

Virginia Leadership Coalition for Fine Arts in Education

CONCERNS REGARDING THE ECONOMICS AND PERSONAL FINANCE COURSE GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

On February 19, 2009, the Virginia State School Board unanimously approved the requirement of a full-year, 1 credit course in Economics and Personal Finance for all students entering high school as ninth graders beginning 2010-11. The Virginia Leadership Coalition for Fine Arts in Education is very concerned about the impact of this unfunded mandate on Virginia students and local districts.

First, this additional graduation requirement would adversely affect the elective options in high school making it even more difficult for a student to elect a four-year sequence in the arts or any other career choice sequence which requires maintaining skills and practice throughout high school.

Second, during the current budget crisis at the local and state levels, we believe that it is unacceptable to impose the implementation of a new, unfunded mandate on our local school budgets. Resources required to procure textbooks and hire and train teachers will, without additional fiscal support from the state, require a reallocation of existing monies at a time when budgets are being cut and funding for localities is falling short of the amount needed to sustain current levels of programming.

The Virginia Leadership Coalition for Fine Arts in Education is not in principle against economic literacy or education in personal finance. However, we believe that the imposition of a stand-alone course slated to be part of the high school graduation requirements, starting with the class of 2014, will have the unintended consequences of limiting students' ability to prepare themselves for careers and post-secondary education and of placing additional strain on local education agencies' budgets.

To that end, we urge that the Economics and Personal Finance course requirement be withdrawn and, to ensure that students have fiscal and economic knowledge and understanding by graduation, that statewide mathematics and social science Standards of Learning, which currently have aspects of the proposed additional course of study, be expanded to include the additional economics and personal finance content. In addition, it would be well to note that a number of electives, including Career and Technical Education courses in business and entrepreneurship also currently address aspects of the proposed courses.

If, on the other hand, the decision is made to proceed with the implementation of this additional course requirement, options should be explored which will alleviate the impact on students' abilities to prepare themselves for chosen careers and/or higher education opportunities. These options should include, but not be limited to, an extended day and/or middle school and on-line options for meeting the economics and personal finance course requirement.