

ARTICLE I: INTRODUCTION

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POLICY 6-1.1 EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

It shall be the philosophy of the Poquoson City School Board to provide equal opportunity for every student to achieve maximum intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth, to insure that each individual be equipped to communicate effectively with other people, to be competent both in the work place and in higher education, and to feel confident of the ability to make creative and constructive decisions in his life.

It shall be the policy of the School Board to:

1. provide the necessary trained and dedicated leadership, qualified personnel, equipment and materials to assure an appropriate education for every student, regardless of race, color, sex, physical condition, or national origin;
2. treat all personnel equally with the highest degree of respect; and
3. appropriate funds fairly and equally.

The School Board believes that quality is essential to sustain its mission, develop shared values, and accomplish its goals.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Constitution of Virginia, Article VIII, §7; Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§22.1-23.3, 22.1-78, 22.1-79, 22.1-293, 22.1-295; Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, 8 VAC 20-130-10, et seq.

Adopted: November 2002

Revised: June 2020, September 2021

POLICY 6-1.2 ACCREDITATION

State

The Poquoson City School Board intends that all Poquoson City Public Schools be fully accredited by the Virginia Department of Education. The division superintendent or his/her designee shall be responsible for seeing that the schools are in compliance with the state accreditation standards. The division superintendent shall keep the School Board informed of the implementation of the accreditation standards in accordance with the accrediting standards established by the Virginia Board of Education. The School Board will review the accreditation status of each school in the school division annually in a public session of a School Board meeting.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950 as amended, §22.1-253.13:3; Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, 8 VAC 20-131-10, et seq.

Adopted: November 2002

Revised: July 2004, August 2013, March 2018

POLICY 6-1.3 INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Generally

The Poquoson City School Board is committed to excellence in education, equality of educational opportunity, and the recognition of each student's individuality. Inasmuch as students differ in their rate of physical, mental, emotional and social growth and vary in their needs and abilities, Poquoson City Public Schools shall provide learning opportunities that are consistent with personal development and potential. Programs shall emphasize diagnostic and prescriptive instruction, allowing an individual approach to each student's learning style and educational needs.

The Poquoson City educational program shall introduce each student to a variety of interests and areas that offer exposure to the range of opportunities available in later years. These experiences should produce the basis for further education and future employment. As students demonstrate increased maturity, they may assume more responsibility for the decisions regarding their education.

The school environment should be responsive and conducive to learning. The physical environment facilitates and enhances the learning experiences available to each student. A responsive environment includes competent, dedicated teachers using a variety of techniques and a classroom atmosphere where students can function and develop according to their abilities. Safety, physical comfort, and appearance also are vital environmental components.

Standards of Quality and Objectives

The School Board accepts the overall goals of public education as expressed by the Standards of Quality legislated by the Virginia General Assembly and implemented by Virginia Board of Education regulations. Education seeks to aid each student, consistent with his abilities, to:

1. develop competence in the basic learning skills;
2. develop the intellectual skills of rational thought and creativity;
3. acquire knowledge and process skills of science and technology;
4. progress on the basis of achievement;
5. qualify for further education and/or employment;
6. develop personal standards of ethical behavior and moral choice;
7. participate in society as a responsible family member and citizen;
8. develop a positive and realistic concept of self and others;
9. practice sound habits of personal health and physical fitness;

10. enhance the quality of the environment;
11. develop skills, knowledge, and attitudes regarding the arts;
12. acquire a basic understanding and appreciation of democracy and the free enterprise system;
13. raise student and school achievement in the core Standards of Learning; and
14. develop proficiency in the use of computers and related technology, computer science, and computational thinking including computer coding.

The School Board will report its compliance with the Standards of Quality to the Board of Education annually. The report of compliance will be submitted to the Board of Education by the chairman of the School Board and the division superintendent.

Standards of Quality - Programs and Services

The School Board commits itself to providing programs and services as stated in the Standards of Quality to an extent proportionate to the availability of state and local funding.

