

#### **BRIEFING**

# SUMMARY OF VIRGINIA'S RACE TO THE TOP COMPETITIVE APPLICATION

PRESENTED TO

#### THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

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# **Summary of Virginia's Race to the Top Application**

Virginia's Race to the Top application was authorized by Governor Timothy M. Kaine; Dr. Mark E. Emblidge, President, Board of Education; and Dr. Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction; and submitted to the U. S. Department of Education on January 15, 2010.

Long before requirements for the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and the State Fiscal Stabilization plans were put into place, Virginia's education stakeholders had identified the important connections between rigorous standards, high-quality assessments, effective teachers, data-driven decision making, and comprehensive policies as they impact student achievement and school success. The last fifteen years of educational policy and practice in Virginia have demonstrated a significant commitment to positive educational reform on behalf of the Governor's Office, the General Assembly, the Board of Education, the Department of Education, as well as Virginia's 132 school divisions, nearly 1900 schools, 1.3 million students, their parents, and citizens of the Commonwealth. Spanning four different governors, two from each of the national political parties, Virginia's systemic reform has remained on course while responding to emerging needs and incorporating innovative and forward-looking components to meet those needs. Public education in Virginia has undergone a thorough transformation to a highly-integrated system:

- founded on college and work-ready standards in the four core disciplines;
- monitored through a comprehensive assessment program in grades 3-12;
- informed by a robust and accessible data management system;
- driven by school-level and student accountability based on policy, regulation, and law;
- supported with comprehensive resources to turn around struggling schools; and
- undergirded by demanding but flexible standards for teacher and principal licensure and educator preparation programs.

Virginia is proud of the progress of its educational reform to date. The Commonwealth has spent the last 15 years building and enhancing a strong educational infrastructure that embeds in its regulatory requirements required policy review and revision, facilitates the states ability to continuously learn from and improve upon educational programs, policy, and support services, and promotes education reform through clearly articulated goals and measurable objectives. Relying on this infrastructure and cycle of continuous process improvement, Virginia is prepared to continue the journey toward helping more students enter college and careers by providing strong programs and assessments, accomplished teachers, reliable data, and strong policies.

Virginia's Race to the Top (RTTT) application has the support of nearly 90 percent of Virginia's school divisions, as well as key partners in Virginia's education system including: the Virginia Education Association (VEA), the Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals (VASSP), the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS), the Virginia School Board Association (VSBA), and more.

Within the application, Virginia has proposed a wide variety of initiatives that build on the current infrastructure to bring more rigor and relevance into classrooms for all children with a primary goal of increasing all students' preparation for postsecondary education and careers. Highlights of the initiatives include:

- The application of Virginia's revised Standards of Learning to establish a college-ready initiative that defines the standards and associated achievement that students require to be prepared for postsecondary education.
- Commitment to Virginia's learning standards adopted by the Board of Education through the 2010 calendar year while leaving open the possibility of joining an assessment consortium in the future to get specific items or item types that are aligned with Virginia's Standards of Learning.
- Expansion of Virginia's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), which supports children's increased readiness for school by

enabling communities to improve the quality of early care and education programs;

- Initiatives that put more technology-based resources in the hands of classroom teachers and students while providing critical professional development required to maximize their instructional value;
- Completing Virginia's statewide longitudinal data system and developing an efficient, automated, and user-friendly Web portal that permits access to publically available data.
- Providing support to school divisions to develop and implement rigorous, transparent, and fair teacher and principal performance evaluations;
- Providing incentives for developing and implementing performance pay models based on rigorous, transparent, and fair teacher and principal performance evaluations;
- Providing incentives for charter school start-up in lowest achieving schools;
- Expanding the number of Governor's STEM Academies to 18, which will double the number of such academies in Virginia that directly support economic development; and
- Piloting one U-Teach program in a university to increase the pool of mathematics and science teachers in the Commonwealth.

The following describes the initiatives in more detail using the framework that is required for the application.

