

1981

An analysis of selected state requirements for graduation from high school in Virginia 1900-1976

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AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR
GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN VIRGINIA 1900-1976

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

Ed.D. 1981

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AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED STATE
REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL
IN VIRGINIA 1900-1976

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Virginia Richards Armstrong
May 1981

APPROVAL SHEET

AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED STATE
REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION FROM HIGH SCHOOL
IN VIRGINIA 1900-1976

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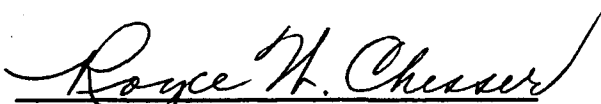
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Virginia State Board of Education approved a policy of competency-based education for Virginia's elementary and secondary schools at the Board's meeting in July, 1976. The policy became effective on July 1, 1978, and will apply to students graduating in 1981.¹ One result of the policy was a requirement for students to pass State competency tests before they can graduate from secondary schools of Virginia.

Controversy has resulted from this additional requirement for graduation. Some educators believe that competency testing is a part of a much needed "return to the basics,"² while others believe that the test requirement will actually lower educational goals.³ There is also disagreement among parents, students, and other citizens about the value of this

¹B. D. Karlen, "The Role of the Virginia State Board of Education in Policy Making" (Ed.D. dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1977), p. 123.

²Robert L. Ebel, "The Case for Minimum Competency Testing," Phi Delta Kappan, April, 1978, p. 549.

³Gerald W. Bracey, "Some Reservations About Minimum Competency Testing," Phi Delta Kappan, April, 1978, p. 552.

new requirement for high school graduation. This dispute is reflected in newspaper articles, public debates, and editorials.⁴

The controversy over competency tests causes one to wonder whether past requirements for receiving a high school diploma from Virginia public schools were a factor in establishing test requirements in 1980. As high schools have developed in Virginia since 1900, have there been changes in the requirements for graduation? Have students been required by either statute or policy to take tests to prove their competencies? Did students spend more hours in school in the early part of the twentieth century than they do now? Have there been changes in the required courses for high school students? If there have been changes, were they designed to improve basic skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic so that the high school graduates could function more effectively in jobs after graduation? Or, were the changes intended to improve students' preparation for college? If there have been changes in high school requirements since the beginning of the twentieth century, what were some of the causes and some of the effects of these changes?

Investigation into these questions may help educators and laymen to gain insights concerning the State requirements for graduation in 1980, and to provide a better understanding

⁴"Competency Test Overreaction Hit," The Ledger-Star, 8 January 1979, Section B, p. 1.

of the causes and effects of changes in requirements for high school graduation.

In the study, the development of the high school graduation requirements in Virginia was traced from 1900-1976. The focus of the study was placed on four areas related to completion of a high school education: the attendance requirements, the curriculum, the number of credits needed for graduation, and the competency test requirements. Since these items are all part of the requirements for graduation in 1980, a focus on the historical development of each area should help one to gain insight into requirements for graduation today and to project future trends for high school graduation requirements.

What groups influenced the Virginia General Assembly and the State Board of Education to change the requirements for graduation? How do the groups influence the legislators to make the changes? One would expect economic interests of such groups as that of business and of labor to play a large part. For example, country schools could be open fewer days a year because farm families need their children to work in the fields. Labor interests may want students to have vocational training in order to meet the needs for skilled labor, and also to keep the younger, less costly workers out of the labor market.

The political climate could also be a major influence on changes in graduation requirements. Within the control

of the progressive era of the early twentieth century, improvements in public education served as a key factor in providing a desire for social mobility. Also, as the progressives worked to achieve a broader participation in American democracy, they would demand that more citizens have a greater amount of formal education. This setting could no doubt lead the Virginia Assembly to enact compulsory education laws and, at the same time, extend the number of days in the school year.

When colleges in Virginia expand, then the pressures from higher education on members of both the legislature and the State Board of Education could play a part in increasing graduation requirements. Requirements for admission to college may force an expansion of the academic curriculum.

An examination of these various influences on requirements for graduation should identify the pressures that may be exerted on legislative bodies in 1980. Could it be possible that the motivation that led these early twentieth century interest groups to exert pressure for change in high school graduation requirements is also that which causes the interest groups of 1980 to exert pressure for change?

The period from 1900 to 1976 has been selected for several reasons. First, until 1900, the development of the school system in Virginia centered on organization of the

elementary schools.⁵ Second, the development of the secondary school system took place in Virginia after 1900.⁶ Third, in 1976 the Virginia State Board of Education approved the policy for competency-based education in the secondary schools which became the basis for the state to require high school students to pass competency tests before they graduate from the public schools in Virginia.

The scope of the study was limited to state standards required for high school graduation. An investigation was conducted into the increased number of years the child was required to attend school, the credit requirements of a changed curriculum, earned credit hours and competency test requirements. The focus was placed on changes made in the requirements for graduation without attention being paid to the results. It is recognized that local school divisions may have had additional requirements, and that school divisions no doubt were diverse in their interpretations and applications of state requirements. However, these differences at the local level were not examined in the present study. The four requirements for high school graduation were

⁵Philip Alexander Bruce, Virginia Rebirth of the Old Dominion (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1929), p. 204.

⁶Harry L. Smith, ed., "Historical Development of Virginia's Public School System, 1870-1970," Public Education in Virginia, 5 (Winter 1970), p. 16.

examined and analyzed without attention being given to the differences that existed between the white and the black school systems. This facet of the Virginia public schools was not examined. While the influence of the cost to implement changes in requirements for graduation is acknowledged, it was not investigated in the study.

There are several assumptions in this study. First, it is assumed that the requirements for graduation changed between 1900 and 1976, due in part to the modernization and slow transition of the economy in Virginia from one characterized as rural to one of an industrialized urban state. This economic change helped to create a need for better educated workers who could work in advanced technological production of goods and services. Second, it is also assumed that graduation requirements changed from 1900 to 1976, in part as a result of social changes in the Commonwealth. These social changes evolved as Virginia moved from landed aristocracy to a more democratic society in which opportunities for education of all members of society were made possible.

Throughout this study, the term requirements for graduation means those requirements that are necessary for a high school diploma as are established by the General Assembly of Virginia and of the State Board of Education.

The term high school will be defined as two, three or four-year institutions due mainly to the ability at local

level to support the institution.⁷ In the early development of high schools in Virginia, there were many two-year high schools. Eventually, all high schools became four-year institutions. The focus of this investigation was placed on a four-year high school.

Curriculum is defined as the courses of instruction in specified subjects. The definition of unit of credit is established as the instructional time required by the Virginia Board of Education in order to award a unit of credit. The term tests is limited to the tests that both the General Assembly and the Virginia State Board of Education require to be administered to high school students in the Virginia public schools.

Several studies have been conducted that deal generally with the requirements for completion of secondary studies in Virginia. Among these is that of Cornelius Heatwole's A History of Education in Virginia. Heatwole used primary sources to provide factual information concerning Virginia's public education up to 1916.⁸ Material is also provided concerning the attitude of the general public toward public education and toward the work of leaders in Virginia to develop interest by the public for an improved, expanded

⁷J. L. Blair Buck, The Development of Public Schools in Virginia (Richmond: State Board of Education, 1952), p. 168.

⁸Cornelius J. Heatwole, A History of Education in Virginia (New York: MacMillan Company, 1916), p. 249.

school system. Heatwole does provide insight about the entrance requirements for institutions of higher learning in the twentieth century which had an impact on the requirements for high school graduation. Heatwole did not examine the curriculum and credit requirements for graduation, nor did he make any references to testing requirements.

Raymond Pulley, in Old Virginia Restored, relates the changes in Virginia's public education during the early twentieth century to the progressive movement in Virginia and the United States.⁹ He claims that Virginia's "educational Renaissance" during this period was the best result of progressivism in Virginia.¹⁰ Pulley emphasizes the social and political climate in Virginia, and relates this to the changes in the public educational institutions. While the author discusses changes in the schools, he does not delineate or analyze any of the requirements for graduation.

J. L. Blair Buck, in The Development of Public Schools in Virginia, traces the development of the schools from 1607 to 1952. He deals extensively with the expansion of high schools in the early twentieth century, and the roles of various superintendents in this development.¹¹ Buck describes

⁹Raymond H. Pulley, Old Virginia Restored (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 1968), p. 132.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 133.

¹¹Buck, Development of Public Schools in Virginia, p. 198.

some of the acts of the General Assembly that affected the growth of high schools, such as the Mann Act.¹² He also explains the manifestations of the scientific movement with the resultant surveys and measurements of efficiency. Buck does present some of the high school requirements, such as the course of study in high school in 1910, and the expansion of the hours of instruction.¹³ He does not, however, trace the development of the required hours of instruction, the credits for graduation, the mandated curriculum, or the required tests.

Virginus Dabney wrote the comprehensive Virginia, The New Dominion. The emphasis in this history is on the political movements and the changing social scene in Virginia. Dabney does include the growth and the changes in the educational system, but his sections on education emphasize the views of political leaders and how they worked (or didn't work) to make changes in the educational system. Dabney also provides statistics on illiteracy, attendance, school budgets and school buildings. There is little mention of specific state requirements for graduation.¹⁴

Another book by Dabney concerns the history of the City of Richmond. This is interjected with the history of the

¹²Ibid., p. 143.

¹³Ibid., p. 318.

¹⁴Virginus Dabney, Virginia, The New Dominion (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1971), p. 386.

city's public schools. The author provides information about both black and white schools and about the leaders in Richmond who worked to improve the public education in Virginia in the early 1900's.¹⁵ The author, however, does not present information about the State requirements for graduation, or about how these were applied in the Richmond Public Schools.

Another publication related to the development of high school education in Virginia, is Public Education in Virginia, Winter, 1970. In this issue of the periodical there is a section on the development of high schools in Virginia. It describes the beginnings of high school accreditation in 1912, and refers to new courses of study for high schools in 1915.¹⁶ Within the article there are a number of statistics that will be utilized in the study; viz, the increase in the number of high schools, the increase of requirements for teacher education, and other statistics. The author does not, however, present detailed facts about the requirements for a high school education from 1900 to 1976, nor is an attempt made to analyze the causes and effects of the changes in the high school requirements.

¹⁵Virginius Dabney, Richmond--The Story of a City (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1976), p. 230.

¹⁶Smith, "Historical Development of Virginia's Public School System, 1870-1970," p. 16.

From the secondary sources examined it is clear that little has been written on requirements for completion of high school in Virginia, 1900-1976. The primary sources used in this study are the Virginia State Constitutions, the Acts of the General Assembly of Virginia, Journals of the Legislature, the minutes of the Virginia State Board of Education, reports of the State Board of Education, publications of the State Board of Education, Annual Reports of Superintendents of Public Instruction, private papers of selected Virginia leaders in education, and personal interviews. The secondary sources used include newspapers, historical journals, histories of Virginia, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations.

The purpose of this proposed investigation was to trace the State requirements for graduation in Virginia public schools from 1900 to 1976. The study was focused on four requirements for graduation: the attendance; the curriculum; the credits; and the tests. The study examined the historical development of these four requirements because these same requirements are those designated for graduation in 1980.

It is anticipated that the attendance requirements will change in several ways. Supporters of the Progressive Movement may be concerned about the welfare of youth and about the universal education for citizenship. Labor groups and business groups might be motivated by economic interests,

such as decreasing the supply of cheap labor, or increasing the number of skilled workers.

It should follow that the curriculum will expand as the diversity of the student body is increased. Vocational subjects will be included in the curriculum as a result of the pressure from business groups and parents. Business people may see the need for well-trained graduates who can fulfill requirements for technical employment. Parents could realize that their children will not be able to make a living from the farms, and that they will need training for jobs to be able to move up the economic ladder. The academic curriculum of the secondary school may expand and approach uniformity as colleges experience increased enrollments and new demands are made for college admissions.

In the study an examination was made of high school graduation requirements prior to 1900, to investigate the background of those events that helped shape public education in Virginia from 1900 to 1976. An investigation of the attendance requirements, the curriculum and credit requirements, and the tests for competency that were required during this period was conducted. To analyze graduation requirements, an investigation was conducted to discover purposes for increasing requirements for graduation.

A major step in the advancement for an educational renaissance in Virginia, seems to have begun with legislative fiat in 1882, at which time money was provided in order that

normal schools be established to prepare teachers. The events that occurred between 1882 and 1900 will be examined in Chapter II in order to discover whether any major state requirements for graduation were established prior to the initiation of the present study in 1900.

CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL

EDUCATION IN VIRGINIA

1882-1900

From 1882 to 1900, there were no state established requirements for graduation from high school in Virginia. Many children attended the public schools in Virginia, but the majority of students were studying elementary subjects. Education beyond the primary level was called studying the "higher branches."

In 1882, the enrollment in public schools in Virginia was 257,362 students, with 7,829 of these students studying the higher branches. In 1900, the enrollment was 370,595 students, with 11,512 studying beyond the elementary level. This was an increase in numbers of students studying the higher branches of 3,683,¹ which was a change in the percentage of only .001 (Table 1). The trend was toward more children attending public schools in Virginia, with an increase in the number of students at the secondary level.

¹Virginia, Department of Public Instruction, Virginia School Report. Richmond, Virginia: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1882-1883, p. 11; 1900-1901, p. xiii.

TABLE 1
PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN VIRGINIA
AND NUMBER STUDYING HIGHER
BRANCHES 1882-1900

Year	Total Number Enrolled	Number Studying Higher Branches	Percent Studying Higher Branches
1882	257,362	7,829	.030
1883	266,040	6,651	.025
1884	288,030	8,274	.028
1885	303,343	9,564	.031
1886	308,296	8,664	.028
1887	325,184	10,219	.031
1888	330,280	11,957	.036
1889	336,948	10,159	.030
1890	342,269	9,124	.026
1891	342,720	8,269	.024
1892	335,646	8,545	.025
1893	348,471	7,769	.022
1894	352,710	10,075	.028
1895	355,986	10,939	.032
1896	362,133	11,876	.032
1897	367,817	11,886	.032
1898	374,847	11,241	.029
1899	358,825	11,287	.031
1900	370,595	11,512	.031

Sources: Virginia, Department of Public Instruction, Virginia School Report, 1882-1900.

