly related to graduation requirements are the promotion requirements for each grade level. In the Poquoson School System, the following minimum credit requirements must be met to be classified at each grade level:

9 th Grade	Freshman	8 th Grade Promotion
10 th Grade	Sophomore	5 Credits (including English 9)
11 th Grade	Junior	10 Credits (including English 10)
12 th Grade	Senior	15 Credits (including English 11)

Special Education

Determinations regarding promotion of special education students shall be made consistent with applicable law and relevant individualized education programs (IEP) .

Acceleration

Qualified students may choose the acceleration option of obtaining Carnegie credit(s) and verified credit(s) in designated courses without completing the requirement of 140 clock hours of instruction. Designated courses will include all courses in English, mathematics, science, and social studies for which an end-of-course SOL test exists. To qualify for this option, students in grades 6-11 must demonstrate mastery of the course content and objectives in the manner prescribed by the division and have the recommendation of the division superintendent or his/her designee.

Having received Carnegie credit(s) for acceleration course(s), the students shall be permitted to sit for the relevant Standards of Learning assessment(s), and upon receiving a passing score, shall earn verified credit(s).

The curriculum and schedule of elementary, middle and high schools shall provide flexibility in placing certain students in programs or subjects normally considered above their grade level. Scheduling eighth grade students into subjects above the normal grade level should be done with counseling based on evidence of ability, past scholastic achievement, and cooperation of the individual student and his parents or guardian.

When students below the ninth grade successfully complete courses offered for credit in grades 9 through 12, credit shall be counted toward meeting the standard units required for graduation provided the courses meet the requirements of the Standards of Learning or are equivalent in content and academic rigor as those courses offered at the secondary level or verified units of credit, and provided the students achieve a passing score on the end of course Standards of Learning tests.

In any high school credit-bearing course taken in middle school, a parent may request that the grade be omitted from the student's transcript and the student not earn high school credit for the course. Such request must be made in writing by July 1 prior to the student's entry into ninth grade.

See Superintendent's Regulation 6-4.4

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-78; Individuals with Disabilities Act, 20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq; Virginia Board of Education Regulations Governing Educational Services for Gifted Students, 8 VAC 20-40-10; and Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, 8 VAC 20-131-10, and et seq.

Adopted: November 2002

Revised: July 2003; July 2004; July 2005, November 2014, June 2019

POLICY 6-4.5 GRADUATION AND SOL REQUIREMENTS

SOL Tests and Verified Units of Credit

In kindergarten through eighth grade, where Standards of Learning (SOL) tests are administered, each student is expected to take the SOL tests. Schools will use the SOL test results in kindergarten through eighth grade as part of a set of multiple criteria for determining the promotion or retention of students.

Each student in middle and secondary school will take all applicable end-of-course SOL tests. Students who achieve a passing score on an end-of-course SOL test and pass the course will be awarded a verified unit of credit in that course. Students may earn verified credits in any courses for which end-of-course SOL tests are available. The number of verified credits a student must earn to graduate are specified in the Virginia Board of Education's regulations and are outlined in detail in Superintendent's Regulation 6-4.5(B) or in the PCPS Program of Studies. Students may also earn verified credits by taking alternative tests to the SOL assessment. Such tests may only be those approved by the Virginia Board of Education, and the student may earn verified credit only by achieving the score established by the Board of Education. Students may find additional information about locally awarded verified credits in School Board Policy 6-4.7.

Upon recommendation of the division superintendent and demonstration of mastery of course content and objectives, qualified students may receive a standard unit of credit and be permitted to sit for the relevant SOL test to earn a verified credit without having to meet the 140-clock-hour requirement. Additionally, the Board of Education may permit local school divisions to waive the 140-clock-hour requirement to earn a standard unit of credit (i) upon providing the Board with satisfactory proof, based on Board guidelines, that the students for whom such requirements are waived have learned the content and skills included in the relevant Standards of Learning, without sitting for the test; or (ii) after the student has completed the course curriculum and relevant Standards of Learning end-of-course assessment, or Board-approved substitute, providing that such student subsequently receives instruction, coursework, or study toward and industry certification approved by the School Board. The division superintendent by regulation will determine the manner in which a student may demonstrate mastery of course content and objectives, and documentation of such mastery will be maintained in the student's permanent record.

Participation in the SOL testing program by students with disabilities will be prescribed by provisions of their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Plan. All students with disabilities will be assessed with appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments where necessary.

All students identified as English Learners will participate in the SOL testing program. A school-based committee will convene and make determinations regarding the participation level of English Learner. In grades three through eight, English Learners may be granted a one-time exemption from SOL testing in the areas of writing and history/social science. Additionally, English Learners who have attended school in the United States for less than 12 months, may receive a one-time exemption from the SOL reading test in grades three through eight.