# Developing and adopting common standards

Virginia is a member of the American Diploma Project (ADP), which is a consortium of 35 states dedicated to ensuring that every high school graduate is prepared for college or careers. Through a thorough and defined process ADP, the College Board, and ACT independently reviewed and validated as college ready standards Virginia's mathematics and English Standards of Learning. The Board of Education adopted revised mathematics standards in 2009 and will conduct is final review (and likely adoption) of the revised English standards on

January 14, 2010. With this work accomplished, Virginia intends to continue moving forward with newly revised standards.

#### • Developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments

Virginia has an extensive and mature standards-based assessment program. Initially implemented in 1998, revisions to the assessments have occurred on a rolling basis at approximately seven year intervals consistent with revisions to Virginia's content standards, the Standards of Learning. Virginia has been a national leader in online testing since 2001 with all of its current assessments except for the writing test administered online. In the 2008-2009 school year Virginia administered 1.8 million online tests with 98 percent of its end-of-course assessments administered in the online mode. Virginia has also been a leader in the use of end-of-course assessments for accountability purposes and for graduation requirements. Virginia has provided guidance to a number of other states as they have considered implementing online testing and end-of-course assessments. Virginia has a plan in place to develop high quality assessments that align to the most recent mathematics and English standards. The state's leadership continues to be engaged in discussions related to collaborative development of both formative and summative assessments, and will continue to engage in discussions about the possibility of joining an assessment consortium in the future to get specific items or item types that are aligned with Virginia's Standards of Learning.

# Supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments

To build upon existing statewide support systems, as we move to establish additional rigor in standards, assessments, and content for high school courses and diplomas, we propose a number of initiatives that will: a) develop and deliver high-quality professional development for teachers and school leaders; b) develop or acquire, disseminate, and implement high-quality instructional materials and assessments; and c) translate the standards and information from assessments into classroom practice for all students, especially as students prepare for global competitiveness and awareness. Specific initiatives include:

• Investments in Virginia's College Readiness Initiative that defines learning standards and associated levels of achievement needed to be successful in the first year of college; the development of a capstone course that provides high school seniors with the academic instruction, including interventions if necessary, that are needed for students to be

ready for postsecondary education upon high school graduation; and professional development for teachers to ensure they are providing instruction that supports high levels of student achievement.

- Providing start-up funds for eight Governor's CTE STEM Academies.
- Expansion of Virginia's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to improve the quality of early childhood care and educational programs throughout the state—which will in the long-term bring more children to kindergarten ready to learn.
- Adoption and implementation of electronic literacy diagnostic and screening tools, and resources to provide students with needed interventions to develop strong reading and writing skills.
- Expansion of Virginia's Advanced Placement Training and Incentive Program (APTIP) to increase participation and performance of public high school students in rigorous college-level work in math, science, and English Advanced Placement (AP) exams, and expand access to college-level courses for traditionally under-represented students through the expansion of the NMSI's APTIP.
- Establishment of one U-Teach program in a university to increase the pool of mathematics and science teachers in the Commonwealth.
- Expansion of Virginia's International Baccalaureate Programs.
- Development or expansion of foreign language immersion programs in Virginia's public schools

#### • Fully implementing a statewide longitudinal data system

Virginia has proposed to enhance the state's longitudinal data system to meet all requirements of the America Competes Act while safeguarding the privacy of personal data as required by law.

#### • Accessing and using State data

Virginia has proposed significant enhancements to our statewide longitudinal data system that will put additional high quality, actionable data into the hands of a number of stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, researchers, policymakers and the public, providing transparency in additional aspects of P-12 education in Virginia and enabling us to achieve the 12 elements of the America COMPETES Act. Our plan features a Web-based portal, accessible in part to the public, with other areas accessible to authorized users only. The portal will feature P-12 data linked to postsecondary and the workforce and provide feedback to schools of education on the classroom outcomes of recent graduates. The portal will provide users with access to prepared data reports and permit users to develop custom reports. Reports within the portal will be available within in a variety of formats depending on the user's preferences. Tables, charts, and graphs will be presented to provide different views of the data. Maps will also be used to provide a geographic perspective. This much-needed data will provide decision-makers with powerful information on how well our students are prepared for college and careers that can influence policy and practice. Information in the hands of teachers will influence classroom practices.