Between 1882 and 1900, there were no compulsory attendance laws enacted by the Assembly of Virginia. Despite the absence of these laws, the percentage of the school age population enrolled in public schools increased from 45 percent in 1882 to 53 percent in 1900. This increase in total school enrollment is not compatible with the percentage of increase in average daily attendance which was 26 percent in 1882 as compared to 31 percent by 1900.²

There was an increase in the population of Virginia from 1,512,565 in 1880, to 1,854,184 in 1900.³ This change in population, coupled with a larger percentage of school-age children attending public schools, suggests there will be more students attending public schools during the first part of the twentieth century. This expanded number of school-age children would lead to a greater number of students ready to attend a secondary school program. With such changes, more attention was focused on the secondary school program. At the close of the nineteenth century, despite the lack of compulsory attendance laws to enforce school attendance, more children were attending public schools. It can be assumed that public support for publicly-financed schools was developing and with such growth there would be a broad

²Virginia, School Report, 1882-1883, p. 50; 1900-1901, p. xiii.

³U. S. Department of the Interior, Statistics of the Population of the United States. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1880, p. 82; 1900, p. 3.

base for support in the improvement of public education in Virginia during the early twentieth century.

There was an increase in not only the number of days in average daily attendance, but also in the number of days for instruction. The General Assembly did not designate a specific number of required days of instruction in public schools. The number of days schools were open varied considerably throughout the state, with the city schools usually having the longer sessions.⁴ Prior to 1900, some public schools were operated with assistance from private funds after they were officially closed for the year as public schools. These "semi-public" secondary schools were run by a board of trustees which usually included the Superintendent of Instruction. Many of these schools later became public schools.⁵

The average number of months that school was in session between 1882 and 1900 is presented in Table 2. A slight increase of months taught is indicated as growing from 5.91 months in 1882 to six months in 1900. One reason for this nominal increase is probably the opening of many small, rural schools which had short sessions. Some city

⁴Virginia, School Report, 1889-1890, p. 24.

⁵R. P. G. Bowman, "Secondary Education in Virginia, 1870-1886" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1938), p. 9.

TABLE 2
 AVERAGE NUMBER OF MONTHS PUBLIC
 SCHOOLS OPEN IN VIRGINIA,
 1882-1900

Year	Average Number Months Taught	Year	Average Number Months Taught
1882	5.91	1892	5.9
1883	6.09	1893	6.0
1884	6.0	1894	6.0
1885	5.92	1895	5.9
1886	5.29	1896	5.9
1887	6.01	1897	6.0
1888	5.95	1898	6.0
1889	5.96	1899	5.97
1890	5.91	1900	6.0
1891	5.8		

Sources: Virginia, School Report, 1882-1900.

high schools had sessions as long as ten months, however.⁶

It was frequently mentioned in the State Superintendents' reports to the General Assembly the importance of having a greater number of days in the school year, but laws were not enacted to enforce these suggestions. Monetary pressures were used to guarantee that schools were open at least five months a year. For example, Public Free School Law in 1892 stated:

No state money shall be paid for a public free school until there is filed . . . a written statement, . . . certifying that the school has been kept in operation for five months during the current school year, or that arrangements have been made which will secure the keeping it in operation that length of time. . . .⁷

The General Assembly and the Virginia School Board were concerned about the number of days schools were open and felt it was important that they be open a greater number of days. Comments were made by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to the effect that the city schools were better than rural schools, primarily because they were open for nine or ten months.

State School Board members were also concerned about the large number of children in Virginia who did not attend school. Educators in the early part of the twentieth century may try to influence the General Assembly to enact a

⁶Virginia, School Report, 1880-1887, p. 13.

⁷Virginia, Board of Education, Virginia School Laws. Richmond, Virginia: Board of Education, 1892, p. 70.

compulsory attendance law.

As the numbers of students increase there will be a concomitant need to train more teachers. The Virginia Constitution, 1869, stated, "The General Assembly shall establish, as soon as practicable, normal schools."⁸

Dr. William Ruffner, the first Superintendent of Public Instruction of Virginia, advised in his report to the General Assembly in 1870, "that a normal school for training [sic] teachers be established."⁹ However, training schools for teachers were not established by the Assembly until 1882.

During the session of 1881-1882, the General Assembly passed an act ". . . to incorporate the Normal and Collegiate Institute, and to provide for the support of the same."¹⁰ The first Virginia Normal Schools were established at Petersburg, Virginia, for the preparation of Negro teachers, and at Farmville, Virginia, for the preparation of Caucasian teachers.¹¹ In 1888, William and Mary became the school for educating male teachers.¹²

⁸Virginia, Constitution (1869), Article 8, Section 5.

⁹Virginia, School Report, 1871-1872, p. 131.

¹⁰Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1881-1882, p. 283.

¹¹Virginia, School Report, 1885-1886, p. 78.

¹²Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1888, p. 512.

It would be expected that a "normal school" would provide a collegiate level of instruction; however, in the Superintendent of Public Instruction's biennial report a description of the courses suggests that the normal schools provided a secondary school level of instruction.

There will be two regular courses in the Normal School of two years each--namely: an Elementary Course and an Advanced Course. The scale of the two reaches from the primary studies to the top of an ordinary high school course; and everything will be taught as far as practical by normal methods.¹³

Another indication of the level of instruction comes from Dr. William H. Ruffner, first principal of Farmville Normal School, who reported that while high schools and academies were not substitutes for normal schools, high school graduates could go through normal school in one year instead of two years.¹⁴

The desire for better prepared teachers was due partly to a manifestation of the interest in an expanded secondary school program. The trend toward normal school training for the teachers in Virginia in the nineteenth century foreshadows the expansion of secondary school education in the twentieth century.

¹³Virginia, School Report, 1884-1885, p. 159.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 160.

In the late nineteenth century there was a "blurring" of the distinction between secondary education and college education. Many colleges in Virginia, other than the normal schools, provided courses at the secondary school level and some at the primary school level.¹⁵ In some schools labelled as secondary, work was characterized as being of an elementary nature; and, in some lower schools labelled as elementary, the higher level subjects were taught.¹⁶ The development of elementary and secondary schools in the nineteenth century was closely bound together.

In the twentieth century a clearer distinction was made between the elementary and the secondary level of education and between the secondary and collegiate levels of instruction. The trend will be toward developing specific requirements for completion of each level and for entrance to the next level.

This articulation suggests a move toward curriculum standardization and uniformity in many areas of education. As the education of teachers tends toward standardization in the normal schools, there may be established a base for uniformity in teacher methodology.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 64.

¹⁶Bowman, "Secondary Education," p. xvii.

In the late nineteenth century, there was also a trend toward uniformity in educational materials. On May 13, 1886, the Virginia State Board of Education adopted a resolution that stated, "a single series of text-books [sic] be adopted for use in the public schools. . . ." ¹⁷ By 1900, the Assembly had already adopted books in each main subject for uniformity in materials in Virginia public schools. ¹⁸ There was also an interest in uniformity in the curriculum. State Superintendent Massey recommended a uniform course of instruction which would include manual training. ¹⁹

It appears that in the twentieth century there may be a trend toward a more standardized course of instruction in the secondary schools of Virginia. There are also signs that in the new century many curricular changes might be made. In the late nineteenth century, the General Assembly, rather than educators, determined the curriculum in the public high schools. In 1892, students were to be taught only:

. . . orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and geography; and no other branches shall be introduced except as followed by special regulations to be devised by the Board of Education. ²⁰

¹⁷Virginia, School Report, 1886-1887, p. 17.

¹⁸Virginia, School Report, 1899-1900, p. xxx.

¹⁹Virginia, School Report, 1895-1896, p. lxxii.

²⁰Virginia, Board of Education, Virginia School Laws, 1892, p. 69.

State Superintendent J. L. Buchanan had recommended adding physiology and hygiene, with emphasis on the effects of "alcoholic drinks, stimulants, and narcotics generally" on the human body.²¹ He also recommended adding more effective "moral training, civics, and industrial education."²² State Superintendent Southall, in 1899, pleaded for manual training in the high schools.²³ The trend seems to be for offering a variety of courses to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

The Virginia Constitution of 1869, commonly referred to as the Underwood Constitution, specified that the General Assembly "shall provide by law . . . a uniform system of public free schools;" however, at that time this requirement did not have the enthusiastic support of most Virginians. By the end of the nineteenth century, the battle for public schools was won as both major political parties endorsed a strong public school system.²⁴ This endorsement helps to prepare the way for strong political support to improve the schools in the twentieth century.

²¹Virginia, School Report, 1886-1887, p. 20.

²²Ibid.

²³Virginia, School Report, 1899-1900, p. xxxiii.

²⁴Dabney, Virginia, The New Dominion, p. 393; Virginia, School Report, 1903-1904, pp. xxi-xxii.

There are beginnings being made for a broad-based support for improvement of public schools in Virginia as professionals and laymen attend conferences concerning public education. For example, the Virginia Education Association was formed in 1891; the Virginia Teachers' Reading Association was organized in 1891;²⁵ the first conference of County and City school officials was held in Richmond in 1882;²⁶ and in 1898, there was a conference of laymen and educators on Southern Education held at Capon Springs, West Virginia.²⁷

As these new organizations and educational conferences materialize there will be informed leaders who may become involved in improving public education, and who should possess the abilities to work toward expansion and improvement of the secondary schools in Virginia.²⁸

In 1900, the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Middle States and Maryland established the College Entrance Examination Board. The first examination was administered in June, 1901. This examination requirement probably will encourage the development of more extensive

²⁵Virginia, School Report, 1891-1893, p. x.

²⁶Heatwole, History of Education in Virginia, p. 247.

²⁷Ibid., p. 307; Virginia, School Report, 1900-1901, p. xvii.

²⁸Virginia, School Report, 1900-1901, p. xlvi.

college preparatory training in the high schools in Virginia.²⁹

By the beginning of the twentieth century, popular support for public schools, an increased number of students studying "the higher branches," a desire for a compulsory attendance laws, and the beginning of curricular changes were apparent in Virginia. It appears that there could be leaders in Virginia who are also prepared to enlist support for an improved, publicly financed, secondary school education and for an increase in the number of days of instruction in the schools.

In Chapter III, an examination is made of the required hours of instruction in secondary schools in Virginia from 1900-1976, and of the state compulsory attendance laws during that period.

²⁹U. S., Bureau of Education, Report of the Commissioner of Education for 1903 (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office), p. 571.

CHAPTER III

COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND ATTENDANCE

REQUIREMENTS

At the beginning of the twentieth century a reform movement known as Progressivism, which affected all areas of life in the United States, was evident. In Virginia, the reform movement resulted in an educational "Renaissance."¹ For several reasons, the political leaders of Virginia, before 1900, held little faith in public education. Historically, a desire for universal education was not popular in the Commonwealth, primarily because Virginians held to the English voluntary education notion and believed that the family and the church were responsible for educational decisions. Instead of promising to improve the schools, the political leaders rallied around other issues, such as paying the debts from the Civil War and the demand to end "yankee meddling."²

¹Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, p. 133; Virginia, School Report, 1903-1905, p. xxi.

²Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, p. 134; U. S., Bureau of Education, Report of the Commissioner of Education, 1903, p. 446.

At the turn of the twentieth century, there was a growing realization that Virginians needed both to expand and to standardize their educational system to keep pace with technological advances.³ There was also a developing belief that education was a means of achieving social improvement, as well as encouraging "domestic tranquility," or maintenance of the status quo.⁴

Politically, it is found that the election of Governor Andrew Jackson Montague in 1902 was the beginning point whereby all political parties in Virginia supported public education. Montague ran for office on a Democratic platform in which there was a plank for better schools. During the campaign he emphasized the importance of a public school system, stating:

. . . It is our duty to foster and improve our system of public instruction, for the cause of true popular education and free government is one and the same.⁵

When Montague was inaugurated on January 1, 1902, he again referred to the value of education stating, ". . . The material advancement of a State is measured by the school privileges of its people." Montague is considered the first "educational governor" of Virginia. In the early twentieth

³Virginia, School Report, 1900-1901, p. xlvi.

⁴Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, p. 135; Virginia, Department of Public Instruction, "Counting the Cost," p. 10.

⁵Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, p. 133.

century, both Democrats and Republicans endorsed laws for an improved and expanded educational system, and when politicians were elected they frequently supported education by approving bills for additional funds for the schools.⁶

One manifestation of the desire by laymen to improve public schools of Virginia was the formation of the Richmond Education Association in April, 1900.⁷ This association was founded by Lila Meade Valentine and Beverly B. Munford, two zealous leaders for improved education, health and women's rights. Because both of the founders of the association were socially prominent women, they were able to enlist the active support of many community leaders. The association became a focal point for publicizing the need for an improved educational system in Virginia.⁸

Another organization that worked to improve public education in Virginia was the Cooperative Education Association.⁹ Governor Montague, who had stressed better schools as the principal plank in his platform as candidate in 1901, called a meeting of leading citizens in 1904. They were

⁶Virginia, Department of Public Education, "Counting the Cost," p. 10; Allen W. Moger, Virginia, Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925 (Charlottesville: The University Press, 1968), p. 243.

⁷Virginia, School Report, 1900-1901, p. xlvi.

⁸Pulley, Old Virginia Restored, p. 135; Dabney, Virginia, The New Dominion, p. 447; Moger, Virginia, Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925, p. 243.

⁹Virginia, School Report, 1903-1904, p. xxi.

challenged to consider the educational, civic, and economic needs of Virginia. This group later became the Cooperative Education Association. The motto of the association was:

Every public school in Virginia is a community center where the citizens may unite for the improvement of their educational, social, moral, physical, civic, and economic interests.¹⁰

The Association proposed to the Governor that he and Dr. Edwin A. Alderman, President of the University of Virginia, lead a campaign for better schools throughout Virginia. The Montague-Alderman combination became the nucleus for the famous "May Campaign of 1905," in which over one hundred meetings, designed to publicize the need for improved public schools, were held throughout the Commonwealth, and in which representatives from a group of one hundred prominent citizens spoke on the subject throughout the State.¹¹

Just before the "May Campaign" began, there was a political campaign between the progressives and the conservatives in Virginia for a primary election to nominate a United States Senator from Virginia. Governor Montague, a progressive, was challenging the incumbent Senator Thomas S. Martin, a conservative. Senator Martin interpreted the "May Campaign" as a political aid to Montague.

