

## **Hanover Student Being Denied the Standard Diploma He Earned**

The Hanover student entered the ninth grade during the 1999-2000 school year. According to **8 VAC 20-131-50. Requirement for Graduation**

**A.** The requirements for a student to earn a diploma and graduate from a Virginia high school shall be those in effect when that student enters the ninth grade for the first time. Students shall be awarded a diploma upon graduation from a Virginia high school.

After spending many of his high school years being excluded from enrolling in the courses and tests, due to his disability, the student and his parents researched the policies both in Virginia and Hanover on diploma options and requirements.

The student did what any other student over the age of 18 had the option to do; he enrolled in a correspondence high school program **approved for Home Instruction**. With dreams of going to college, he selected a high school program, which gave him the credits needed to enroll in college. The school was on the list of Correspondence Courses Approved for Home Instruction under **Option (iii) of the Section 22.1-254.1 of the Code of Virginia (1950)**

The student enrolled in the American School in August 2004 in the College Preparatory Diploma program. This **accredited correspondence high school** offered the student the opportunity to earn the same unit of credits as other public high school students in Virginia and Hanover. American School accepted 11 of the 15 units of credit that the student had previously earned from HCPS.

In one year the student earned 7 units of credit from the American School. He earned a GPA of 3.28 and was awarded his high school diploma from the American School on May 9, 2005. At that time both student and his parents thought everything was over with Hanover County Public Schools, boy were they **WRONG**.

In August 2005, parents attend an exit IEP meeting for the student with Hanover County Public Schools. With his transcripts from America School and a licensed teacher who had administered all the exams to the student and expected that the student's school records would reflect his accomplishments. However that was not the case. HCPS refused to accept the credit from American School. The student went from being a High school graduate to a high school drop out that day.

Since that day the student and his parents have been working hard to get the student's diploma statue changed. In May 2006 the student re-enrolled in HCPS, however the IEP team would not allow him to enroll in the courses he needed to meet 8 VAC 20-131-50 Requirements for graduation.

On December 6, 2006 and January 15, 2007 IEP meetings were held. The IEP team finally agreed to allow the student to enroll in two courses (Oceanography and Modern Global Studies). According to Project Graduation and confirmed by Mr. Paul Vecchione

principal of Patrick Henry High School these were the only courses needed to meet the requirements for a standard high school diploma.

On June 14, 2007 (end of 2006-2007 school year) the student successfully completed the two courses with an A in both subject. He also took the End of Course World Geography SOL test on June 15, 2007 with his accommodations.

At an IEP meeting held on June 25, 2007, they refused to award the student the standard diploma that he had earned. He was offered only a Special/IEP Diploma by Mrs. Diane Brown. Mrs. Brown stated that HCPS policy states that the student has not met the requirements for any diploma except a Special/IEP Diploma. However Mrs. Brown

On October 25, 2006 a "Guidance Document Governing Certain Provisions of the Regulations Establishing Standards For Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia" 8 VAC 20-131 was adopted by the Board of Education which support the fact that the student has indeed met the requirements for a standard diploma. We believe Mrs. Brown has been misinformed when it comes to The Standards of Quality (§ 22.1-253.13:4 of the Code of Virginia) and 8 VAC 20-131-60. Transfer of Credits - Transfer from a Nonpublic School.

The Standard of Quality, in § 22.1-253.13:4 of the Code of Virginia, require local school boards to make provisions for students who transfer between secondary schools and from nonpublic schools or **from home instruction as outlined in the standards for accreditation**. Each Local school board shall develop a policy for the transfer of students consistent with these standards.

At the June 25, 2007 IEP meeting in spite of the regulation "Further, reasonable accommodation to meet the requirements for diplomas shall be provided for otherwise qualified students with disabilities as needed." only a Special/IEP diploma was offered. The student and his parents feel that this is just a mistake on the part of Mrs. Brown not offering this student a standard high school diploma. It appears Mrs. Brown is not aware that the regulations apply to all students. The parents ask for help with this matter from the Hanover County Board of Supervisors. Hanover has an appointed School Board and if this matter is not resolved soon it will become necessary to take this matter to the next level. The Board of Supervisors approves the School Boards budget and provides legal representation from the General Fund, to the School Board when they are found to be out of compliance with the Code of Virginia.

All the student and his parents want is the diploma that the student has worked so hard to earn. It is just not right to be denied the diploma that the state regulations say the student has earned.

Parents asked the Board of Supervisors to ensure that Hanover County Public Schools follows the regulations from the Virginia Department of Education in all matters. Their understanding is that the Code of Virginia requires compliance with all Board of Education requirements in order to receive public funds.

At this time it is in the hands of the Hanover County School Board to decide to do the right thing without having to waste taxpayers money. The student and his parents are not giving up on correcting this injustice.