# • Using data to improve instruction via high quality instructional improvement systems

Virginia has made significant investments in the use of technology to improve classroom instruction through the use of data and instructional technology. The proposed activities will propel Virginia's technology initiatives into the future by providing school personnel—teachers, leaders, and administrators—with access to an integrated system that offers resources to provide students with rich, relevant, rigorous, and effective instruction and is connected directly to the data needed to understand the impact of instruction on student outcomes. The initiatives will provide Virginia's schools with an electronic learning environment that connects data, instructional content and resources, and student achievement in a single integrated system. The proposed activities provide Virginia's schools with:

- Technology-based instructional improvement systems that are scalable and structured to meet individual school division needs;
- A single portal for accessing VDOE-developed instructional resources and professional development; and
- Online professional development modules for teachers that focuses on the development and use of data from high quality formative assessments.

#### • Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance

Virginia has proposed several initiatives to improve teacher and principal effectiveness. These initiatives, as a whole, provide more information about teacher impact on student performance, offer opportunities for school divisions to establish comprehensive evaluation systems that can inform decisions about developing teachers and principals and for a variety of personnel decisions. The proposal includes:

- The establishment of student growth models for applicable statewide assessments that can be reported at the student, teacher, school, and school division level;
- The development and implementation of tools for school divisions to establish local measures of student growth for teachers for which no state-level growth measures are available;
- The establishment of criteria that define the minimum components of rigorous, transparent, and fair teacher and principal evaluations, and define multiple levels of teacher and principal effectiveness.
- Leadership and support for school divisions to develop and pilot comprehensive evaluation systems that meet or exceed the established criteria.
- Development and pilot testing of several models of differentiated compensation for school personnel. School divisions also may choose to implement the previously piloted program that provides incentives for effective teachers and principals to work in hard-to-staff schools.

#### • Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals

Virginia has proposed several initiatives to improve upon the state's equitable distribution of effective teachers. Initiatives include:

 Providing incentives to middle schools having difficulty finding qualified mathematics teachers by providing incentives for school divisions to recruit and retain experienced, highly qualified mathematics teachers.  Providing high-quality, job embedded professional development opportunities focused on specific needs of teachers in challenging, high-needs schools.

#### • Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation

Virginia has multiple pathways for teachers and principals to earn licenses supported by universities and non-university providers. The initiatives proposed in Virginia's RTTT application support all methods of teacher and principal preparation and include:

- Providing funds to colleges and universities to design and implement up to four master's degree programs that focus on content and pedagogy in specific content areas.
- Establishing teacher residency programs to help novice teachers make the transition from preparation to practice.
- Supporting school divisions' work to establish model programs for individuals interested in seeking the "principal of distinction" administration and supervision endorsement. The proposal seeks to establish a pilot program to compare the performance of individuals receiving the "principal of distinction" endorsement with other principals and provide incentives to principals who are willing to serve in hard-staff schools.
- Provide funds for one or more divisions to develop and deliver courses that provisionally licensed teachers are required to take to meet professional studies requirements for a full teaching license. All courses will be developed online, will specifically address the competencies required by Virginia's regulations, and will focus on working in hard-to-staff schools, instructional design based on assessment data, differentiated instructional strategies, English language learners, and children with disabilities, and include a research-based mentoring/coaching program.
- Expanding online preparation programs for special educators to assist individuals currently employed under a provisional license to complete licensure requirements.