¹⁰ Dabney, Virginia, The New Dominion, p. 448; Moger, Virginia, Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925, pp. 243-254.

¹¹ Dabney, Virginia, The New Dominion, p. 449.

Recognizing this as a deterrent to the success of the May Campaign, two leaders of the campaign, Charles E. Vawter and S. C. Mitchell, asked Martin to make a few speeches for the May Campaign. Within a few weeks, Martin and his aides were taking part in the meetings and speaking for the schools. This action helped to "de-politicize" the school issues.¹²

The "May Campaign of 1905" prepared the way for Virginia citizens and their elected representatives to encourage and to enact many school laws. The General Assembly of 1906, 1908 and 1910, passed numerous bills which laid the groundwork for a stronger state educational system.¹³ Among these statutes were: the Mann high school act of 1906 which appropriated \$50,000 annually for the establishment of public high schools; an act allocating an additional \$200,000 per year for teachers' salaries; and several acts between 1909 and 1912 establishing additional normal schools to prepare men and women to teach in the public schools.¹⁴

¹²Moger, Virginia, Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925, p. 246.

¹³Edward F. Overton, "A History of the Life and Work of Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Jr." (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1943), p. 246; Dabney, Virginia, The New Dominion, p. 449.

¹⁴Dabney, Virginia, The New Dominion, p. 450; Buck, Development of Public Schools, pp. 143, 147-148.

A third political event that affected public education in Virginia at the turn of the century was the call for a rewriting of the Constitution of Virginia. Eighty-eight Democrats and twelve Republicans were elected delegates to the Constitutional Convention in May, 1901.¹⁵ Some educators recalled the events within which the Underwood Constitution (1869), which required the General Assembly to establish a universal public school system in Virginia, was drafted and adopted, and they were afraid that a new Constitution might not be helpful to the public school system. The Constitution of 1869 had been drafted by a combination of northern carpet-baggers, southern scalawags, recently freed Negroes, and a small number of conservatives from Virginia. Many of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1868 were not Virginians--thirteen delegates were from New York, two from England, two from Canada, one each from Scotland and Ireland, and others from Ohio, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. Of the one hundred and five delegates, twenty-five were Negroes.¹⁶ In contrast, the one hundred delegates to the Constitutional Convention meeting in 1901 were all white and were predominantly conservative Virginians, with a determination to

¹⁵Richard Andrew Meade, "A History of the Constitutional Provisions for Education in Virginia" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1941), p. 255; Dabney, Virginia, The New Dominion, p. 434.

¹⁶Dabney, Virginia, The New Dominion, pp. 366-367.

disfranchise the Negro citizens of Virginia and to establish segregation of the races.¹⁷ Some educators were fearful that the delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1901 would not consider universal public education necessary for the citizens of Virginia as it was believed to be by the writers of the Underwood Constitution in 1868. Articles in the Virginia School Journal alerted educators of the need to attempt to exert influence on the convention delegates.¹⁸ One result of this concern was the presentation of three letters to the Education Committee at the convention strongly recommending a compulsory education law.¹⁹

Dr. Richard McIlwaine of Hampden-Sydney College was Chairman of the Committee on Education and Public Instruction at the Constitutional Convention. He solicited suggestions from Dr. Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Jr., a leading educator who was the first elected Superintendent of Public Instruction.²⁰ Eggleston strongly favored a compulsory attendance law and wrote to the Committee on Education and Public Instruction recommending a compulsory attendance law.²¹

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 434-435.

¹⁸ Meade, "History of Constitutional Provisions in Virginia," p. 257.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 263.

²⁰ Overton, "History of Eggleston," p. 190; Dabney, Virginia, The New Dominion, p. 449.

²¹ Overton, "History of Eggleston," p. 258.

In 1902, Virginia adopted a new Constitution. Article IX, Section 138 of the Constitution stated that every child between the ages of eight and twelve years old had to attend school for at least sixteen weeks each year. There were many children who were exempted--those who were "weak in body or mind," able to "read and write," or those who lived more than "two miles from the public school. . . ." ²² If an eight-to-twelve-year old child could read and write, then the child did not have to attend school. Thus, the compulsory provision did not require any child in Virginia to attend high school. A number of Virginia educators were dissatisfied with these provisions for compulsory education and they recommended ". . . a constitutional amendment permitting the General Assembly to pass an effective compulsory attendance laws." ²³ The Constitution (1902), Article IX, Section 138, was thought to be weaker than the earlier, broader statement in the Underwood Constitution of 1869, which stated that the General Assembly could "make such laws and shall not permit parents and guardians to allow their children to grow up in ignorance and vagrancy." ²⁴ Many educators favored a strong compulsory attendance law. ²⁵ In 1908, the General Assembly enacted the

²²Virginia Constitution (1902), Article IX, Section 138.

²³Buck, Development of the Public Schools, p. 167.

²⁴Virginia Constitution (1869), Article VIII, Section 4.

²⁵Virginia, School Report, 1905-1906, p. 32.

first compulsory attendance law for all children between the ages of eight and twelve; however, this did not solve the attendance problems in the public schools of Virginia.

After the passage of the compulsory attendance law in 1908, many educators complained about the weaknesses of it. In the Annual School Report to the General Assembly, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reamur R. Stearns, lamented that the Constitution limited the power of the General Assembly to pass an adequate compulsory attendance law and he, therefore, recommended a Constitutional Amendment ". . . at the earliest possible moment."²⁶ Stearns stated that one of the gravest problems in developing public education in Virginia was the large number of children who were not attending school.²⁷

In 1918, Westmoreland Davis was inaugurated Governor of Virginia. Under his leadership and the influence of the Scientific Movement throughout the United States, members of the General Assembly became concerned about "economy and efficiency" in government.²⁸ In 1918, the General Assembly appointed Dr. Harris H. Hart, Superintendent of Public

²⁶Virginia, Department of Education, Annual Report, Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1919, p. 17.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Moger, Virginia, Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925, p. 322.

Instruction, to serve as chairman of a commission to study the educational affairs of the state. The commission made many recommendations for the improvement of public education in Virginia.²⁹ The passage of a more comprehensive compulsory attendance law was one of the recommendations and it was enacted in 1922. The new law extended the age from eight-to-twelve-years old to eight-to-fourteen-years old, and the law stipulated that attendance must commence at the beginning of the school year rather than at some time within the school year. Prior to passage of this compulsory attendance law, it was possible for a child's attendance to begin at any time of the year. Again, however, there were many exemptions. Any child who completed "the elementary course of study prescribed by the State Board of Education," and who is "actually, regularly and lawfully employed" did not have to attend school. There were also exemptions for physical and mental weaknesses, for distance from school, for necessary work, and for other reasons accepted by the local School Board.³⁰

In 1927, the General Assembly appointed another educational survey commission with M. V. O'Shea of the University

²⁹Virginia Board of Education, "Proposed Amendments to the Constitution of Virginia Affecting the Public School System," pp. 6-7.

³⁰Bulletin, State Board of Education, Supplement, Vol. VI, No. 1, July, 1923, p. 49.

of Wisconsin as the director. The report of the survey staff recommended that the law be amended to provide for: required schooling from seven-to-fifteen-years old; a minimum school term of 160 days; elimination of the exemption to attend school on the basis of the ability to read and write.³¹

Members of the survey commission also expressed concern that the compulsory attendance laws were not well enforced even after the compulsory attendance law of 1922.³² The survey staff sent a questionnaire to Division Superintendents in 1928 to determine, among other things, the total number of cases of non-attendance reported from 1922-1926, the numbers of cases prosecuted in court, the number of convictions, and the attitude of each local school board towards compulsory attendance.³³ Of the eighty-nine counties responding, it was reported that no effort was made to press criminal charges in most communities; and when charges were pressed, the number of convictions was ". . . insignificant when compared with the rather flagrant violations of the existing compulsory attendance law."³⁴

³¹Virginia, Public Education in Virginia. Report to the Educational Commission of Virginia of a Survey of the Public Educational System of the State, 1928, p. 321.

³²Ibid., p. 317.

³³Ibid., pp. 318-321.

³⁴Ibid., p. 321.

Partly as a result of the recommendation by the survey staff in 1928 to improve school attendance, another compulsory attendance bill was enacted in 1928 that required children between the ages of seven and fifteen-years old to attend school.³⁵ This was the first law that required more than six years of education. Thus, a child in Virginia, who started attending school at age seven would be required to have eight years of formal education. If the student was promoted each year, he/she would have at least one year of high school education. This was the first compulsory attendance law to affect secondary education directly.

In 1930, this compulsory attendance law was amended again so that provisions of the law did not apply to those who had completed the elementary course of study prescribed by the State Board of Education, provided the child was ". . . regularly and lawfully employed."³⁶ The actions by the legislators served as a reminder that they believed an elementary education was essential, whereas, a secondary education was optional for all citizens of Virginia.

The compulsory attendance law was amended several times after 1930. In 1944, it was revised to include children ". . . who have reached the seventh birthday and

³⁵Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1928, p. 1214.

³⁶Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1930, p. 995.

have not passed the sixteenth birthday."³⁷ In 1968, the age for compulsory attendance was extended again to include children who were six years old and who had not passed their seventeenth birthday.³⁸

The United States Supreme Court decision on May 17, 1964, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, had a significant effect on the compulsory attendance requirements in the public schools of Virginia. The decision outlawed segregation in the public schools. Governor Thomas B. Stanley (1954-1958) said publicly, "I shall use every legal means at my command to continue segregated schools in Virginia."³⁹ The majority of the white population in Virginia favored continued segregation in the public schools, while the black population was mostly solidly against segregation.⁴⁰ Opponents of integration in the public schools formed a new organization, the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties headed by Robert B. Crawford, a Farmville laundry owner. This organization spoke for the people who were strong opponents of integration.

Governor Stanley appointed State Senator Garland Gray to be chairman of a commission charged with recommending

³⁷Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1944, p. 28.

³⁸Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1968, p. 295.

³⁹Dabney, Virginia, The New Dominion, p. 531.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 533.

legal means by which the Supreme Court's ruling on integration could be circumvented and integration prevented.⁴¹

On November 15, 1954, the Gray Commission, as it came to be known, held an eleven-hour public meeting in Richmond, where more than one hundred speakers were heard. The Commission held closed-door meetings for almost a year. On November 11, 1955, the Gray Commission presented its plan which was based on the principle of local option. Public schools in Virginia could be integrated if that was the decision by the local authorities. The Gray Commission also recommended the compulsory attendance law be revised to provide that in schools where races were mixed, no child would be forced to attend school. The Gray Commission suggested tuition grants be provided for those children who chose to attend private, non-segregated schools or public schools in another district.⁴² On March 5, 1956, delegates to a Constitutional Convention in Richmond voted unanimously for an amendment to legalize tuition grants.

On August 27, 1956, the General Assembly met in special session. Thirteen bills were introduced, known as the "Stanley Plan," the most significant of which ". . . required the Governor to close any school under court order to integrate, and to cut off all state funds from any

⁴¹Ibid., p. 532.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 532-533.

school which tried to reopen in obedience to the order of the court."⁴³ The General Assembly passed the "Stanley Plan," and in September, 1958, the Warren County High School of Front Royal was closed and removed from the public school system by order of Governor J. Lindsay Almond under the requirements of the laws of Virginia. Two Charlottesville schools and the entire Norfolk public schools system were closed because of court orders to integrate.⁴⁴

Business leaders were concerned about the economic impact of the closed public schools because new industries would not settle in an area that did not have reliable educational facilities.

On January 19, 1959, the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals, in *Harrison v. Day*, outlawed school closing;

. . . the state must support such public free schools in the state as are necessary to an efficient system, including those in which the pupils of both races are compelled to be enrolled and taught together, however unfortunate that situation might be.⁴⁵

On the same day, the Federal District Court in Norfolk, Virginia ruled that the laws of Virginia requiring the closing of public schools due to integration violated the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution

⁴³Ibid., p. 537.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 540-542.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 542.

because citizens were denied ". . . the equal protection of the laws."⁴⁶

Governor Almond recommended "freedom of choice" legislation to the General Assembly. An amendment to the compulsory attendance law was passed in 1959, which stated that the law was in effect only if it were adopted locally. This "local adoption" amendment allowed schools to be closed in the localities that wanted to resist integration of the schools.⁴⁷ In September, 1959, Prince Edward County schools were closed because the board of supervisors failed to appropriate operational funds due to their objections to the court-ordered integration. Prince Edward County public schools remained closed until 1964, when the Supreme Court ordered Prince Edward County public schools to be opened.⁴⁸

The "local option" statute on compulsory attendance was in effect until early 1968, when a statewide compulsory attendance law for normal children between the ages of six and seventeen was passed by the General Assembly.⁴⁹ The compulsory attendance law was extended in 1975, to include

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, State Law on Compulsory Attendance, 1971, p. 3.

⁴⁸ Dabney, Virginia, The Old Dominion, p. 546.

⁴⁹ Smith, "Development of Virginia's Public Schools," p. 21.

those children who had some kind of physical impairment.⁵⁰ Exemptions from attending school were for children "suffering from contagious or infectious diseases," or "under ten years of age who live more than two miles from a public school, unless public transportation is provided within one mile of their homes," or children ". . . between ten and seventeen years of age who live more than two and one-half miles from a public school, unless public transportation is provided within one and one-half miles of their homes."⁵¹ A child could be excused from attendance by the school board on recommendation of the principal, the superintendent of schools and the judge of the juvenile and domestic relations court ". . . if in their judgment the child cannot benefit from education at such school, or whose parents conscientiously object thereto. . . ," provided there is the written consent of his/her parents or guardian.⁵²

Significant changes were made by the General Assembly in the requirements to attend school from 1900 to 1976. In 1900, no child was required by law to attend school; by 1976, children who had physical incapacities and normal children had to attend school for eleven years, from age six to age seventeen.

