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James F. Lane, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

OFFICE OF MEDIA RELATIONS

Contact: Charles Pyle, 804-371-2420

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Contact: [Charles B. Pyle](#), Director of Media Relations (804) 371-2420 or (804) 640-2117

State Superintendent Provides Flexibility for Class of 2020 and Other Students

RICHMOND — Superintendent of Public Instruction James Lane announced today that he is using his authority under [Governor Ralph Northam's Executive Order 51](#) to ensure that high school seniors who were on track to earn a diploma later this spring are able to graduate, despite the closure of schools for the remainder of the year as a means of slowing the spread of COVID-19. "The governor and I agree that every student who was on a trajectory toward earning a diploma should be able to graduate on time and move on to the next stage of his or her life," Lane said. "I hope the flexibility that I am announcing today will help students and teachers as they cope with the deep disappointment of having their time together unexpectedly cut short and of not being able to enjoy the recognitions and celebrations that should be a part of every student's graduation experience."

In a guidance document sent to the commonwealth's 132 school divisions, Lane said that high school seniors in the following categories will be able to graduate on time, despite the closure of schools for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year:

- Seniors currently enrolled in a course for which they need a standard or verified credit in order to graduate (verified credits are earned by passing a required course and also passing the associated Standards of Learning test);
- Seniors who have successfully completed a course required for graduation, but have not earned the associated verified credit; and
- Seniors who have not passed a required student-selected SOL test;

Lane said flexibility also is available for seniors who have not earned a required career and technical education credential, seniors who have not completed a fine or performing arts course or CTE course, seniors who were unable to complete sequential course requirements, and seniors who have not completed a course in economics and personal finance.

"The vast majority of our high school seniors have already met most of the commonwealth's rigorous graduation requirements," Lane said. "And for most students in the class of 2020, that means passing nine end-of-course SOL tests in English, mathematics, science and history to earn an Advanced Studies Diploma."

Action by the General Assembly is required for the waiver of requirements in the Code of Virginia for the following students:

- Seniors who have not completed training in emergency first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and the use of automated external defibrillators; and
- Seniors who have not completed a virtual course.

“I am confident that everyone recognizes that students should not be prevented from graduating because of unforeseen circumstances beyond their control,” Lane said.

The [guidance issued by the Virginia Department of Education](#) also includes options for providing students in other grades with equitable opportunities and instruction covering required course content — either while schools are closed, over the summer or during 2020-2021 — without disrupting their academic progress. These options include the following:

- Utilizing distance/remote, face-to-face or blended learning or learning modules while schools are closed with plans to ensure equitable access;
- Offering instruction during the summer of 2020;
- Extending the 2019-2020 calendar or adjusting the 2020-2021 calendar to allow for instruction in core content not covered by March 13, 2020; and
- Incorporating learning modules into an extension of the 2019-2020 school year or the existing 2020-2021 schedule.

“As school divisions review our guidance and plot a course forward that best fits their unique circumstances, they should make sure that every decision is equitable and meets the needs of all learners, including early learners, English learners and students with disabilities,” Lane said. “VDOE will continue to provide technical support and updated guidance as new issues and questions arise during this unprecedented challenge.”

VDOE this week also issued an online guide for parents and other caregivers. [COVID-19: A Parent Guide for School-Aged Children](#) is available on the department website and includes information on in-home learning activities, social distancing and other topics.

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