The School Board shall provide teachers, parents, principals, and other school leaders with their students' results on any Standards of Learning assessment or Virginia Alternate Assessment Program assessment as soon as practicable after the assessment is administered.

Retaking SOL Assessments

Eligible students may qualify for an expedited retake of an end-of-course SOL assessment to earn a verified credit where the student meets the criteria established by the Virginia Board of Education.

Under the criteria established by the Board of Education, the student must:

1. Need the test for verified credit; and
2. Have passed the course associated with the test, and one of the following:
 - a. Failed the test by a narrow margin, or
 - b. Failed the test by any margin and have extenuating circumstances that would warrant re-testing; or
 - c. Did not sit for the regularly scheduled test for legitimate reasons.

For purposes of these criteria, “narrow margin” means a scaled score of 375-399. The division superintendent will be responsible for making the determination of what constitutes “extenuating circumstances” and “legitimate reasons” for purposes of an expedited re-test of an end-of-course SOL assessment. In addition, for students in grades three through eight, parents of eligible students shall be notified: a) of the opportunity to retake the test(s) and b) that a decision to not retake any test(s) will not impact their child’s grade or academic record. Prior to any additional testing, school staff shall obtain and maintain written/electronic documentation of parental consent for their child to take an expedited retake.

Graduation Requirements

In order to graduate from the Poquoson City Public Schools, a student must meet all applicable requirements set forth in the Standards of Accreditation (SOA) and Standards of Quality (SOQ). The School Board shall award diplomas to all secondary student who earn the units of credit prescribed by the Virginia Board of Education, pass the required assessments, and meet other requirements as prescribed by the School Board and approved by the Board of Education. The requirements for a student to earn a diploma are those in effect when he or she enters ninth grade for the first time. Diploma options include Standard Diplomas, Advanced Studies Diplomas, Applied Studies Diplomas, Certificates of Program Completion, and a high school equivalency examination approved by the Board of Education. A description of each diploma option, certificate or program and the specific requirements needed for graduation can be found in Superintendent’s Regulation 6-4.5(B) or in the PCPS Program of Studies. The School Board shall provide guidance from the Department to parents of students with disabilities regarding the Applied Studies diploma and its limitations at a student's annual individualized education program meeting corresponding to grades three through 12 when curriculum or statewide assessment decisions are being made that impact the type of diploma for which the student can qualify.

General Achievement Diploma

A General Achievement Diploma is intended to provide a diploma option for individuals who leave high school without a diploma. It should not be a first option for high school students. A General Achievement Diploma will be awarded to eligible candidates who satisfy the following requirements.

1. In order to be eligible for a General Achievement Diploma, an individual must meet one of the following criteria:
 - a. be at least eighteen (18) years old and not enrolled in public school; and/or
 - b. not otherwise be subject to Virginia’s compulsory school attendance requirements.

2. In order to be awarded a General Achievement Diploma, candidates must earn a total of twenty standard units of credit including the following:
 - a. four standard units of credit in English;
 - b. three standard units of credit in mathematics;
 - c. two standard units of credit in science;
 - d. two standard units of credit in history and social sciences; and
 - e. nine standard units of credit in elective courses.¹

3. The required standard units of credit may be earned by enrolling in:
 - a. a public school if the candidate meets the age requirements;
 - b. a community college or other institution of higher education;
 - c. an adult high school program; or
 - d. correspondence, distance learning, and on-line courses.

¹ The electives taken by a candidate must include at least two sequential electives in an area of concentration or specialization, which may include career and technical education and training.

Candidates for a General Achievement Diploma MUST participate in GED preparation and must achieve a passing score on the GED examination.

Transfer Students and Transfer of Credits

The Poquoson City secondary schools shall accept credits for transfer students in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Virginia Board of Education and relevant School Board policies. Course credits earned for online courses taken in the Department of Education's Virtual Virginia program shall transfer to Virginia public schools in accordance with provisions of the standards for accreditation.

Notice of Credits Needed for Graduation and of the Right to a Free Public Education

The School Board will notify the parents or guardian of rising eleventh and twelfth grade students of:

- (i) the number and subject area requirements of standard and verified units of credit required for graduation pursuant to the Standards of Accreditation; and
- (ii) the remaining number and subject area requirements of such units of credit the individual student requires for graduation.

The School Board will notify the parents or guardians of students with disabilities who have an individualized education plan (IEP) and who fail to meet the requirements for a standard or advanced studies diploma of the student's right to a free and appropriate education to age 21, inclusive, pursuant to Virginia Code § 22.1-213, et seq., and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400, et seq.