⁵⁰Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1975, p. 1183.

⁵¹Virginia School Laws, 1975, 22-275.3, p. 160.

⁵²Ibid., 22-275.4, p. 161.

In addition to providing standardized regulations for school attendance, the attention of legislators was directed toward lengthening the school year. In the early twentieth century, there were no state requirements for the number of days a student had to attend school. In 1920, the goal established by members of the State Board of Education was for all schools to be open nine months a year. To achieve this goal, the Virginia State Board of Education enlisted the support of community groups who were interested in public education. It was recommended by the Virginia State Board of Education that citizens work together to ". . . find a way to gradually increase the length of the term year by year until a nine-months' session is secured."⁵³ In 1928, the General Assembly approved a bill stating that the minimum school term must be 140 school days.⁵⁴ Section 647 also stated that a local district would not receive state money unless the schools were operating at least seven months. The school year was again extended in 1936 to a minimum of 160 school days.⁵⁵ In 1938, the school year was expanded to 180 days.⁵⁶ This was the required length of the school year through 1976.

⁵³State Board of Education Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 2, September, 1920, p. 13.

⁵⁴Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1928, p. 1188.

⁵⁵Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1936, p. 498.

⁵⁶Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1938, p. 636.

From 1900 to 1976, there were significant changes in the laws concerning school attendance and hours of instruction. In 1900, children in Virginia did not have to attend any school. By 1976, children between the ages of six and seventeen years of age were required to attend school. The eleven-year period of schooling was also required for children who were both physically fit as well as those who had physical incapacities.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, schools in Virginia were open for instruction an average of six months. There were requirements, however, concerning how long a high school had to be maintained. Dr. Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Jr., State Superintendent of Public Instruction, helped State Senator William Hodges Mann and Professor Bruce R. Payne of the University of Virginia, to draft a high school bill which was enacted in 1906.⁵⁷ The bill required that high schools be maintained at least eight months in the year.⁵⁸ By 1976, public high schools were required to be maintained for a period of 180 days, exclusive of all holidays and professional meetings. Thus, there was a significant increase in the hours of instruction required in order to graduate from high school during the first seventy-six years of the twentieth century.

⁵⁷Overton, "History of Eggleston," p. 267.

⁵⁸Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1906, pp. 350-352.

From 1900 to 1938, it appears that both educators and laymen believed an increase in the time children were required to attend school would cause an improvement in their preparation for the responsibilities of adult life. From 1938 to 1976, there seems to be little evidence of any organized groups working toward an increase in the amount of time children should be required to attend school. Is it possible that after the attainment of a one-hundred-eighty-day school year, a movement away from quantitative and toward qualitative objectives for students was developing?

A number of forces, both within and outside of Virginia, were acting together to cause significant increases in the number of years children had to attend school and in the number of days in the school year. One of the outside forces was the recognition that a number of school systems in industrialized states had already established compulsory attendance laws and nine-month school years before these requirements were considered by the legislators in Virginia.⁵⁹ Thus, the legislators were not breaking new ground, but they were enacting laws that were similar to those in the economically advanced states. Another factor was the progressive movement which encouraged people to look at the plight of children involved in child labor. There was a need to protect children from parents and manufacturers who wanted the economic

⁵⁹Department of Health, Education and Welfare, State Laws on Attendance, pp. 1-90.

benefits of child labor. As the miseries of these children were publicized, more people became aware of the need for all children to receive an education.⁶⁰ A growing support for compulsory attendance laws was developing.

Economic and social changes in Virginia were among the forces that helped to cause the legislators to extend the school year and to enact compulsory education laws. At the beginning of the twentieth century, 83 percent of Virginia was rural. In a rural, non-mechanized society people do not need a formal education to earn a living.⁶¹ Between 1900 and 1976, Virginia experienced a transition from a rural to an urban, industrialized society, with a growing need for educated citizens who were prepared to work and live in a modern society.

Besides these factors, there were a number of organized interest groups that actively supported the expansion of the school year and a compulsory education law that would require additional years of education for the children of Virginia. There were laymen who established organizations to support an improved educational system, such as the Richmond Education Association. Professional groups such as the Virginia Education Association, actively supported compulsory

⁶⁰T. Harry Williams, Richard N. Current, and Frank Friedel, A History of the United States Since 1865 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), pp. 267-268.

⁶¹Don Adams, Schooling and Social Change in Modern America (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1972), p. 19.

education laws and the one-hundred-eighty-day school year. In 1907, the Journal of Education, published by the Virginia Education Association, stated its "platform" which included ten items, one of which was "a session of 180 days for every public school in Virginia."⁶² One might expect that labor groups favored compulsory education laws and longer school years in order that children would be kept out of the labor force, providing more jobs for the adult workers. However, there appears to be little evidence that labor groups in Virginia took a public stand either in favor of compulsory education or of an extended school year.

Another factor that contributed to the extension of the school year and the enactment of a compulsory attendance law was the interaction between educators and politicians. One of the influential educators between 1900 and 1976 was Dr. Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Jr., State Superintendent of Public Instruction, from 1905 to 1912. He understood the political process in Virginia and recognized the need for educators to interact with those who were elected to office. Eggleston wrote unofficial letters to legislators giving them suggestions on legislation affecting education.⁶³ He also participated in publicizing the needs of the public school system

⁶²The Journal of Education, Vol. LI, 2 (October 1957), p. 14.

⁶³Moger, Virginia, Bourbonism to Byrd, pp. 246-260; Overton, "History of Eggleston," p. 249.

and the educational desires of the people. After the election of 1904, Eggleston wrote to the Rockbridge County News, stating ". . . the politicians did not know the heart-hunger of the people for better schools. . . ." ⁶⁴ In May, 1905, Eggleston also pointed out to the public the economic advantages of a strong public school system, writing "The State's natural resources would be turned into wheels of industry by giving the boys and girls a chance." ⁶⁵

Some of the forces that acted together in Virginia to cause significant changes in the length of the public school year and to effect the enactment of a compulsory school law were: (1) the earlier enactment of similar laws in other states; (2) the influence of the Progressive movement; (3) the economic and social changes in Virginia; (4) the support of both groups of laymen and of professional associations; and (5) the interactions of leading educators and politicians.

With significant changes in the length of the school year and the number of years a child had to attend school, it may be assumed that there will also be important changes in the curriculum and credit requirements for the completion of a high school education in the public schools of Virginia. Chapter IV will include an examination of the curriculum and credit requirements from 1900 to 1976.

⁶⁴ Moger, Virginia, Bourbonism to Byrd, p. 246.

⁶⁵ Richmond News Leader, May 10, 1905.

CHAPTER IV

CURRICULUM AND CREDITS

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the curriculum in the public high schools was established primarily by the General Assembly and the State Board of Education. The local school boards had limited power in adding to the prescribed curriculum. In 1900, the basic curriculum was: orthography (correct spelling), reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, physiology and hygiene, history of the United States, and history of Virginia.¹

In addition, the Superintendent of Public Instruction was authorized by the Assembly to make arrangements for the gradual introduction of civil government and drawing. The only other subjects that could be taught were those allowed by the State Board of Education, and the "higher branches" that a district school board determined necessary to qualify pupils to become teachers or to enter colleges in the state.²

Under the Public Free School Law, 1901, the local school boards were given limited authority over the

¹Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1899-1900, p. 134.

²Ibid.

curriculum in order to encourage educators to establish a curriculum of study for that level of education which is between the grammar school and the college. This instruction may not have been free, as school districts were also authorized to charge up to two dollars and fifty cents per month for instruction to the "higher branches."³

The Public Free School law specified that the introduction of "higher branches" of study in the elementary school could not be allowed to interfere with the instruction at the elementary level. In schools where there was only one teacher, the time set aside for instruction in the secondary level could occur after instruction of the elementary subjects of ". . . not less than five hours each day. . . ." ⁴

Concern for elementary education was also expressed in the Constitution of Virginia adopted in 1902. Within the Constitution it was stated that money could be spent for high schools, but only after a primary school was established in the district and was maintained for a minimum of four months a year.⁵

In the early 1900's, the curriculum for the "higher branches" was an extension of the elementary instruction, and

³Virginia, Public Free School Law, 1901, p. 61.

⁴Ibid., p. 62.

⁵Virginia Constitution (1902), Article IX, Section 132.

it was possible to include whatever subjects beyond the elementary level members of the local school board believed to be the proper preparation for college.

Plans were made at the turn of the century to write a new Constitution of Virginia. During the summer of 1901, there were numerous meetings of educators, each preparing recommendations to the Education Committee of the Constitutional Convention. At a conference of educators in Virginia, July, 1901, proposals were made to the effect that the Commonwealth needed ". . . a complete system of primary, grammar, and high schools."⁶ Expression was given several times that an expanded system of public education was needed.⁷ For example, P. B. Barringer, Chairman [sic] of the University of Virginia, wrote to Governor Montague on July 10, 1902, and described an address he had given to teachers urging ". . . the finding and completion of the missing link--the high school." Barringer said the address was well received.⁸ There was general agreement among educators to support Barringer's opinion that high schools were a necessary link between the primary schools and the colleges. The concern of the legislators was that the movement toward more

⁶Meade, "A History of the Constitutional Provisions for Education in Virginia," p. 339.

⁷Buck, Development of Public Schools in Virginia, pp. 129-130; Superintendent's Report, 1899-1900, p. xxxiii.

⁸Montague Papers, July 10, 1902.

high schools would interfere with the attempt to provide an elementary education for all children because money, materials and teacher time would be focused on secondary, rather than on elementary, education.⁹

There was discussion at the Constitutional Convention about requiring each school district to have a primary school for all children before tax money could be spent on a high school in the district. This requirement might have delayed the access to a high school education for white students, since each district would need to have an elementary school for both white and Negro children before a high school for white students could be established in the district.¹⁰ This requirement was rejected by the delegates.

In the Virginia Constitution (1902), the State Board of Education was given broad powers. It was stated that the Board shall:

. . . have authority to make all needful rules and regulations for the management, and conduct of the schools, which, when published and distributed, shall have the force and effect of law, subject to the authority of the General Assembly to revise, amend, or repeal the same.¹¹

In the Virginia Constitution (1902) the basis was established for the State Board of Education to set standards for high school accreditation, for curriculum requirements, and for

⁹Meade, "A History of the Constitutional Provisions for Education in Virginia," p. 342.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 345.

¹¹Virginia Constitution (1902), Article IX, Section 132.

other requirements for graduation from high school.

Constitutional authority was also provided for the General Assembly to expand the secondary school program in the public schools: "The General Assembly may establish agricultural, normal, manual training and technical schools, and such grades of school as shall be fore [sic] the public good."¹² Although there were public high schools in some areas of Virginia in 1900, the adoption of the Virginia Constitution (1902) prepared the way for the establishment of public high schools in all of the school districts in the Commonwealth.

The Virginia State Board of Education appears to have taken the first step in developing standards for high school accreditation in 1904, when the first minimum requirements for the high school course of study were established.¹³ While minimum requirements for accreditation were established, the minimum requirements were not specified.

Another move toward standardization was a law enacted by the General Assembly on March 21, 1905, in which a State Board of Examiners was established. The state was divided into five circuits, and each examiner was to visit the schools

¹²Virginia Constitution (1902), Article IX, Section 137.

¹³Smith, "Development of Virginia's Schools," p. 16; Buck, Development of Public Schools in Virginia, p. 130.

within his circuit and to report on conditions of the schools to the State Board of Education.¹⁴

On June 22, 1906, the State Board of Education defined the various types of high schools and standardized them into three categories: the "third grade" high school had one and two years of instruction beyond the elementary level; the "second grade" high school had three years of instruction beyond the elementary level; and the "first grade" high school had four years of instruction beyond the elementary level.¹⁵ In 1910, there were two additions to the standardized requirements for classification of high schools:

(1) there had to be a minimum number of students in average daily attendance; (2) a specific number of units had to be offered (Table 3).

In 1910, the State Board of Education seemingly first used the term "units" in relation to the high school curriculum. A unit was defined as a recitation period of forty minutes, for five times a week, for thirty-six weeks. The time was to be devoted to the "completion of an assigned amount of subject matter."¹⁶

¹⁴Virginia, Board of Education Minutes, March 22, 1905, p. 210.

¹⁵Virginia, Board of Education Minutes, June 22, 1906, p. 246.

¹⁶Virginia, Board of Education, "Course of Studies for Public High Schools in Virginia," (1912), p. 2.

TABLE 3

REQUIREMENTS FOR HIGH SCHOOLS--1906

Classification	Minimum Number of Students in Average Daily Attendance	Minimum Number of Curricular Units Offered
1st Grade High School	18	16
2nd Grade High School	15	12
3rd Grade High School	10	8

In the early twentieth century, there was a move toward standardization of the textbooks used in the secondary schools of Virginia. On March 22, 1905, the Virginia State Board of Education adopted textbooks for use in the high schools. The topics of the textbooks adopted are listed in Chart A. A review of the topics may reveal the standard curriculum in the high schools by 1905.¹⁷

An important step in the development of the high schools was the Mann High School Act which was passed unanimously by the General Assembly in 1906.¹⁸ The Mann Act provided funds for high school programs to assist those localities that paid for high school buildings and for teachers' salaries.

¹⁷Virginia, Board of Education Minutes (1902-1912), pp. 168-170.

¹⁸Smith, "Development of Virginia's Schools," p. 15; Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1906, pp. 350-352.

CHART A
 TOPICS OF TEXTBOOKS ADOPTED FOR
 HIGH SCHOOLS, 1905

ENGLISH	Grammar, Words, Composition and Rhetoric Poetics History of American and English Literature Southern Literature Classics Dictionaries
HISTORY	General American Ancient Greek and Roman French, English, Virginia and Southern History Civil Government Economics
LANGUAGES	Latin, Greek, French, German, Spanish
MATHEMATICS	Arithmetic, Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry
SCIENCE	Astronomy, Botany, Chemistry Physical and Commercial Geography Geology, Physics Physiology, Zoology
BUSINESS	Bookkeeping and Business Methods

Source: Virginia, Board of Education Minutes, March 22, 1905,
 pp. 168-179.