#### • Providing effective support to teachers and principals

Virginia will provide highly effective support to teachers and principals by providing professional development and technical assistance that is responsive to teachers', principals', and students' needs in the key areas of 1) literacy instruction; 2) mathematics instruction; 3) use of innovative technologies in teaching and learning; and 4) mentorships for teachers and principals. The proposed initiatives include:

- Working with strategic partners to provide data-informed and jobembedded professional development to teachers and principals that supports the attainment of literacy skills for all students PreK through grade 12;
- Providing teachers and principals with professional development resources that will assist teachers in diagnosis of mathematical weaknesses in young children and support differentiating mathematics instruction in response to students' needs;
- Providing eLearning modules and professional development that support applications of mathematics and science, especially as they relate to STEM;
- Expanding the availability of diverse technology-based resources to classroom teachers and students while providing critical professional development required to maximize their instructional value; and
- Providing coaching and mentoring for novice principals that ensures a successful transition into teaching by engaging successful, veteran principals to serve as coaches and mentors. Participating school divisions would also be able to use their Race to the Top funds to augment mentoring programs for new and probationary teachers.

# • Turning around the lowest-achieving schools

Virginia will use part of the state's share of RTTT funds to develop high-performing charter schools or high-performing contract schools for five to seven LEAs that have been identified as having persistently low-performing schools. The schools will be led with lead turnaround partners (educational management organizations) to provide intensive services to students who are struggling, high-need students, at-risk of not graduating on time or not graduating at all, by

providing educational services to accelerate student growth as early as fifth grade. The LEAs selected must agree to maintain these charters or contract schools for a minimum of five years. This effort is consistent with Virginia's approach to using federal entitlement funds that are required to be used for turning around persistently low-performing schools.

**Funding Request: \$350 million** 



#### **Appendix**

#### Local Education Agencies (LEAs) Participating in Virginia's Race to the Top Application

The table below provides detailed information on each "participating" LEA, as defined in the Race to the Top notice. Of Virginia's 132 LEAs, 117 (88.6 percent) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the state to be a "participating" LEA in Virginia's Race to the Top application. All used the standard MOU template, which is modeled closely on the MOU template provided by the U.S. Department of Education. These 117 LEAs comprise over 94 percent of Virginia's K-12 schools, over 95 percent of Virginia's K-12 students, and 96 percent of Virginia's K-12 students in poverty.

Seven LEAs have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to be an "involved" LEA in Virginia's Race to the Top application, as defined in the Race to the Top notice. They are Augusta, Bath, Buchanan, Clarke, Greene, and Rockbridge Counties; and Radford City.

Seven LEAs have elected not to participate in Virginia's Race to the Top application as of January 11, 2010. They are Essex, New Kent, Prince George, Surry, and Williamsburg-James City Counties; and Bristol and Petersburg Cities.

One LEA, Mathews County, has expressed interest in being a "participating LEA" but cannot declare formal status until after its school board takes action at its meeting on January 19, 2010. Mathews County is not reflected in the list below.

In the table below, "Y" means "Yes".

	LEA Demographics			Signatures on MOUs		
Participating LEAs	# of Schools	# of K-12 Students	# of K-12 Students in Poverty	LEA Supt. (or equivalent)	Chair of local school board	Pres. of Local Teachers Union
Accomack County	11	4,985	2,809	Y	Y	N/A
Albemarle County	26	12,794	2,980	Υ	Υ	N/A
Alexandria City	19	11,488	6,235	Υ	Υ	N/A
Alleghany County	7	2,811	1,266	Υ	Υ	N/A
Amelia County	3	1,810	811	Υ	Υ	N/A
Amherst County	10	4,469	1,800	Υ	Υ	N/A
Appomattox County	4	2,232	942	Υ	Υ	N/A
Arlington County	30	19,297	5,671	Υ	Υ	N/A
Bedford County	21	10,612	3,237	Υ	Υ	N/A
Bland County	4	918	375	Υ	Υ	N/A

