

Information for High School Students Transferring To Virginia's Public Schools

Virginia Department of Education, February 2003



Welcome to Virginia's public schools.

As a transfer student, you may have questions about what to expect and what will be expected of you as a student in a Virginia high school. Your school and the Virginia Department of Education are committed to making sure you have the information you need to make a smooth transition in your educational program.

The following questions and answers cover issues typically asked by students transferring into a Virginia high school from a public school in another state or a private school. Your school guidance counselor can provide additional information.

Are students who transfer to Virginia public high schools subject to the same requirements for graduation as other students?

All students in Virginia public high schools are required to earn a minimum number of units of credit to earn a high school diploma. There are two types of units of credit that a student must earn to receive a Standard Diploma or an Advanced Studies Diploma:

- * A standard unit of credit is earned by completing 140 hours of instruction and passing the course.
- * A verified unit of credit is earned by passing a course and its related Standards of Learning (SOL) test or approved substitute test.

Certain high school students who have a disability and are unlikely to meet the credit requirements for a Standard Diploma are eligible for the Modified Standard Diploma. The student's Individual Education Program (IEP) team and the student's parents determine a student's eligibility for a Modified Standard Diploma.

Each transfer student's academic record is evaluated to determine the number of standard units of credit that have been earned, as well as ascertain the remaining number of standard units of credit and verified units of credit that a student needs to graduate. The type of diploma a student wishes to pursue determines the total number of standard units of credit and verified units of credit necessary for graduation.

What subjects or courses can be taken to earn verified units of credit?

The following subjects and courses offer end-of-course SOL tests or approved substitute tests:

- * English : English: Writing, and English: Reading

Literature/Research (tested in the 11th grade);

- * Math : Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry;
- * Science : Earth Science, Biology, Chemistry; and
- * History/social studies : U.S. History, World History from 1000 A.D., World History to 1000 A.D., World Geography.

A number of career and technical courses offering industry certification and licenses provide additional opportunities for students to earn verified units of credit.

The document *Substitute Tests for Verified Credit* at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/suptsmemos/2002/inf079a.pdf> provides a complete list of approved substitute tests for earning verified units of credit.

Are transfer students required to take SOL tests for courses taken before transferring into a Virginia high school? For example, would a student be required to take the Algebra I SOL test if he or she took Algebra I in the eighth grade and transferred to a Virginia school during the ninth grade?

Students are not required to take the SOL test related to a course taken before transferring to a Virginia public school; however, a student wishing to earn a verified unit of credit may ask to take the SOL test associated with a course taken prior to the transfer. Thus, a student who completed Algebra I at a previous school is not required to take the Algebra I end-of-course test, but may wish to do so to earn a verified unit of credit. This verified credit can count for either diploma.

A transfer student should look at all opportunities to earn verified units of credit with current and future courses before making the decision to take a SOL test for a course taken for credit before the transfer.

Will coursework credit also be given for students who transfer from private schools or Department of Defense schools?

The academic records of students transferring from something other than a Virginia public school - including schools outside the United States, schools accredited through the Virginia Council for Private Education (VCPE), schools operated by the Department of Defense, and other accredited schools are reviewed to determine the amount of credit that will be given.

Standard units of credit are accepted for courses completed in accredited colleges and universities if the student has been given credit by the school previously

attended or with prior written approval of the principal. Coursework from other accredited schools will be accepted.

What are the graduation requirements for students who transfer to Virginia high schools during the ninth grade or at the beginning of the tenth grade?

Students entering a Virginia public high school for the first time during the ninth grade or at the beginning of the tenth grade are required to meet the same graduation requirements as nontransfer students.

For a Standard Diploma, a student must earn 22 standard units of credit and six verified units of credit. Two of the six verified units of credit must be in English. The remaining four verified units of credit necessary for graduation are as follows:

- * For the transition classes of 2004, 2005, and 2006 – of the student’s own choosing.
- * For the classes of 2007 and beyond – one each in math, history/social studies, and science, and one of the student’s own choosing.

For an Advanced Studies Diploma, a student must earn 24 standard units of credit and nine verified units of credit. The nine verified units of credit must include two each in English, math, history/social studies, and laboratory science, and one of the student’s own choosing.

A student should discuss the specific course requirements and course options with the guidance counselor.

What are the graduation requirements for students who transfer to Virginia high schools during the tenth grade or at the beginning of the eleventh grade?

Students transferring during the tenth grade or at the beginning of the eleventh grade are required to earn a minimum of four verified units of credit for a Standard Diploma and six verified units of credit for an Advanced Studies Diploma. For a Standard Diploma for students in the class of 2004, 2005, and 2006, the four verified units of credit include one in English and three of the student’s choosing. For a Standard Diploma for the class of 2007 and beyond, the four verified units of credit include one each in English, math, history/social studies, and science.

A student should discuss the specific course requirements and course options with the guidance counselor.

What are the graduation requirements for students who transfer to Virginia high schools during the eleventh grade or at the beginning of the twelfth grade?

Students transferring during the eleventh grade or at the beginning of the twelfth grade are required to earn a minimum of two verified units of credit for a Standard Diploma and four verified units of credits for an Advanced Studies Diploma. One verified unit of credit must be in English for either diploma.

Typically, an eleventh grader is enrolled in English and U.S. History. Both of these content areas have SOL tests that would apply toward graduation. The student also may be enrolled in other SOL tested courses as part of the normal eleventh- and twelfth-grade programs, thus having the opportunity to accrue additional verified units of credits required for graduation.

A student should discuss the specific course requirements and course options with the guidance counselor.

Can a transfer student earn more than the required verified units of credit?

Yes. The requirements outlined above specify the minimum verified units of credit that a transfer student must earn toward a high school diploma.

What about students who attended a Virginia public high school in ninth grade, transferred to another state, and returned to a Virginia public high school in the eleventh grade with the intention of graduating in Virginia?

Such a student would be considered a first-time transfer student and be expected to meet the requirements in effect when he or she reenters a Virginia public high school.

In that case, students transferring to Virginia during the tenth grade or at the beginning of the eleventh or twelfth grade are expected to earn a minimum of four verified units of credit for a Standard Diploma and six verified units of credit for an Advanced Studies Diploma. Students transferring during the eleventh grade or at the beginning of the twelfth grade are expected to earn a minimum of two verified units of credit for a Standard Diploma and four verified credits for an Advanced Studies Diploma.

What if a student transfers during the twelfth grade and is unable to meet the verified units of credit requirements for graduation?

The student would be given every opportunity to earn a Standard Diploma, Advanced Studies Diploma, or Modified Standard Diploma, whichever is applicable. If it is not possible for the student to meet the requirements for a diploma, arrangements should be made for the student’s previous school to award the diploma. If these arrangements cannot be made, a waiver of the verified unit of credit requirements may be available to the student. The local school board would have to request such a waiver from the Department of Education.

Regulations concerning transfer of credit and transfer students is available at 8 VAC 20-131-60 of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Accountability/soafulltxt.pdf>