



**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**BRIEFING**

# **DEVELOPMENT OF THE TECHNICAL DIPLOMA AND THE ADVANCED TECHNICAL DIPLOMA**

**PRESENTED TO THE**

**VIRGINIA MANUFACTURING DEVELOPMENT  
COMMISSION**

**AUGUST 14, 2007**

**MICHELLE VUCCI  
DIRECTOR OF POLICY  
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
DIVISION OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS**

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- ✓ The 2007 General Assembly passed HB 2039, a bill that establishes a technical diploma and an advanced technical diploma. HB 2039 incorporates the provisions and concepts of HB 1442 and SB 1447, which were also bills that would have created technical diplomas.
- ✓ HB 2039 states the following:

*In establishing course and credit requirements for a high school diploma, the Board (of Education) shall:*

- 3. Establish the requirements for a technical diploma. This diploma shall meet or exceed the requirements of a standard diploma and will include a concentration in career and technical education, as established in Board regulations. A student who meets the requirement for the advanced studies diploma who also fulfills a concentration in career and technical education shall receive an advanced technical diploma. The Board may develop or designate assessments in career and technical education for the purposes of awarding verified credit pursuant to subdivision 6;*
- ✓ In February of this year, the Board of Education approved amending its accrediting standards relating to the requirements for graduation to address the technical diplomas. This set of regulations sets out the types of diplomas issued for Virginia students.

- ✓ The state process for amending regulations takes time – it can take up to 18 months for regulatory revisions to take effect.
- ✓ The Board has been receiving public comment regarding the technical diplomas. The Board held a forum on July 24, 2007. At this forum, the following organizations provided comment on the requirements of the technical diplomas:
  - Virginia Automobile Dealers Association
  - Virginia Career Education Foundation
  - Virginia Chamber of Commerce
  - Advisory Board on Career and Technical Education
  - Virginia Association for Career and Technical Education
  - State Special Education Advisory Committee
  - Virginia PTA
  - Virginia Education Association
  - Virginia School Boards Association
  - Virginia Association of School Superintendents
- ✓ The Board will hold a second forum in late September, at which time the Virginia Manufacturers Association and others will provide additional comments on the technical diploma.
- ✓ The Board's goal is to have a set of draft requirements for both technical diplomas available for the public to comment on in late fall.

## SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT TO DATE

At the July 24 forum, participants were asked for input regarding the skills needed for entry into the workplace and what the requirements of the technical diplomas should be. General comments were as follows:

- ✓ Students need to have the skills to become “trainable employees” – through the ability to read, write, compute, and communicate, a combination of soft skills and hard skills.
- ✓ Students should earn a good assessment-based credential that provides a uniform measure of key workplace skills.
- ✓ The technical diplomas need to be actively promoted as attractive and lucrative options to students, parents, and potential employers.
- ✓ Partnerships should continue to be fostered between the Board, local school divisions, institutions of higher education, and business and industry to ensure that students have access to the career pathways that will be addressed in the technical diplomas.

- ✓ The requirements of the technical diploma should exceed those of the standard diploma. The technical diploma requirement could mirror the Commonwealth Scholars Program, a program that requires high school students to complete the following:
  - 4 English courses
  - 3 Mathematics courses (Algebra I and II plus Geometry)
  - 3 Laboratory Science courses (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)
  - 3.5 History & Social Science courses (chosen from options that include economics and financial literacy)
  - 1 Fine Arts or Career and Technical Education course
  - 2 Foreign Language courses (in the same language)
  - 2 Physical Education courses
  
- ✓ The technical diploma could also be modeled after a program of the Southern Regional Education Board called High Schools That Work. Like Commonwealth Scholars, this program is also intended to prepare students for further education and the workplace through the following minimum requirements:
  - 4 English courses
  - 4 Mathematics courses (to include Algebra I and II, Geometry and a higher-level course)
  - 3 college-preparatory science courses (Biology, Chemistry, Physics or Anatomy/Physiology)
  - 3 college-preparatory social studies
  - 1 computer course (beyond keyboarding)
  - 4 credits in a concentration (career and technical education or academic)

**PUBLIC COMMENT - RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (VACTE) – TECHNICAL DIPLOMA**

Discipline Area	CURRENT STANDARD DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS Standard Units of Credit Required	VACTE PROPOSAL Standard Units of Credit Required
English	4	4
Math	3	3
Laboratory Science	3	3
History & Social Sciences	3	3
Health & Physical Education	2	2
Fine Arts or Career & Technical Education	1	
Electives	6	1
Foreign Language		2
Career & Technical Education		4-5
Total	22	22-23

Additional Requirements recommended by VACTE:

- ✓ Three credits in mathematics should be Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II.
- ✓ Three credits in science would be above Earth Science.
- ✓ All CTE requirements must meet the requirements for a CTE diploma seal.
- ✓ Dual credit with higher education where applicable.
- ✓ An academic career plan would be used to begin in middle school and continue throughout high school.

**PUBLIC COMMENT - RECOMMENDATIONS FROM  
THE VACTE – ADVANCED TECHNICAL DIPLOMA**

Discipline Area	CURRENT REQUIREMENTS Standard Units of Credit Required	VACTE PROPOSAL Standard Units of Credit Required
English	4	4
Math	4	3
Math or Science*		1
Laboratory Science	4	3
History & Social Sciences	4	3
Foreign Language	3	2
Health & Physical Education	2	2
Fine Arts or Career & Technical Education	1	
Telecommunication Education		1
Electives	2	
Career & Technical Education		5-6
Total	24	24-25

Additional Requirements recommended by VACTE:

- ✓ Three credits in mathematics should be Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II.
- ✓ \*Mathematics or Science (1 credit) must be related to the student’s CTE specialization.
- ✓ Three credits in science would be above Earth Science.
- ✓ All CTE requirements must meet the requirements for a CTE diploma seal and the Advanced Mathematics and Technology seal.
- ✓ Where applicable, CTE requirements should be verified credits via Industry Assessment.
- ✓ Dual credit with higher education where applicable.
- ✓ An academic career plan would be used to begin in middle school and continue throughout high school.

## NEXT STEPS --- MORE INPUT

The Board continues to be interested in feedback and the public from both school divisions and industry regarding how to establish technical diplomas that ensure all students can acquire the skills necessary to excel in the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace.

The Board values feedback from you and would very much like your comments in the following areas:

- ✓ What skill set is most needed in the workplace today? In addition to the soft skills, what hard skills are in greatest demand? Does demand vary by region?
- ✓ What partnerships between business and education currently exist that could enhance student training and education opportunities? How could these partnerships be used to promote the technical diplomas?



**Contact Information:**

**Anne D. Wescott**  
**Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications**  
**Office of Policy and Communications**  
**Virginia Department of Education**  
**(804) 225-2403**  
[anne.wescott@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:anne.wescott@doe.virginia.gov)

**Michelle M. Vucci**  
**Director of Policy**  
**Office of Policy and Communications**  
**Virginia Department of Education**  
**(804) 371-0558**  
[michelle.vucci@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:michelle.vucci@doe.virginia.gov)