	LEA Demographics			Signatures on MOUs		
Participating LEAs	# of Schools	# of K-12 Students	# of K-12 Students in Poverty	LEA Supt. (or equivalent)	Chair of local school board	Pres. of Local Teachers Union
Botetourt County	11	5,026	895	Υ	Υ	N/A
Brunswick County	5	2,091	1,321	Υ	Υ	N/A
Buckingham County	6	1,971	1,134	Υ	Υ	N/A
Buena Vista City	4	1,133	425	Υ	Υ	N/A
Campbell County	14	8,418	3,033	Υ	Υ	N/A
Caroline County	6	4,159	1,688	Υ	Υ	N/A
Carroll County	10	3,931	2,062	Υ	Υ	N/A
Charles City County	3	839	389	Y	Υ	N/A
Charlotte County	6	2,091	1,150	Υ	Υ	N/A
Charlottesville City	9	3,821	1,998	Υ	Υ	N/A
Chesapeake City	45	39,129	8,326	Υ	Υ	N/A
Chesterfield County	63	58,840	14,316	Y	Υ	N/A
Colonial Beach	2	615	122	Υ	Υ	N/A
Colonial Heights						
City	5	2,841	834	Y	Y	N/A
Covington City	3	863	400	Y	Υ	N/A
Craig County	2	717	286	Y	Y	N/A
Culpeper County	10	7,482	2,710	Y	Υ	N/A
Cumberland County	3	1,426	682	Υ	Υ	N/A
Danville City	15	6,237	4,539	Y	Y	N/A
Dickenson County	8	2,471	1,194	Υ	Υ	N/A
Dinwiddie County	8	4,717	1,911	Υ	Υ	N/A
Fairfax County	193	169,069	37,977	Y	Y	N/A
Falls Church City	4	1,999	130	Υ	Υ	N/A
Fauquier County	19	11,174	2,324	Y	Υ	N/A
Floyd County	5	2,078	878	Y	Y	N/A
Fluvanna County	5	3,722	887	Y	Y	N/A
Franklin City	3	1,223	866	Y	Y	N/A
Franklin County	16	7,264	2,438	Y	Y	N/A
Frederick County	18	13,060	3,597	Υ	Υ	N/A
Fredericksburg City	4	2,826	1,303	Y	Y	N/A
Galax City	3	1,329	742	Y	Y	N/A
Giles County	5	2,560	1,108	Y	Y	N/A
Gloucester County	9	5,960	1,715	Y	Y	N/A
Goochland County	5	2,452	572	Υ	Y	N/A
Grayson County	9	1,942	1,100	Υ	Υ	N/A
Greensville County	4	2,568	1,676	Υ	Υ	N/A
Halifax County	9	5,692	3,312	Υ	Υ	N/A
Hampton City	33	20,917	3,442	Υ	Υ	N/A
Hanover County	23	18,542	2,130	Υ	Υ	N/A
Harrisonburg City	8	4,412	2,694	Υ	Υ	N/A
Henrico County	67	48,509	14,875	Υ	Υ	N/A
Henry County	15	7,185	4,085	Υ	Υ	N/A
Highland County	2	245	138	Υ	Υ	N/A
Hopewell City	5	3,988	2,563	Υ	Υ	N/A
Isle of Wight County	9	5,417	1,574	Υ	Υ	N/A
King George County	5	4,068	918	Υ	Υ	N/A
King William County	4	2,158	661	Υ	Υ	N/A
King and Queen County	3	734	412	Y	Y	N/A