In 1910, the first course of study for high schools was published by the Virginia State Department of Education.¹⁹ It was a four-year college preparatory program requiring five periods a week of math, English, and languages, and three periods a week of science and history. Drawing, bookkeeping and business forms were electives. The teacher was instructed to ". . . find time for vocal music and physical culture." Provisions were to be made for ". . . moral instruction in each year of the high school."²⁰

In 1912, there was another step toward standardization of the high schools when the Virginia Commission on Accredited Schools was established by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.²¹ According to Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reamur C. Stearnes (1913-1918), this was the ". . . first serious effort to apply some definite and uniform standard of measurement to the work of all the secondary schools of the State."²² A joint report on high schools was issued each year by the Commission and the Department of Public Instruction, from 1912 until 1929.²³

¹⁹Virginia, Board of Education Minutes, 1902-1912, pp. 246-248.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Smith, "Development of Virginia's Schools," p. 16.

²²Virginia, Superintendent's Report, 1912-1914, p. 4.

²³Smith, "Development of Virginia's Schools," p. 16.

On August 29, 1916, the first standard requirements for graduation from a four-year public high school in Virginia were adopted by the Virginia State School Board of Education.²⁴ In order to graduate, a student needed ". . . not less than 16, nor more than 18 units, of which four shall be in English, two in mathematics, one in history (American and civics), and one in science." Eight elective units were required also.²⁵ A unit was defined as a "recitation period of forty minutes, five times a week, for thirty-six weeks, devoted to the completion of an assigned amount of subject matter."²⁶ Authority was given for students to earn from one-half to one unit credit for Bible Study as an elective, if it were taught according to the ". . . official Syllabus of Bible Study."²⁷

In 1918, the Virginia State Board of Education ended the use of three classifications of high schools, and established standards for only the junior high school and the four-year high school. Schools that did not fit either the standards for a junior high school or for a four-year high school were to ". . . determine their possibilities and

²⁴Virginia, Board of Education Minutes, 1912-1917, p. 298.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Virginia, Superintendent's Report, 1918-1919, p. 24.

²⁷Virginia School Board Minutes, 1912-1917-, p. 297.

conform to one of the two standard types of organization."²⁸ The program of studies for each high school had to be submitted to the supervisor of high schools at the beginning of the fall school term.²⁹ No changes could be made during that school year without the approval of the supervisor of high schools.

Additional graduation requirements were allowed in some school districts. Effective July 1, 1919, local school boards were granted permission to require a maximum of eighteen units for graduation if in the program of studies there was provision for unit courses in music, physical education (or military drill), home economics, manual arts, and drawing or fine arts. A student could select two or more of the elective courses for the required eighteen units.³⁰

One of the organizations whose rulings affected the standardization of the units of credit required for high school graduation in Virginia was the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States. The Association, formed in the late nineteenth century, led the way in the articulation of high school and college requirements when, in November, 1911, the Association created the Commission on Accredited Schools of the Association of

²⁸Virginia, Superintendent's Report, 1921-1922, p. 5.

²⁹Virginia, Superintendent's Report, 1918-1919, p. 24.

³⁰Virginia, Superintendent's Report, 1919-1920, p. 30.

Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States.³¹

Among other duties, the Commission was to
 ". . . describe and define unit courses of study in the
 various secondary school programs, based on the recommenda-
 tions of the Carnegie Foundation and the rules of the Associa-
 tion. . . ." Article four of the Commission's "Standards of
 Accrediting" stated:

No school shall be accredited which does not require
 for graduation the completion of a four-year high
 school course of study embracing fifteen units as
 defined by this Association. A unit represents a
 year's study in any subject in a secondary school
 constituting approximately a quarter of a full year's
 work. More than twenty periods per week should be
 discouraged.³²

The state requirements for units earned for graduation from
 high school in Virginia appear to follow closely the accredi-
 tation standards of the Association of Colleges and Secondary
 Schools of the Southern States. The work of the Commission
 on Accredited Schools of the Association was handled in each
 state by a committee, one member of which was usually a
 member of the State Department of Education.³³ The accredi-
 tation requirements of the Southern Association were listed

³¹Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the
 Southern States, Proceedings of the Twenty-Sixth Annual Meet-
 ing (Birmingham, Alabama, n.p., December 1-2, 1921), p. 50.

³²Ibid., p. 52.

³³Virginia, Bulletin, State Board of Education,
 Vol. 7, "Manual of Administration for High Schools," 1924-25,
 p. 19.

in the "Manual and Courses of Study for the High Schools of Virginia."³⁴ It seems to be expected that schools would be organized so that they could be accredited by the Southern Association.

From 1916 to 1950, the credit and curriculum requirements for graduation from high school in Virginia seemingly remained the same. Various recommendations were made by the Virginia State Department of Education, such as the Curriculum Revision Program in the 1930's.³⁵ The proposal was made that the study of language arts, science, and social studies could be organized around ". . . problems of social significance such as conservation, health, use of leisure time, changing standards of living, and other problems which have purpose and meaning for the pupil."³⁶ Several suggestions were made concerning the time allotment for the core curriculum, but there were no state-mandated changes in the curriculum and credit requirements for graduation from a high school in Virginia between 1930 and 1950.³⁷

³⁴Virginia, Bulletin, State Board of Education, Vol. II, No. 2, September 1919, "Manual and Courses of Study for the High Schools of Virginia," p. 20.

³⁵Smith, "Development of Virginia's Schools," p. 26.

³⁶Virginia, Bulletin, State Board of Education, Vol. 21, 1938-1939, "Virginia Program for Improving Instruction," p. 18.

³⁷Virginia Board of Education Minutes, 1930-1950; Virginia Board of Education Bulletins, 1930-1950; Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1930-1950.

From 1916 to 1960, the organization of the public schools in Virginia evolved from an eleven-year to a twelve-year program. The transition was completed in 1960, when Nelson County became the last county to adopt a twelve-year program.³⁸ By 1960, students who attended public schools in Virginia would satisfy all requirements for graduation in a twelve-year program rather than an eleven-year program.

In the latter part of the period 1916 to 1960, the Russians successfully launched Sputnik, and American educators and the public critically looked at their school systems to determine whether they were properly preparing young Americans for success in the competition of the space age. In Virginia, the General Assembly enacted legislation to provide for a commission, later to be known as the Spong Commission, which was given the charge to evaluate the curriculum and related matters in the public schools.³⁹ State Senator William B. Spong, Jr., headed the commission which reported, among other things, that there was a need for strengthening programs in science, mathematics, English, and foreign languages.⁴⁰ On December 11, 1958, the Virginia State

³⁸Smith, "Development of Public Schools," p. 25.

³⁹Virginia, Superintendent's Report, 1958-1959, p. 23.

⁴⁰Smith, "Public Education in Virginia," p. 30.

Board of Education approved an increase in the number of units required for graduation from high school from sixteen to twenty units, with sixteen of the units being earned in grades nine through twelve. Eighth grade students, who were qualified, were encouraged to earn credits in advanced science, algebra, and a foreign language.⁴¹

In 1960, the standard requirements for graduation listed by the Virginia State Board of Education included twenty units of credit in addition to two and one-half years of health and physical education. At least sixteen of the twenty units had to be earned in grades nine through twelve, and each student had to earn a specified number of credits in designated subjects⁴² (Table 4). From 1960 to 1970, no changes in the credit requirements for graduation were made.

In September, 1970, new graduation requirements were established by the Virginia State Board of Education. Students were required to earn twenty-three units of credit for graduation, eighteen of which were to be earned in subjects in grades nine through twelve. Students had to earn a certain number of credits in designated subjects⁴³ (Table 4). Within

⁴¹Virginia, State Board of Education Minutes, Vol. XXIX, p. 117.

⁴²Virginia, State Board of Education, "Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools in Virginia," 1960, p. 10.

⁴³Virginia, State Board of Education, "Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools in Virginia," 1970, p. 6.

TABLE 4
CREDIT REQUIREMENTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL
GRADUATION 1960-1970

Course	Number of Units Required	
	1960	1970
English	5	5
Math	2	2
Laboratory Science	2	2
Virginia and U. S. History	1	1
Virginia and U. S. Government	1	1
World History and/or World Geography	1	1
Health and Physical Education	*0	3
Additional Units from a Specified Program	4	0
Electives	4	8
Total	**20	***23

*Two and one-half years of health and physical education are required.

**At least 16 units shall be required in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade subjects.

***At least 18 units shall be required in 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade subjects.

Sources: Virginia, Board of Education, "Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools in Virginia," 1960, p. 10; 1970, p. 6.

the twenty-three required units, fifteen had to be in specified subjects. Each graduating student had to have earned five units of English, two units of mathematics, two units of a laboratory science, one unit of the history of Virginia and the United States, one unit of Virginia and United States government, one unit of world history and/or geography, and three units of health and physical education.⁴⁴ The three units of health and physical education represented a change from 1960, when no unit of credit was granted (or required) for study in health and physical education.

The number of units of credit required for graduation by 1976 was eighteen units to be earned in grades nine through twelve.⁴⁵ Credit for eighth-grade subjects was optional at the discretion of local school authorities, and the credit would be earned in addition to the eighteen units required for graduation in grades nine through twelve. The purpose of removing the credit from eighth grade subjects was ". . . to provide flexibility that will result in improved programs for students in junior high, middle school, or intermediate schools."⁴⁶ The required subjects and units of credit earned,

⁴⁴Virginia, Board of Education, "Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools in Virginia," 1970, p. 6.

⁴⁵Virginia, Board of Education, "Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools in Virginia," 1976, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁶Virginia, Board of Education, "Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools in Virginia," 1974, p. 9.

minus the eighth grade credit, remained the same as they were in 1970.

Between 1910 and 1976, the Virginia State Board of Education changed the definition of a unit of credit (Table 5). In 1910, a unit of credit was defined as the study of a specific subject for a forty-minute period, five times a week for one school year.⁴⁷ In 1960, a unit of credit represented the study of a subject for forty-five minutes, five times a week for thirty-six weeks. In 1970, the definition of a unit of credit was changed to read: "[It] shall represent satisfactory completion of a designated course for a minimum time allotment of 160 clock hours."⁴⁸ In 1974, the definition of a unit of credit was changed to: ". . . satisfactory completion of a designated course based on a minimum time allotment of 150 clock hours,"⁴⁹ and this continued to be the requirement for earning a unit of credit in 1976. Between 1910 and 1976, the changes made in the time required to earn a unit of credit increased thirty hours for each unit of credit.

⁴⁷Virginia Board of Education Minutes, 1902-1912, pp. 246-248.

⁴⁸Virginia, Board of Education, "Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools in Virginia," 1970, p. 6.

⁴⁹Virginia, State Board of Education, "Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools in Virginia," 1974, p. 7.

TABLE 5
DEFINITIONS OF UNIT OF CREDIT
1910-1976

Year	Minutes In Class	Class Meetings Per Week	Total Minutes for 36 Weeks (1 Year)
1910	40	5	7200
1916	40	5	7200
1960	45	5	8100
1970	*	*	9600
1974	*	*	9000
1976	*	*	9000

NOTE: Increase from 1910 to 1976: 1800 minutes or 30 hours per unit of credit.

*Not stated in definition.

Source: Virginia, Board of Education Minutes, 1910-1976; Virginia, Board of Education, "Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools in Virginia, 1910-1976.

Throughout the first seventy-six years of the twentieth century significant changes were made in the state-required curriculum and units of credit earned in order to graduate from an accredited high school in Virginia. In 1900, for the few public high schools located mainly in major cities of Virginia, there were neither curriculum nor credit requirements for graduation from high school. By 1976, public high schools were available to students throughout the State, and there were specific curriculum and credit requirements. Students were required to take a proscribed curriculum of English, mathematics, science, history, government, world studies, health and physical education, and electives, and they had to earn a minimum of eighteen units of credit in grades nine through twelve.

There were a variety of forces outside of Virginia that seemingly influenced some of these changes. One of these forces began developing in 1892 when a committee of leading educators, under the auspices of the National Education Association, was appointed by the Association to ". . . make order out of widespread chaos in secondary education."⁵⁰ The chairman of the committee of ten educators was

⁵⁰Theodore R.Sizer, Secondary Schools at the Turn of the Century (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. xi-xii, 210.

Charles W. Eliot, president of Harvard University. The Committee of Ten, as it was called, was to make a study of the subjects of the secondary school curriculum and to ". . . consider the limits of its subject, the best methods of instruction, the most desirable allotment of time for the subject, and the best methods of testing pupils' attainments. . . ." ⁵¹

The Report of the Committee on Secondary School Studies was published in January, 1894, and it appears to have had an influence on the curriculum requirements for high school graduation throughout the United States. ⁵² Prior to the committee's study, there were no common standards for the curriculum in secondary schools. The curriculum was ad hoc with marked differences between rural and urban schools, and between private and public institutions. ⁵³ There were also great variations in the work done at the university level, with many colleges maintaining preparatory departments which competed with secondary schools for students. ⁵⁴

The report of the Committee of Ten stated that "mental discipline" was the aim of education, whether the student was

⁵¹Ibid., p. xii.

⁵²Ibid., p. xiv.

⁵³Ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁴Ibid.

to enter college or to enter the job market. The curriculum was to have the traditional linguistic base with the addition of history, science, mathematics, and language. There were no recommendations made to include vocational subjects, even though it was stated:

The secondary schools of the United States taken as a whole, do not exist for the purpose of preparing boys and girls for colleges. . . . A secondary school programme . . . must be for those children whose education is not to be pursued beyond the secondary school.⁵⁵

The Committee of Ten reported that the following subjects were "proper" for secondary schools: languages (English, Latin, Greek, German, French, Spanish), mathematics (algebra, geometry, trigonometry), general history, natural history (astronomy, meteorology, botany, zoology, physiology, geology, ethnology, physical geography), physics and chemistry. Drawing could be used in the science subjects, English and history could have "incidental instruction" in metaphysics or aesthetics, and "book-keeping [sic] and commercial arithmetic" could be taken in place of algebra. If it were desired to provide training "in trade or the useful arts," this could replace some of the science recommended in the third and fourth year.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 261.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 259.