Annual Notice

At the beginning of each school year, each Poquoson City Public School will provide to its students' parents or guardians:

1. The learning objectives developed in accordance with the Standards of Accreditation to be achieved at their child's grade level, or, in high school, a copy of the syllabus for each of their child's courses;
2. A copy of the Standards of Learning applicable to the child's grade or course requirements and the approximate date and potential impact of the child's SOL testing;
3. An annual notice to students in all grade levels of all requirements for Standard, Advanced Studies, and Modified Standard Diplomas; and
4. The School Board's policies on promotion, retention, and remediation.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§22.1-23.3, 22.1-78, 22.1-253.13:1, et seq.; Virginia Board of Education Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, 8 VAC 20-131-10

Adopted: November 2002

Revised July 2004; July 2005, September 2021

POLICY 6-1.4 ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN

The Poquoson City Public Schools may be organized as follows:

1. Primary School may be organized as including grades K-2.
2. Elementary School may be organized as including grades K-5, or K-2 and 3-5.
3. Middle School may be organized as including grades 6-8.
4. Senior High School may be organized as including grades 9-12.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Constitution of Virginia, Article VIII, §7; Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§22.1-78 and 22.1-79.

Adopted: November 2002

POLICY 6-1.5 SCHOOL YEAR/SCHOOL DAY

School Year

In accordance with applicable law, Poquoson City Public Schools will be operated with students in attendance a minimum of 180 teaching days or 990 hours (540 hours for kindergarten) per school year. A minimum of 680 hours of instructional time will be provided to students in elementary school, except for students in half-day kindergarten, in the four academic disciplines of English, mathematics, science, and history and social science and a minimum of 375 hours of instructional time will be provided to students in half-day kindergarten in the four academic disciplines of English, mathematics, science, and history and social science. Days on which schools are closed due to severe weather or other emergencies will be made up if necessary to meet these requirements in the manner prescribed by law.

Make Up Days

If severe weather conditions or other emergency situations result in the closing of a school or schools in the school division for

1. five or fewer days, all missed days will be made up by adding teaching days to the school calendar or extending the length of the school day;
2. six days or more, the first five days plus one day for each two days missed in excess of the first five will be made up by adding teaching days to the school calendar or extending the length of the school day.

If severe weather conditions or other emergency situations result in the closing of any school in the school division and such school has been unable to meet the 180 day teaching requirement, the school division may make up the missed teaching days by providing its students with instructional hours equivalent to such missed teaching days to meet the minimum 990 teaching hour requirement.

When severe weather conditions or other emergency situations have resulted in the closing of any school in the school division for in-person instruction, the school division may declare an unscheduled remote learning day whereby the school provides instruction and student services that are consistent with guidelines established by the Department of Education to ensure the equitable provision of such services. No school division shall claim more than 10 unscheduled remote learning days in a school year unless the Superintendent of Public Instruction grants an extension.

The Board of Education may waive the requirement that the school division provide additional teaching days or teaching hours to compensate for school closings resulting from a declared state of emergency or severe weather conditions or other emergency situations under certain circumstances. If the School Board desires a waiver, it will submit a request for a waiver to the Board of Education. The request will include evidence of the school division's efforts to reschedule as many days as possible and certification by the division superintendent and School Board

chairman that every reasonable effort to make up lost teaching days was exhausted before the School Board requested the waiver. If the waiver is denied, the school division will make up the lost instructional time.

Notwithstanding the provisions of this policy, the Board of Education shall waive the requirement that the school division provide additional teaching days or teaching hours to compensate for school closings resulting from an evacuation directed and compelled by the Governor pursuant to § 44-146.17 for up to five teaching days. If the School Board desires such a waiver, it shall notify the Board of Education and provide evidence of efforts that have been made by the school division to reschedule as many days as possible and certification by the division superintendent and chairman of School Board that every reasonable effort for making up lost teaching days or teaching hours was exhausted. After receiving such notification, the Board shall grant the waiver and there shall be no proportionate reduction in the amount paid by the Commonwealth from the Basic School Aid Fund. Further, the local appropriations for educational purposes necessary to fund 180 teaching days or 990 teaching hours shall not be proportionally reduced by any local governing body due to any reduction in the length of the term of any school or the schools in a school division permitted by such waiver.