	LEA Demographics			Signatures on MOUs			
Participating LEAs	# of Schools	# of K-12 Students	# of K-12 Students in Poverty	LEA Supt. (or equivalent)	Chair of local school board	Pres. of Local Teachers Union	
Lancaster County	3	1,327	542	Y	Υ	N/A	
Lee County	13	3,403	2,140	Y	Υ	N/A	
Lexington City	2	499	90	Y	Υ	N/A	
Loudoun County	74	59,111	7,887	Y	Υ	N/A	
Louisa County	5	4,596	1,867	Y	Υ	N/A	
Lunenburg County	4	1,579	992	Y	Υ	N/A	
Lynchburg City	16	8,372	4,568	Y	Υ	N/A	
Madison County	4	1,821	524	Y	Υ	N/A	
Manassas City	8	6,729	2,340	Y	Υ	N/A	
Manassas Park City	4	2,664	1,135	Y	Υ	N/A	
Martinsville City	4	2,369	1,363	Y	Y	N/A	
Mecklenburg County	9	4,649	2,508	Y	Y	N/A	
Middlesex County	3	1,207	486	Y	Y	N/A	
Montgomery County	20	9,583	3,389	Y	Y	N/A	
Nelson County	4	1,919	921	Y	Y	N/A	
Newport News City	39	29,056	13,220	Y	Y	N/A	
Norfolk City	49	31,709	17,980	Y	Y	N/A	
Northampton County	3	1,705	1,163	Y	Y	N/A	
Northumberland County	3	1,375	603	Y	Y	N/A	
Norton City	2	832	348	Y	Y	N/A	
	6			Y	Y	N/A	
Nottoway County	8	2,194	1,272	Y	Y		
Orange County	9	5,104	1,647 1,665	Y	Y	N/A	
Page County	7	3,531	,	Y	Y	N/A	
Patrick County	18	2,509 9,065	1,349 4,200	Y	Y	N/A N/A	
Pittsylvania County	4		306	Y	Y	N/A	
Poquoson City		2,397					
Portsmouth City	20	14,420	7,823	Y	Y	N/A	
Powhatan County Prince Edward County	3	4,442 2,491	619 1,333	Y	Y	N/A N/A	
Prince William		·	·				
County	82	76,121	24,953	Y	Y	N/A	
Pulaski County  Rappahannock	8	4,616	2,018	Y	Y	N/A	
County	2	930	219	Y	Υ	N/A	
Richmond City	47	21,637	14,118	Y	Y	N/A	
Richmond County	3	1,220	561	Y	Y	N/A	
Roanoke City	25	12,316	8,496	Y	Y	N/A	
Roanoke County	27	14,571	2,857	Y	Y	N/A	
Rockingham County	22	11,521	4,308	Y	Y	N/A	
Russell County	13	4,065	2,114	Y	Y	N/A	
Salem City	6	3,941	1,078	Y	Y	N/A N/A	
				Y	Y		
Scott County	13	3,757	2,002			N/A	
Shenandoah County	9	6,121	2,238	Y	Y	N/A	
Smyth County Southampton	13 6	4,833 2,809	2,574	Y	Y	N/A N/A	
County		,	1,226		i e		
Spotsylvania County	29	23,854	7,477	Υ	Υ	N/A	

	LEA Demographics			Signatures on MOUs		
Participating LEAs	# of Schools	# of K-12 Students	# of K-12 Students in Poverty	LEA Supt. (or equivalent)	Chair of local school board	Pres. of Local Teachers Union
Stafford County	30	26,672	5,724	Y	Y	N/A
Staunton City	6	2,649	1,356	Υ	Υ	N/A
Suffolk City	21	13,902	5,528	Υ	Υ	N/A
Sussex County	4	1,228	891	Υ	Υ	N/A
Tazewell County	15	6,648	1,848	Υ	Υ	N/A
Virginia Beach City	81	69,940	19,659	Υ	Υ	N/A
Warren County	8	5,339	1,665	Υ	Υ	N/A
Washington County	15	7,281	3,070	Υ	Υ	N/A
Waynesboro City	6	3,011	1,266	Υ	Υ	N/A
West Point	3	789	178	Υ	Υ	N/A
Westmoreland County	4	1,723	1,100	Y	Y	N/A
Winchester City	6	3,778	1,620	Υ	Υ	N/A
Wise County	15	6,533	3,400	Υ	Υ	N/A
Wythe County	12	4,234	1,853	Υ	Υ	N/A
York County	19	12,588	2,243	Y	Υ	N/A
Total Participating LEAs = 117	1,758	1,160,612	381,578	117	117	N/A