The Report of the Committee of Ten appeared to be influential in curriculum building in the secondary schools of Virginia, until the National Education Association published the "Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education" in 1918. The National Education Association had appointed the Commission to Reorganize Secondary Education.⁵⁷ In its report the commission stated that the main goals for the secondary schools were: "1. Health, 2. Command of fundamental processes, 3. Worthy home membership, 4. Vocation, 5. Citizenship, 6. Worthy use of leisure, 7. Ethical character."⁵⁸ These "Cardinal Principles" appear to have been the starting point for many of the changes in the curriculum requirements in the public high schools of the United States for approximately forty years. The educators, who worked on the committee that designed the "Cardinal Principles," were active in the 1920's and 1930's publicizing the report and working toward a broader curriculum, the comprehensive high school, and suitable instruction for mature students.⁵⁹ The trend was toward less emphasis on linguistics and more concentration on manual vocational training.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 203.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ James B. Conant, Shaping Educational Policy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), p. 21.

⁶⁰ Sizer, Secondary Schools at the Turn of the Century, p. 204.

Technological advances and the move toward universal high school education were among the factors that encouraged changes in curriculum requirements for graduation established by the Virginia State Department of Education during the first seventy-six years of the twentieth century. As a result, one of the major changes in the curriculum was the expansion of vocational course offerings which could be taken to fulfill the elective credit requirements for completion of a high school education. Superintendents of Public Instruction regularly noted in their reports to the General Assembly that there was a need for more vocational offerings. Superintendent Stearns reported, "It is very clear that a broader and more elastic state course of study is an immediate and urgent need."⁶¹ At times politicians also articulated the need for vocational education. Governor William Hodges Mann, in his message to the General Assembly on January 16, 1914, when discussing the public schools, noted that ". . . an important movement in linking up the schools with the life of the people . . . vocational training is finding more and more favor."⁶²

⁶¹Virginia, Superintendent's Report, 1913-1914, p. 26.

⁶²Message of Governor Mann to the General Assembly, January 16, 1914.

From 1900 to 1976, several investigations were conducted of the public schools in Virginia. In 1918, members of the General Assembly appointed a Commission to make a survey of the schools. The report of the Commission stated ". . . the school children are educated away from and not towards their probable vocations."⁶³ It was recommended that many students should be prepared for ". . . entrance into agriculture, industry, trades and vocations, including home making."⁶⁴

Another survey of the public schools in Virginia was directed by Dr. Michael O'Shea in 1928. One of the criticisms made by members of the O'Shea Committee was that the school ". . . does not train properly for the realities of life . . ." in an institutionalized age. It was recommended that more effort be made toward consolidation of the small, rural high schools in order that there could be a broader curriculum offering of vocational subjects.⁶⁵

Businessmen, another component of society, were concerned with more practical studies in education, and they initiated studies of the public schools. One of these was

⁶³Report of the Commission, 1921, p. 9.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵James E. Pate, State Government in Virginia
(Richmond, Virginia: The Appeals Press, 1932), pp. 132-138.

completed on November 2, 1943, under the auspices of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce and Dr. Francis G. Lankford, Jr., Department of Education, University of Virginia, directed the study of problems of high school education in Virginia. This was undertaken because ". . . no other single function of our state and local government costs as much as public education."⁶⁶ The reasons stated for the study were two-fold:

1. The recognition that education affects the general welfare more than any other state or local activity.
2. The statistical evidence of the low rank of Virginia among the states in nearly all factors used is a measure of effort and achievement in education.⁶⁷

Members of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce were also concerned because new business would not be attracted to Virginia without the assurance of having an educated work force capable of performing skilled jobs in a variety of technical fields. Businesses in Virginia were already suffering from a shortage of skilled workers because of the manpower needs created by World War II.

Another concern of the members of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce was the possible effect of the national ratings of the public school system in Virginia upon businesses that

⁶⁶ Opportunities for the Improvement of High School Education (Richmond: Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, 1944), p. v.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. vi.

might consider moving to Virginia. The schools of Virginia were ranked in the lower third in comparison to schools in the other states in the amount of money spent on public education, the percentage of the population graduating from high school, and the education of the teachers. The illiteracy rate in Virginia was the eleventh highest in the nation.⁶⁸ The people employed by businesses that were planning to relocate in Virginia would want statistical evidence that their children would have an opportunity to receive the benefits of a public school education that would be comparable in quality to education in other states in the nation.

The study made by the Chamber of Commerce resulted in several recommendations concerning the high school curriculum, especially the vocational offerings. Some of these were: (1) long term curriculum planning to give greater vocational training and pre-vocational education; (2) expanding the work-study program and the Distributive Education courses; (3) encouraging more girls to take home economics; (4) establishing regional trade schools; (5) requiring all vocational courses to provide work experience; (6) supervising commercial education courses by the state.⁶⁹ The

⁶⁸U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1979, p. 147.

⁶⁹Opportunities for the Improvement of High School Education, pp. 101-104.

committee also noted that the curriculum in the small high schools was meager, and that there was an acute need for consolidation in order to provide a broader course of study for high school students.⁷⁰

Partly as a result of these studies instigated by both educators and laymen, there was a continuous development of vocational education in the public high schools of Virginia. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were seemingly no vocational offerings in the public high schools of Virginia; by the 1920's, there were courses of study in agriculture, home economics, business, and a small number of industrial courses. In addition, other courses were added during the 1940's in a group of representative public high schools in Virginia: bookkeeping, shorthand, typewriting, home economics, agriculture, general shop, mechanical drawing, woodwork, metal work, electricity, printing, machine shop, auto shop, and distributive education.⁷¹ By 1976, the vocational program had been expanded to include health occupations, cosmetology, and a variety of additional industrial and commercial courses of study.⁷²

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 3-4.

⁷¹Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, Opportunities for Improvement of High School Education, pp. 121-122, 160.

⁷²Virginia, Superintendent's Report, 1975-1976, pp. 87-98.

From 1900 to 1976, there were significant increases in the number of vocational courses of study offered in the public high schools of Virginia, which a student could elect to take to satisfy the elective credit requirement for graduation. These changes appear to be due in part to the recommendations of various educators, business groups, and legislators; however, there is seemingly no evidence to indicate that labor groups in Virginia formally advocated vocational education or changes in curriculum requirements.

Another cause for changes in the curriculum and credit requirements for graduation from high school was the trend toward standardization of secondary schools. Nationally, the work of the Committee of Ten and of the Commission to Reorganize Secondary Education established goals for secondary education that affected the state-mandated curriculum requirements for graduation in Virginia. Regionally, the high school accreditation requirements by the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States caused changes in the state-mandated curriculum and credit requirements for high school graduation in Virginia. At the state level, the Virginia State Board of Education, in 1916, established standards for accreditation of secondary schools in Virginia which included standardized curriculum and credit requirements for graduation from high schools in Virginia.

The changes made in entrance requirements to colleges and universities also affected the graduation requirements

for the public high schools of Virginia. At the turn of the century, students could be admitted to colleges with no specific curricular requirements, but with just the approval of the admissions officers. By 1976, colleges had specific high school curriculum and credit requirements, which caused the public schools to have state-mandated curriculum and credit requirements for graduation in order that their graduates could be admitted to colleges.

From 1900 to 1976, Virginia moved from a predominantly rural society to an urban society whose young citizens needed an education that would prepare them for life in the city. This created an increase in the number of students attending high school and provided a diversified student body planning to graduate from high school. No longer was the high school to be just a college preparatory institution, but it also was to prepare many of its students for the world of work. This change aided in the broadening of the state-mandated curriculum and credit requirements for graduation from high school.

Other factors helped influence changes in graduation requirements. International events, such as World War I and II, and Sputnik caused Americans to look critically at their educational institutions to determine whether they were adequately preparing young people to meet the technological needs of the nation. From 1900 to 1976, the general public,

politicians and concerned educators requested numerous studies of the public high schools in Virginia. Some of the recommendations of the study committees encouraged changes in the state-mandated curriculum and credit requirements for graduation from high school.

There were significant changes in the curriculum and credit requirements for graduation from high school from 1900 to 1976. The curriculum was expanded to include the social sciences, the natural sciences, health and physical education, and a wide variety of vocational courses, and other elective courses. The credit requirements were established, defined, and increased. While there have been significant changes in the curriculum and credit requirements for a high school diploma in Virginia, legislators and educators in the Commonwealth have not led the nation in establishing standards for graduation from high school. The state-mandated changes that have occurred in these areas have generally replicated the national patterns in secondary education.

Chapter V will include an examination of the state-mandated test requirements for graduation from 1900 to 1976.

CHAPTER V

TESTS

At the beginning of the twentieth century there were no state-mandated testing programs for the public high schools in Virginia. During this period, the legislative and administrative emphasis was on establishing a network of public high schools throughout the state. The apparent assumption was that either the local school district and/or the classroom teacher would adequately evaluate the progress of high school students. In 1919, the General Assembly appointed a Survey Committee, directed by Dr. Alexander Inglis of Harvard University, to determine the quality of education in Virginia and the needs of the public school system. The Survey Committee administered tests to more than sixteen thousand students in Virginia to: (1) measure the results of instruction, (2) establish standards of accomplishment for certain ". . . educational conditions peculiar to the South and exemplified in Virginia . . . ," (3) encourage and stimulate teachers and others to understand modern educational methods.¹ The Survey Committee noted that the South had

¹Virginia Education Commission, Virginia Public Schools--A Survey of a Southern State Public School System, Part II (New York: World Book Company, 1921), p. ix.

particular problems which would undoubtedly have an effect on the students who graduated from southern high schools. The major differences were: the organization of the schools into seven grades of elementary education (as opposed to eight grades in other regions of the United States); the problem of educating a large number of Negroes; the many small, rural schools; the short school terms and the poor attendance.²

The testing by the Survey Committee was designed to provide evidence that would show where improvement was needed. It was also hoped that the interest and learning stimulated by the survey would help to establish a permanent force of educators working to improve the quality of education in the Commonwealth.³ Both educational and psychological tests were given to students in grades one through seven. At the high school level, two tests were given to eight hundred eighty-seven first-year students in twenty-five representative high schools of the state. The tests were in Composition, the "Nassau County Supplement to the Hillegas Composition Scale," and in Algebra, the "Holtz's First Year Algebra Scales, Series A, Addition and Subtraction, Equation and Formula." The tests for grades one through seven were in reading,

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

spelling, handwriting and arithmetic.⁴ Instruction in language arts and mathematics was the primary purpose of education. This is affirmed in the report of the Survey Committee:

Reading, writing, arithmetic: through all the changing concepts of education these remain the fundamental aims of instruction in the elementary school. Language and figures are the basic tools of civilized life at every level and for every bit of higher education to which individuals and society may aspire. No school can be efficient if it does not teach things well; any school which does teach them well justifies its cost in social and individual service rendered.

A valid survey of any school must, therefore, inquire how well the pupils are learning to read, how well they add, subtract, multiply and divide, how well they express their own ideas. . . .⁵

In the report of the Survey Committee the results of the tests were given with recommendations for improving student performance in the subjects in which they were tested.

The Survey, commissioned in 1919, was a result of the influence of the scientific movement throughout the United States. Many people believed that "science and technology" could solve the problems of society. Educators were admonished to use scientific methods to measure the efficiency of their schools and to use scientific methods to improve public education. Superintendent of Public Instruction

⁴Ibid., p. 2.

⁵Ibid., p. 1

Harris Hart designed a "scientific formula" using various educational and monetary factors to determine the "efficiency" of the schools.⁶

Another manifestation of the scientific movement was the development and use of standardized intelligence and achievement tests during World War I. In 1918, the General Assembly was prepared to enact legislation that would attempt to apply "scientific methods" to evaluate the public schools in Virginia. An appropriation of ten thousand dollars was made for a survey of the school system as well as for administration of standardized tests to students.

In 1919, students were required to complete sixteen units of high school work; however, there is no evidence of a state-required examination upon completion of a required subject. Reference is made to examinations in the Manual and Courses of Study for High Schools, 1919:

Many schemes of promoting pupils from subject to subject, or grade to grade, are followed in the State, but the practice most usually followed is to give an evaluation of one-third to daily grades, one-third to monthly tests, and one-third to term examinations, requiring a combined average of 75 percent for passing, and a minimum grade of 60 percent, on all three grades entering into the combined grade.

Pupils are sometimes exempted from taking term examinations upon attaining a high degree of efficiency on daily recitations and monthly tests. This exemption, however, should not, as a rule, apply to members of the graduating class.

⁶Virginia, Superintendent's Report, 1919-1920, p. ix.

Examinations should, in the main, test ability to think, to work to solve new problems; should test attitudes and motives, rather than ability to reproduce memorized facts.

Examination questions and the papers of the senior class, at least, should be kept on file in the principal's office for examination by the Division Superintendent and the Supervisor of High Schools.

Principals and teachers should familiarize themselves with the various scientific tests and scales of measurement recently formulated to determine comparative achievements in the various secondary school subjects, and should make use of them wherever possible. These tests and scales are mentioned in the suggestions on method in the various courses that follow.⁷

It appears that examinations upon completion of units of study were not required by the State Board of Education, but the ". . . practice most usually followed" was to have a "term examination" count as one-third of the final evaluation in a subject.

In 1925, under the topic of "Grading of Pupils," English teachers of composition were directed by the State Board of Education to be certain that students ". . . show by definite tests. . ." that they had made progress in: literary appreciation, knowledge of classics studied, silent reading, oral reading, and memorizing.⁸ In the sections of the bulletin concerning science and mathematics there was no mention

⁷Virginia, Bulletin State Board of Education, Vol. II, No. 2, September, 1919, p. 12.

⁸Ibid.

of tests.