School Calendar

The first day of school shall be no earlier than 14 days before Labor Day unless this requirement has been waived by the Board of Education pursuant to the Code of Virginia, §22.1-79.1 or the second enactment of Chapter 569 of the Acts of Assembly of 2019 applies. The official school calendar for the following year shall be adopted no later than June 1 by the School Board upon the recommendation of the division superintendent. Any exceptions or revisions to the calendar must be approved in advance by the School Board. The division superintendent shall insure that the calendar conforms to the number of actual days of employment as required by applicable law and School Board policy. An advisory committee composed of teachers, parents, and school administrators may be utilized to recommend a proposed calendar to the division superintendent. The recommendation of this committee shall be advisory only. The School Board shall establish the school calendar and related teaching contracts in accordance with applicable regulations of the Board of Education to include contingencies for making up teaching days and teaching hours missed for emergency situations. Historical data shall be used to determine the needs of the school division including scheduling holidays, breaks and work days.

School Day

The standard school day for students in grades kindergarten through twelve will average at least 5 ½ hours, excluding breaks for meals. The secondary school class schedule shall contain a minimum of 140 clock hours for each unit of credit. When credit is awarded in less than whole units, the increment awarded must be no greater than the fractional part of the 140 hours of instruction provided.

The time for opening and closing schools will be established by the School Board upon recommendation of the division superintendent, provided that the daily program for students in grades one through twelve will average at least 5 ½ hours, excluding breaks for meals. If the required program length is maintained, the School Board may approve occasional shortened days for staff development, conferences, planning, and other activities designed to improve the instructional program, provided that no more than one day in each five-day week may be shortened to no less than four hours. When exceptions in the length of the daily program are necessary for special education, alternative education, double shifts, and scheduling or other unusual situations, the School Board will request approval for the exceptions by the Superintendent of Public Instruction no later than by August 1 preceding the school year for which they are requested.

The length of the work day for employees will be determined by the School Board. It will be of sufficient length to allow for the daily program for students and additional time as may be necessary for such activities as planning, preparation, meetings, workshops, conferences, meal intermissions, or other contractual obligations.

The length of the school day shall be modified, if appropriate, as outlined in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) of a special education student. The instructional time shall be protected from interruptions and intrusions.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended §§22.1-19, 22.1-79.1, 22.1-98; Virginia Board of Education Regulations Governing Reduction of State Aid When Length of School Term Below One Hundred Eighty School Days, 8 VAC 20-520-10; and Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, 8 VAC 20-131-10, et seq.

Adopted: November 2002

Revised: August 2006, June 2015, August 2018, August 2019, April 2020, August 2021

POLICY 6-1.6 CLASS SIZE

The Poquoson City School Board expects that class sizes will be consistent with those mandated by the Standards of Quality and those acceptable under the accrediting requirements of the Virginia Board of Education and, where applicable, the Southern Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities.

In addition, the School Board sets the following guidelines:

1. small classes are desirable at the primary level;
2. larger classes are permissible where large group instruction is appropriate; and
3. in all courses requiring specially designed facilities and equipment, enrollment shall be limited on a priority basis to those students needing such courses in order to meet graduation requirements.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§22.1-78, 22.1-253.13:2(C); 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

POLICY 6-1.7 CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES

Generally

The Poquoson City School Board encourages the observance throughout the school division of special days and ceremonies proclaimed by the President of the United States, the United States Congress, the Governor of Virginia, and the Virginia General Assembly. Such observances should be of educational value to the students and in acceptable taste.

Flags

In accordance with state law, the American flag shall be displayed in each classroom at each school. The School Board authorizes and encourages the display of the flag of the Commonwealth of Virginia in accordance with state law.

Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States

The Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States and the statement “‘In God We Trust,’ the National Motto, enacted by Congress in 1956,” shall be posted in a conspicuous place in each Poquoson City Public School for all students to read.

Opening Exercises

The Pledge of Allegiance shall be recited daily in each classroom of the Poquoson City Public Schools as part of opening exercises. During the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, students shall stand while facing the flag with their right hand over their hearts, or in an appropriate salute if in uniform.

No student shall be compelled to recite the Pledge of Allegiance if the student, the student’s parent(s), or legal guardian object on religious, philosophical or other grounds to the student’s participation in this exercise. Students who are exempt from reciting the Pledge of Allegiance shall stand quietly or sit at their desks while others recite the Pledge and make no display that disrupts or distracts those who are reciting the Pledge.

Appropriate accommodations shall be made for students who are unable to comply with the procedures described herein due to disability.