The School Board will notify the parents or guardians of students who fail to graduate or who fail to achieve the number of verified units of credit required for graduation as provided in the Standards of Accreditation and who have not reached 20 years of age on or before August 1st of the school year of the right to a free public education. If the student who does not graduate or achieve such verified units of credit is a student for whom English is a second language, the School Board will notify the parents or guardians of the student's opportunity for a free public education in accordance with Virginia Code § 22.1-5.

Waiver of Certain Graduation Requirements

Upon a recommendation from the division superintendent and for good cause, the School Board may request a waiver by the Virginia Board of Education of certain graduation requirements on a case-by-case basis.

See Superintendent's Regulation 6-4.5.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§ 22.1-253.13:1, 22.1-253.13:3, 22.1-253.13:4, 22.1-254(D), 22.1-254.1, 22.1-254.2; Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 20 U.S.C. 1400, et seq; Virginia Board of Education Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, 8 VAC 20-131-10, et seq.

Adopted: November 2002

Revised: July 2004, August 2006, July 2007, June 2009, June 2010, August 2013, June 2015, June 2019, August 2023

POLICY 6-4.7 LOCALLY AWARDED VERIFIED CREDITS

Generally

For students entering the ninth grade for the first-time in the 2018-2019 school year and thereafter:

The Poquoson City School Board will award locally verified credits in English, mathematics, science and history to students in accordance with this policy. First-time ninth graders, beginning with the 2018-2019 school years, or thereafter, will be able to earn no more than one locally awarded verified credit in English, mathematics, science and history/social science. Students must meet the eligibility requirements listed below. Students with credit accommodations are not subject to the limit on the number of locally awarded verified credits. Locally awarded verified credits can be applied toward a Standard or an Advanced Studies diploma.

Eligibility

To qualify for locally-warded verified credits, a student must:

1. Enter the ninth grade for the first time beginning with the 2018-2019 school year, or thereafter
2. Pass the high school credit course and not pass the related Standards of Learning (SOL) test
3. Take the Standards of Learning test at least twice; and
4. Score within a 375-399 scale score range on any administration of the Standards of Learning test
5. Demonstrate achievement in the academic content through the appeal process outlined below.

Appeal Process

If the student wishes to apply for locally awarded verified credit, he/she must attend and successfully complete the “SOL Brush-up” class for the subject in question. There will be no charge for this class.

The School Board shall appoint a review panel comprised of at least three educators (an administrator, a guidance counselor, and a subject-matter teacher) to evaluate the student’s evidence of achievement of adequate knowledge of the Standards of Learning. Based on the evidence it reviews, the review panel may:

1. award the verified credit;
2. deny the verified credit; or
3. make additional academic assignments prior to determining whether to award the verified credit.

The decision of the panel will be final.

For students entering the ninth grade for the first-time prior to the 2018-2019 school year:

Generally

The Poquoson City School Board will award verified credits in science and history/social sciences to students entering ninth grade for the first time in school years 2000-2001, or thereafter, in accordance with this policy. These credits may be applied to a standard diploma only. No student may earn more than four locally awarded verified credits.

Eligibility

To be eligible to earn locally awarded verified credits, a student must:

1. enter the ninth grade for the first time in school years 2000-2001, or thereafter;
2. have earned fewer than four of the student-selected verified credits required for the standard diploma;
3. pass the high school course and not pass the related Standards of Learning test;
4. take the Standards of Learning test at least twice; and
5. score within a 375-399 scale score range on any administration of the Standards of Learning test.

Appeal Process

If the student wishes to apply for locally awarded verified credit, he/she must attend and successfully complete the “SOL Brush-up” class for the subject in question. There will be no charge for this class.

The School Board shall appoint a review panel comprised of at least three educators (an administrator, a guidance counselor, and a subject-matter teacher) to evaluate the student’s evidence of achievement of adequate knowledge of the Standards of Learning. Based on the evidence it reviews, the review panel may:

4. award the verified credit;
5. deny the verified credit; or
6. make additional academic assignments prior to determining whether to award the verified credit.

The decision of the panel will be final.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, § 22.1-253.13:3; Acts of Assembly 2002, c. 577, as amended by Acts 2004, c.473; Guidelines for Local School Boards to Award Verified Credits for the Standard Diploma to Transition Students (attachment to Virginia Department of Education Superintendent’s Memo No. 52 (August 9, 2002) as amended by the Virginia Board of Education September 7, 2006.

Adopted: November 2002

Revised: July 2004; July 2007; April 2020