In 1924, the first reference was made to a "measurement for quality" as a requirement for high school graduation. In a section in the Manual of Administration for High Schools, 1924-25, entitled "Quantity-Quality Standard for High School Graduation," it is recommended that a ". . . certain minimum quality of work . . ." be earned, as well as a given number of hours or units for graduation. A qualitative unit of sixteen credits ". . . is suggested." A mark of "C" would carry a value of one qualitative credit; a mark of "B", two qualitative credits; and a mark of "A", three qualitative credits. To graduate from high school, a student would need to earn sixteen quantitative units, and sixteen qualitative units. Thus, to graduate from high school in four years a student would have to make an average of "C" or higher throughout his/her courses.⁹ It appears that the idea of a qualitative credit requirement was dropped, as there is no mention of it in later publications of the State Board of Education or in the acts passed by the General Assembly.

In February, 1927, a step was taken toward both standardization and expansion of a state-wide testing program when the Division of Research and Surveys was established

⁹Virginia, Bulletin State Board of Education, Manual of Administration for High Schools, Vol. 7 (1924-1925), p. 42.

within the State Department of Education.¹⁰ In May, 1927, under the direction of the new department, experimental tests were given to high school seniors in ten counties and three cities ". . . to find if possible [sic] some adequate basis upon which high school graduates can be recommended for college entrance."¹¹ The tests that were given were: (1) the Terman Group Test of Mental Ability; (2) the Iowa Content Examination for English and Mathematics; and (3) the Iowa Reading Comprehension Test.¹²

Preparing students for college and getting high school graduates admitted to college were of major concern to high school educators. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States had established criteria for accrediting high schools. In 1921, the accreditation standards indicated that there were no test requirements, but there were required inspections of schools before the school ". . . shall be considered eligible for the list." There had to be a ". . . rigid, thorough-going systematic inspection . . ." of the following items: "The efficiency of instruction, the acquired habits of thought and speech, the general

¹⁰Virginia, Superintendent's Report, 1926-1927, p. 21.

¹¹Ibid., p. 22.

¹²Ibid., pp. 18-20.

intellectual and moral tone of a school. . . ."13 Article 7
of the Accreditation Standards concerns evaluation of the
work in high schools from another vantage point:

Colleges belonging to the Association shall
report to the professor of secondary education
or high school inspector by February 15th of
each year any cases of lack of preparation of,
or other information relating to students coming
from schools in his state. . . .14

The request indicated that students who did poorly in college
would be a reflection on the quality of education in the high
school.

At irregular intervals in the 1930's and 1940's,
standardized tests were administered to students in the
public schools of Virginia to provide some comparison of
student achievement. In 1937, a standardized high school
achievement test was administered in the spring to a random
sample of one-fourth of the seniors in public high schools in
Virginia. The test measured achievement in English, social
studies, science, and mathematics.¹⁵

In 1941, the General Assembly appointed
Dr. J. Galen Saylor of Columbia University to direct a study

¹³Proceedings of the 26th Annual Meeting of the Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools of the Southern States. Birmingham, Alabama, December 1 and 2, 1921, p. 53.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁵Buck, Development of Public Schools in Virginia, p. 340.

of the "Program for Improving Instruction," which was a plan for curriculum revision in Virginia. Dr. Saylor noted that the use of state-wide standardized testing programs to measure the results of instruction had not been encouraged because it would tend to restrict the work of teachers. The directors of the "Program for Improving Instruction" believed a balanced curriculum was important, and teachers should not be lead to teach primarily that which would produce high scores in a state-wide testing program.¹⁶

In 1944, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce surveyed the public school system in Virginia. Students of forty-three representative high schools were tested in an ". . . earnest effort . . . to evaluate the product of the Virginia high schools."¹⁷ Objective standardized achievement tests in American History, mechanics of English, reading, and arithmetic were administered to the high school students in the selected high schools. The test results were to be used as a basis for improving the guidance program and for adapting instructional materials to meet individual students' needs. The test scores of students were not to be used ". . . to put pressure on pupils to learn more subject matter."¹⁸ The

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 337-338.

¹⁷Opportunities for the Improvement of High School Education, p. 18.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 20.

Chamber of Commerce survey team also used both records of high school graduates enrolled in colleges and universities, and questionnaires to businessmen to evaluate the public schools in Virginia.

Businessmen felt that their beginning employees were ". . . deficient in certain specific fundamentals essential to jobs they perform . . ." and they particularly noted the inability of high school graduates to spell, to write legibly, to compute accurately, and to use English correctly.¹⁹ Those who responded to the questionnaire said ". . . secondary schools should put more stress on reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic."²⁰ One of the four recommendations from the study was that there should be a ". . . continuous appraisal of the work of the high schools of Virginia . . ." because it appeared to the study committee appointed by the Virginia Chamber of Commerce that ". . . educators knew very little about the product of the high schools."²¹

In 1948, the General Assembly established a Commission to study state and local revenues and expenditures under the chairmanship of State Senator Garland Gray.²² One of the

¹⁹Ibid., p. 41.

²⁰Ibid., p. 42.

²¹Ibid., p. 43.

²²Buck, Development of Public Schools, p. 496.

recommendations of the Gray Commission, as it came to be known, was:

. . . [that] the State Board of Education be charged with the responsibility for devising and administering on a state-wide basis, comprehensive objective tests to determine what the public school pupils have learned; we recommend further that the results of these tests be studied by the Board with a view to correction of deficiencies discovered.²³

This recommendation laid the groundwork for the legislature to pass the "Accomplishment Testing Program" in 1950, which required tests at least every two years in selected grades to determine the ". . . ability and the extent . . ." that students have mastered the subjects taught. The scores of students on the tests were not to be considered in passing a course or in graduating from high school.²⁴

In 1958, the General Assembly enacted a law requiring the State Board of Education to begin testing students in secondary school subject matter examinations, junior high school survey tests and elementary school progress tests, to identify and develop the abilities of students at an early age, and to measure pupil achievement in the basic subjects of the elementary school program. This testing program was initiated because:

²³Virginia Journal of Education, January, 1950, p. 38.

²⁴Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1950, p. 451.

. . . a challenge of unprecedented graveness exists in the apparent Soviet superiority in sciences and engineering. . . . It is a state responsibility to enlarge the capacity for citizenship in justice and for enjoyment of the blessings of liberty.²⁵

In 1973, the General Assembly directed the State Board of Education to study and develop performance tests to measure the level of performance of a child before the child is passed to a higher grade.²⁶ This was the first time that the General Assembly indicated state-mandated tests may become an evaluation tool for deciding to pass or fail a student.

In July, 1976, the State Board of Education approved a competency-based policy statement submitted by the Department of Education. The testing requirements were published in July, 1976, as a part of "Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools in Virginia." Under the section, "Graduation Eligibility," it is stated:

*In order to graduate from an accredited secondary school and receive a high school diploma in Virginia, students shall earn the number of units of credit prescribed by the Board of Education and be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of local school officials attainment of the following minimum competencies:

1. Functional literacy in communicative skills including the ability to read, write, and speak;

²⁵Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1958, p. 1096.

²⁶Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1973, p. 1309.

2. Computational skills including the ability to work with decimals and percentages to the extent that they can effectively participate in society as consumers;

3. A basic knowledge and understanding of the history and cultures of the United States, including concepts and processes of democratic governance and our economic system;

4. The ability to pursue higher education in post-secondary schools or gain employment as a result of having gained a job-entry skill.

*Change to become effective July 1, 1978.²⁷

From 1900 to 1976, there were significant changes in the tests required for graduation from public high schools in Virginia. There were no test requirements in 1900. Between 1900 and 1950, the only state-mandated tests were those required for surveys of the public school system to determine the weaknesses and the needs of public schools, and achievement tests at intervals to measure the effectiveness of instructional programs. After 1950, standardized tests were required: (1) to measure the achievements of students in order to improve the instructional program, (2) to help in determining the curriculum needs of individual students, (3) to provide guidance in the selection of suitable career goals.²⁸ It was not until 1976 that there were state-mandated tests required before graduation from high school, beginning with the prospective graduates of 1981.

²⁷Virginia, "Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools in Virginia" (Richmond, Virginia: Department of Education, 1976), pp. 8-9.

²⁸Virginia, Board of Education Minutes, 1950-1973.

One reason for the significant increase in state-mandated tests is that as technology has advanced the opportunity both to score tests and to interpret data from a testing program has greatly increased. In 1939, the first step toward providing help to local school divisions in scoring and interpreting test data was taken when the State Department of Education, in concert with the National Youth Administration and the Virginia Employment Service, established the Richmond Consultation Service to provide vocational guidance and to create an information center which would furnish schools and other agencies knowledge about career opportunities.²⁹ In 1946, when the Richmond Consultation Service received a test-scoring machine, they offered a test-scoring service at cost to the schools. When the testing service became operational, local school divisions used the service for their testing programs. In the 1960's and 1970's, with the development of computers, test data could be interpreted rapidly and economically, which made it feasible for the legislature and the State Board of Education to require tests for high school graduation.

During the period 1900-1976, the development of the science of testing helped to cause an increase in the number

²⁹ Buck, Development of Public Schools in Virginia, p. 432.

of state-mandated tests in Virginia. By 1976, the General Assembly and the Virginia Board of Education were aware of the improvement in the validity, reliability and predictability of aptitude, personality, intelligence and achievement tests. This improvement was due in part to the development and use of tests in the armed forces during World War I and World War II.

Another reason for the increase in state-mandated tests in Virginia is the rapid growth of the technology of computer science. The Cold War and the concomitant competition between the United States and the Soviet Union for leadership in the nuclear age had accelerated the development and use of computers. By the mid-1960's, computers had assumed a valuable role in the management of the school divisions in Virginia.³⁰

The advancement of computer technology and the improvement in the reliability and validity of standardized tests worked together to increase the possibility that tests would be widely used in the public schools in Virginia. In 1973, it was feasible for the General Assembly to direct the Virginia State Board of Education to require students to pass competency tests in order to be promoted to a higher grade.³¹

³⁰ Donald D. Spencer, Introduction to Information Processing (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 14-16.

³¹ Virginia, Acts of the General Assembly, 1973, p. 1309.

From 1950 to 1976, there were other events which helped to create a demand for competency tests in Virginia. Events in international affairs caused many Americans to lose confidence in the leadership ability of the United States. The Russians launched the first spacecraft. The Vietnam War was a defeat for the United States. Friendly nations no longer looked to the United States for leadership.

In addition to the disappointment with international affairs, there were domestic problems that Americans were not able to solve. The assassination of public leaders, the growing anti-war movement, increase in crime, racial tensions, and unremitting inflation affected our system of public education. These continuing problems added to the loss of self-confidence felt by many Americans. Soon a search was begun to find the causes for the decline in the confidence in the power of the United States.

In the mid-1960's, one such cause was an attempt to discover reasons for a downward trend in the achievement test scores of high school students. Concern was raised about the ineffectiveness of public schools. This increased the feeling of self-doubt by Americans. There were declines in both the verbal and the math scores of eleventh and twelfth grade students taking the Scholastic Aptitude Tests

(SAT).³² The verbal scores dropped forty-one points from the testing year 1962-1963, to the testing year 1974-1975, and the math scores went down twenty-nine points.³³ On the American College Tests (ACT), the scores of both eleventh and twelfth grade students declined in English, mathematics and social studies.³⁴ These scores are in contrast to the general increase in achievement test scores throughout the 1940's, 1950's, and to the mid-1960's. The decline in the test scores was publicized in the news media and fostered speculations concerning the causes for the lower scores.³⁵ It is possible that the citizens of Virginia, who had looked to the public schools to provide solutions to problems, needed evidence to prove that their schools were providing a meaningful education.

From 1900 to 1976, advances were made in the minimal educational level of the people in Virginia. Even though there was an improvement in the number of years of education for the people, Virginia did not maintain a level consistent

³² Lawrence Lipsitz, ed., The Test Score Decline, Meaning and Issues (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Educational Technology Publications, 1977), pp. 3-4.

³³ Ibid., p. 28.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁵ The Washington Post, "The Great SAT Mystery," November 9, 1975; F. M. Heckinger, "SAT Scores: What Happened to the Best and the Brightest?," Saturday Review World, 1974, 1, p. 65.

with other areas of the United States. In 1900, 24.3 percent of the population of Virginia was estimated to be illiterate; in 1960, 3.4 percent was considered to be illiterate.³⁶ While this was a significant decline in illiteracy in Virginia, when the percentages are compared to the national illiteracy rate for the same years, the comparison is unfavorable for Virginia. In 1900, the illiteracy rate in Virginia was 160 percent of the national average; however, in 1960, it was 300 percent of the national average.³⁷ In 1972, the armed forces released the information that 11.9 percent of the people in Virginia who were to be inducted into the armed forces failed the mental requirements.³⁸

From 1900 to 1976, significant changes were made in the state-mandated test requirements for graduation from high school in Virginia. A variety of forces worked together to cause these changes. One of these forces was the increased sophistication of testing which provided improved validity, reliability, and predictability of tests, combined with the development of computer technology with its increased capacity to score and to interpret test results. Forces

³⁶United States Government, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Digest of Educational Statistics (Washington, D. C., 1975), p. 18.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

interacting with that of the loss of national self-confidence, such as the declining standardized test scores of students and the inability of the schools to meet all the educational needs in Virginia, were given wide publicity. This increased awareness caused the General Assembly and the Virginia Board of Education to require students to pass competency tests in order to graduate from high school.

In Chapter VI an analysis will be made of the reasons for changes in state-mandated requirements for graduation from public high schools in Virginia, 1900-1976.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

During the course of the investigation an attempt was made to trace the changes in state requirements for high school graduation in Virginia from 1900-1976. The focus of the study was placed on these four areas: compulsory education and attendance requirements, curriculum and credits, and test requirements.

During this time, from 1900 to 1976, there were significant changes in the requirements made for graduation from public high schools in Virginia. In 1900, children in Virginia were not required by law to attend school, while in 1976, children who were both physically fit as well as those who had physical incapacities had to attend school between the ages of six and seventeen years of age. In 1900, public schools were not required to be open for a standard amount of time, but in 1976, as a minimum, they had to be maintained for a 180-day school year.