Minute of Silence

During the school day at an appropriate time designated by the principal, one minute of silence shall be observed by the students of each school in the division for the purposes and under the conditions established by state law.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§22.1-133, 22.1-203, 22.1-203.1, 22.1-203.2; Acts of Assembly 2003, c. 902.

Adopted: November 2002

Revised: July 2003

POLICY 6-1.8 RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

In accordance with the mandate of the Constitution of the United States prohibiting the establishment of religion, it is the policy of the Poquoson City School Board that the Poquoson City Public Schools shall be neutral in matters of religion. This means that the Poquoson City Public Schools:

1. will assume no role or responsibility for the religious training of any student; and
2. will in no way become involved in the religious belief, disbelief or doubt of any student.

This requirement of neutrality need not preclude nor hinder the Poquoson City Public Schools in fulfilling their responsibility to educate students to be tolerant and respectful of religious diversity. The School Board also recognizes that one of its educational responsibilities is to advance the students' knowledge and appreciation of the role that religion has played in the social, cultural, and historical development of civilization. Therefore, the division's instructional staff shall approach religion from an objective, curriculum-related perspective, encouraging all students and staff members to be aware of the diversity of beliefs and respectful of each other's religious and/or non-religious views. In that spirit of respect, students and staff members may be excused from participating in activities that are contrary to their religious beliefs unless there are clear issues of compelling public interest that would preclude such nonparticipation.

The School Board may offer, as an elective in grades nine through twelve with appropriate credits toward graduation, a comparative religion class that focuses on the basic tenets, history, and religious observances and rites of world religions.

Nothing herein shall prohibit students' right to express their beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions. Home and classroom work shall be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance and other legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §22.1-78, 22.1-202, 22.1-203.1, 22.1-203.2; 22.1-203.3; Constitution of the United States (1st. Amendment).

Adopted: November 2002

Revised: July 2004; August 2006; July 2008

POLICY 6-1.9 COMMUNITY RESOURCE PERSONS/SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

The Poquoson City School Board supports and encourages the active participation of parents and members of the community in providing and extending educational opportunities for children. The involvement of parents, volunteers, and others in the community who can serve as a resource to schools is a fundamentally important component of successful school programs. The administration of each school will direct the activities of parents, volunteers and other community resources at the building level. Volunteers serve at the sole discretion of the principal, division superintendent and/or the School Board. They are obligated to adhere to all policies and regulations of the School Board and administration, but are not School Board employees and do not enjoy the benefits of employment. (See Policy 2-3.1).

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§22.1-70, 22.1-78, 22.1-253.13:6; Virginia Board of Education Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, 8 VAC 20-131-10, et seq.

Adopted: November 2002

POLICY 6-1.10 TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

The Poquoson City School Board recognizes that training for effective citizenship is one of the major purposes of education and that many important areas of study involve issues on which differing positions are held by individuals or groups. To pursue this purpose the Poquoson City Public Schools allow teachers and students to:

1. have free access to all relevant information and materials in the school;
2. conduct research in an atmosphere of freedom from bias and prejudice; and
3. form and express opinions on assigned issues.

The role of the teachers in the presentation of assigned issues is vitally important. Teachers should strive to present all sides of a given issue to the students in a dispassionate manner. The goal is for the students to be taught to think clearly on all matters of importance, and to make decisions in the light of all the material that has been presented or can be researched on the issues. Indoctrination is not the intent or purpose of the school division. Although the instructional program of the school division includes many facets of the political party system in the United States, the School Board does not approve as a part of the school program the involvement of students in activities that imply school endorsement of an individual political party or candidate.

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

Adopted: November 2002

POLICY 6-1.11 INTERSTATE COMPACT ON EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR MILITARY CHILDREN

Notwithstanding any other Poquoson City School Board Policy section, the School Board shall implement the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children. In the event that another Policy section conflicts with the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, the latter shall govern, unless the conflict is one with federal or Constitutional law.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia of 1950, as amended, §22.1-360.

Adopted: June 2009

POLICY 6-1.12 PLANNING TIME

All Poquoson City Public elementary school teachers shall have at least an average of thirty (30) minutes per day during the student's school week designated as planning time.

LEGAL REFERENCE: Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, §§22.1-291.1

Adopted: June 2009