In 1900, while there was a state-devised curriculum for students in public schools, there were not any requirements made for completing a specific number of courses for one to graduate from high school. The basic curriculum was:

orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, physiology and hygiene, history of the United States, and history of Virginia. In addition, the Superintendent of Public Instruction was authorized by the General Assembly to make arrangements for the gradual introduction of civil government and drawing. The State Board of Education could make allowances for "higher branches" that would help to qualify pupils to become teachers or to enter colleges in the state. In the first decade of the century, the authority of the State Board of Education to require courses of instruction was less than that of the local school board.

By 1976, the curriculum required by the State Board of Education in order to graduate had grown to include:

- (1) four units of English;
- (2) one unit of mathematics;
- (3) two units of American studies (Virginia and United States history and Virginia and United States government);
- (4) one unit of world studies;
- (5) one unit of laboratory science;
- (6) two units of health and physical education; and
- (7) seven units of elective courses.

While the Carnegie unit had been widely used by 1900, there was no quantitative measure to represent the satisfactory completion of a designated course. In 1976, the "unit of credit" was the quantitative measure of time used in high school instruction and it required ". . . a minimum time allotment of 150 clock hours." In 1910, members of

the State School Board first adopted the unit of credit, and it was defined as a period consisting of forty minutes, five times a week, for thirty-six weeks. This was 120 hours of instruction a year for each unit of credit. By 1976, the State Board of Education had redefined the unit of credit to be 150 clock hours of instruction, which is an increase of thirty hours of instruction for each unit of credit.

At the same time as the state-mandated curriculum requirements for graduation have changed, these requirements have continued to meet the standards for admission to colleges and universities. However, the requirement in mathematics has dropped from two units in 1916, to one unit in 1976. On the other hand, the curriculum requirements in social studies have increased from one unit in 1916 to three units in 1976. The curricular requirements in science have remained the same. The decrease in requirements in mathematics would seem to be a move away from the state-required college preparatory curriculum. While other areas in the United States were increasing the mathematics and science requirements, students in Virginia were required to have only one credit in each subject. On the other hand, the increase in the graduation requirements for credit in social studies was viewed as a preparation both for college and for the responsibilities of adult life.

From 1900 to 1976, the state-mandated curriculum for high schools in Virginia has been apparent in an emphasis on the basic skills of reading and writing, with less emphasis on mathematics. Throughout the period, students have been required to take English each year in high school and at least one year of mathematics. The descriptions of the required English courses indicate they are to include extensive practice for students in both reading and writing.

There was a significant change during the period 1900-1976 in the vocational offerings to fulfill the requirement for elective credit for graduation from the high schools of Virginia. In 1900, there were no state-mandated vocational offerings. In 1976, the elective credit requirement could be met by an increased number of vocational offerings because secondary schools were required to offer eleven units in practical arts and vocational subjects and two units in fine arts.

In 1900, there were few vocational courses offered in the public high schools of Virginia. By the 1920's, there were courses of study in agriculture, home economics, business, and a small number of industrial courses. In addition, other courses were added during the 1940's in a group of representative public high schools in Virginia: bookkeeping, shorthand, typewriting, home economics,

agriculture, general shop, mechanical drawing, woodwork, metal work, electricity, printing, machine shop, auto shop, and distributive education. By 1976, the vocational program had been expanded to include health occupations, cosmetology, and a variety of additional industrial and commercial courses of study.

In 1900, there were no state tests of competency required for graduation from high school in Virginia. In 1976, there were state-mandated requirements to ". . . be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of local school officials attainment of the following minimum competencies: in communicative skills, computational skills, history and cultures of the United States, democratic governance, the economic system in the United States, and the ability to pursue higher education or have a job-entry skill."¹ These requirements were to become effective on July 1, 1978.

From 1900 to 1976, there were two strands of concern woven through the changes in state-mandated requirements for high school graduation. One concern is quantitative-- require more children to attend school; increase the number of days in the school year; add to the required years in school; increase the hours of instruction to earn a unit of credit; extend the credit requirements. The other concern is

¹Virginia, Board of Education, "Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools," 1976, pp. 8-9.

qualitative--survey to determine what needs to be improved; revise the curriculum to meet students' needs; enhance the vocational program to prepare students for work; test to measure the quality of the education. In the first forty years of the twentieth century, the emphasis was on quantity. From 1940 to 1976, the emphasis was on quality.

Several groups worked to change the state-mandated requirements for graduation. Groups of educators tried to influence legislators to pass compulsory education laws, to extend the ages of compulsory education, to lengthen the school year, and to add vocational subjects to the curriculum. Some educators worked within organized groups, such as the Virginia Education Association. Other educators worked with laymen, as in the Cooperative Education Association in the May Campaign of 1905, to encourage legislators to enact legislation designed to improve public education in Virginia. Some of the Superintendents of Public Instruction, such as Dr. Joseph Dupuy Eggleston, Jr., worked to influence legislators to support public education and helped to publicize the needs of public education through the news media.

From 1900 to 1976, there was pressure from higher education for changes in state-mandated graduation requirements. This was in concert with the trend toward standardization and uniformity in the secondary schools and in the colleges of Virginia. Members of the Association of Colleges

and Universities in the South worked toward both articulation between high school and college and standardization of admission requirements for colleges and universities. The accreditation standards developed by the Southern Association have affected the curriculum and credit requirements.

Throughout the first seventy-six years of the twentieth century, educators attempted to influence both legislators and members of the Virginia Board of Education to change the state-mandated graduation requirements. Efforts by the educators were directed toward increasing (1) attendance laws, (2) the length of the school year, (3) curriculum and credit requirements, and (4) vocational offerings. Educators have supported testing programs which were designed to identify the needs of the school system, to specify instructional weaknesses and to point out students' needs and abilities; however, groups of educators have not worked to influence legislation in establishing minimum competency tests.

In addition to the work done by the educators, laymen have supported legislation to strengthen public education. In the early part of the twentieth century, laymen organized groups, such as the Richmond Education Association and the Cooperative Education Association in order to promote improvement in public education. The Virginia Chamber of Commerce endeavored to improve public education, particularly working

toward the expansion of vocational offerings in the curriculum. There is no evidence that would indicate organized groups of laymen tried to bring about changes in state requirements for graduation after 1950. However, individual laymen and members of the news media have expressed views on the quality of education.

It is significant that while labor groups should be interested in limiting the number of people in the work force and in preparing young people for jobs, there is no evidence that any labor groups worked in order to extend the number of years students were required to attend school or to expand the vocational offerings in public high schools. Thus, organized groups of educators, laymen and politicians were active in working toward changes in state-mandated graduation requirements, while labor interests were not active.

Various methods were used by educators, laymen and politicians to influence the General Assembly and the State Board of Education. Educators tried to influence legislators by (1) writing letters, (2) lobbying for proposed changes, (3) publicizing educational needs through the news media, (4) working cooperatively with groups of laymen who had similar desires for changes, and (5) by pointing out the needs for changes through the periodic reports of the Superintendents of Public Instruction.

Elected politicians used other methods to effect changes. Legislators appointed commissions, such as the Spong Commission and the Denny Commission, to study the needs for improvement in public education. Recommendations of the commissions helped to pave the way for future legislative changes. Governors and, at times, legislators requested surveys made of the public school system. The results of the surveys became the bases for the recommendations to improve public education.

Groups of laymen, such as the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, also commissioned a survey of the high schools in Virginia to determine the needs. In the report of the survey recommendations were made for changes in the high school program. Other groups of laymen, such as the Richmond Education Association, used public meetings and the news media to garner public support for improvement of education. Representatives of these groups then attempted to influence state legislators by lobbying for those educational issues with which they were concerned.

Many forces influenced the educators, laymen and politicians to feel the need for changes in state requirements for graduation. A number of the changes in the state-mandated requirements for graduation in Virginia were replications of what existed in industrialized states. The compulsory attendance laws and the extended school year are examples of this pattern. The changes in the curriculum requirements

generally followed the national trends. On the other hand, Virginia was one of the first states to have state-mandated minimum competency tests, even though public support for the tests was developing throughout the United States.

In the twentieth century, technological advances have affected some changes in state-mandated requirements for graduation from high school in Virginia. Skilled, literate workers were needed to operate the increasing number of industrial plants. This helped to cause the changes in the compulsory attendance laws, the length of the school year, and the curriculum and credits required.

Technology has also helped to cause changes in testing requirements, but in a different way. The development of both the computer and the science of testing have worked together to expand the possibilities of a testing program, which made it feasible to have a state-mandated testing requirement for graduation from high school. The advances in computer technology made it practicable for large numbers of tests to be scored and for the results to be analyzed. The improvement in the science of testing has increased the validity, reliability, and predictability of tests.

As the Commonwealth became an industrialized state, its citizens needed more education in order to be prepared to earn a living. Partly as a result of this, the compulsory attendance laws were extended to include more children,

the school year was lengthened and more vocational courses were offered.

From 1900 to 1976, the political climate in Virginia and in the nation has influenced the legislators who make educational policy in Virginia. The Progressive Movement in the early part of the century focused on the needs of children and the necessity of having an educated citizenry in a democracy. In Virginia, the advance of the Progressive Movement and the gradual public support of education by both major political parties helped to cause the changes that were made in the compulsory attendance laws, the length of the school year, and the curriculum and credit requirements. The World Wars and the Cold War, with its resultant international competition for both nuclear power and outer space, accelerated technological changes which helped to cause revisions in both curriculum and test requirements for graduation from high school.

While the political climate in Virginia was partly a cause for the changes in state-mandated test requirements, it has not been the result of impact from the Progressive Movement or of support for education by both political parties. Supporters of both political parties, and citizens who are apolitical, have united in favor of a minimum competency test requirement because of a complex interplay of forces which caused citizens to doubt the quality of education in the public schools.

The decline of scores on standardized tests, the inability of the United States to solve its domestic problems, the loss of national self-confidence, and the failure of public schools to meet all the educational needs in Virginia were given wide publicity in the news media. These factors worked together to help to cause a demand for evidence to prove that high school graduates in Virginia received an acceptable level of education. In response to this demand, the General Assembly and the Virginia Board of Education required students to pass competency tests in order to graduate from public high schools in Virginia.

In the study of state requirements for graduation from high school in Virginia, 1900-1976, it was found that there were many changes in the requirements made during the period studied. Future studies are suggested concerning a comparison of the requirements for graduation in Virginia with those of other states in order to determine if there were similar patterns in graduation requirements.

It is also recommended that a study be made of the way school divisions in different regions of Virginia have implemented state-mandated graduation requirements in order to determine the similarities and differences in both interpretation and application of the requirements.

Reflecting on the changes made in state requirements for graduation from high school from 1900 to 1976, one may

assume there will also be changes made in the requirements between 1976 and 2000. It is anticipated that children will be required to attend school at an earlier age, due in part to the acceptance by laymen of the value of early childhood education and, also, due to the increase in the number of mothers of young children who are employed outside the home. Children will probably be required to attend nursery school for at least one year.

It is not anticipated that there will be a state-required extension of the school year; however, school divisions are expected to expand their summer programs for those children who choose to participate in them.

One may expect the curriculum and credits required for graduation by the State Board of Education to increase from one to two credits in both mathematics and laboratory science. This will be due in part to the technological advances related to electronics, medicine and outer space. Additional courses will be offered in both computer and vocational mathematics, and medical and extraterrestrial sciences.

Some educators and laymen are concerned about the possibility of cultural or racial discrimination in the competency testing program. Other educators and laymen are questioning the fairness of not granting diplomas to students who have attended school for twelve years and performed

satisfactorily in classes, but who have not passed the required minimum competency tests. By 2000, it is anticipated that students will still be required to take state-mandated competency tests before graduation from high school. However, passing or failing the tests may not determine whether one graduates from high school, but it will affect the type of diploma the student receives. From 1976 to 2000, there will probably be court cases concerning the use of competency tests as they relate to discrimination, due process, and accountability. The decisions in the litigations will help to establish new guidelines for the development and use of competency tests.

In the study of the state requirements for graduation from high school, 1900-1976, it was found that there were significant increases in the length of the school year, number of children who were required to attend school, number of years children had to attend school, curriculum and credit requirements and test requirements. These changes were due in part to the demands of a technological society, the political climate in Virginia and the nation, and the leadership of educators, laymen and politicians. It was hypothesized that labor groups would work to increase both attendance and curriculum requirements, but no evidence was found to support the hypothesis. It is anticipated that

these same forces will continue to help to cause changes in the state requirements for graduation from high school in Virginia.

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Abstract

AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION IN VIRGINIA, 1900-1976

Virginia R. Armstrong

The College of William and Mary in Virginia, May 1981

Chairman: Professor Royce W. Chesser, School of Education

The purpose of the study was to trace the state requirements for graduation in Virginia public schools from 1900 to 1976. The focus of the study was placed on four requirements for graduation--attendance, curriculum, credits, and tests.

In the study there was an examination of high school graduation requirements prior to 1900 in order that one may become familiar with the background of those events in Virginia education that helped to shape public education in Virginia from 1900 to 1976.

In the study it was found that in 1900 children were not required by state law to attend school, while in 1976 children had to attend school between the ages of six and seventeen years of age. While there was a state-devised curriculum in 1900, students did not have to complete a specific number of courses before graduation. By 1976, the curriculum required by the State Board of Education in order to graduate included four years of English, one year of mathematics, three years of social studies, one year of laboratory science, two years of health and physical education, and seven one-year elective courses.

In 1900, there was no quantitative measure to represent the satisfactory completion of a designated course. By 1976, the unit of credit was the quantitative measure of time, and it required a minimum time allotment of 150 clock hours. In 1976, eighteen units of credit were required for graduation. In 1900, there were no state-mandated tests in order to graduate from high school; however, in 1976, there were tests required to demonstrate minimum competencies in communicative skills, computational skills, history and cultures of the United States, democratic governance, the economic system in the United States, and the ability to pursue higher education in a job-entry skill.

It was found that the changes made in state-mandated graduation requirements for graduation were due in part to the demands of a technological society, the political climate in Virginia and the nation, and the leadership of educators, laymen and politicians. There was no evidence to indicate

labor groups worked to support changes in the requirements.

Further study is needed to compare the requirements for graduation in Virginia with those of other states. It is also recommended that a study be made of the way school divisions in different regions of Virginia have implemented the graduation requirements.