



# Virginia Public Charter School Application

(Effective July 1, 2014)

<b>Charter School Name:</b>	<b>Bertha B. Williams Academy</b>		
<b>Date of Submission to Virginia Board of Education:</b>		<b>February 15</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Proposed Date of Submission to Local School Board:</b>		<b>February 15</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Name of Authorized Official:</b>	<b>Dr. Lois Williams</b>	<b>February 15</b>	<b>2015</b>
<b>Signature of Authorized Official:</b>	<b>Lois S. Williams</b>	<b>February 13</b>	<b>2015</b>

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## Instructions

All applicants for a public charter school should read the Public Charter School Application Process before completing the application. The process is available on the Virginia Department of Education Web site at the following link:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/charter\\_schools/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/charter_schools/index.shtml).

Please complete the cover page and insert the name of the public charter school into the footer before completing the application. Each gray section in the document must contain a response.

Two hard copies of the completed application with the original signature of the authorized official on the cover page and on the certification page must be submitted to:

Melissa Luchau  
Executive Assistant for Board Relations  
Virginia Board of Education  
P.O. Box 2120  
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

In addition, a PDF and Word version of the completed application document should be sent to Melissa Luchau at [Melissa.Luchau@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Melissa.Luchau@doe.virginia.gov).

*Note:* The Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), §§ 2.2-3700 et seq. of the *Code of Virginia*, guarantees citizens of the Commonwealth and representatives of the media access to public records held by public bodies, public officials, and public employees. Please be advised that documents submitted to the Virginia Department of Education are subject to FOIA and must be released in response to a FOIA request unless the records are exempt as specifically provided by law.

## **Part A: Applicant Information**

### **School Information**

Charter School Name: The Bertha B. Williams Academy

Local School Division: Virginia Beach City Public Schools

Does the applicant presently have access to a facility suitable for a school? Yes  No X

If the answer is yes to the question above, insert address and information regarding ownership of the facility:

School Location (City/Town and Zip Code):

Ownership:

Proposed Date of Application Submission to Local School Board:

Proposed Opening Date:

Applications for public charter schools should be submitted to the Board of Education within a time frame that is adequate enough to ensure that the public charter school application will also be submitted to the local school board in accordance with the application policies of the local school board.

Content Areas and Instructional Services Offered (Please Check All That Apply)			
Early Childhood Education	X	Gifted Education	X
English/Language Arts	X	Special Education	X
Mathematics	X	Computer Technology	X
Science	X	Agricultural Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
History and Social Studies	X	Business and Informational Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>
Foreign Language	X	Career Connections	<input type="checkbox"/>
English as a Second Language	X	Family and Consumer Sciences	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	X	Marketing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physical Education	X	Technology Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Driver Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trade and Industrial Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Art	X	Electives:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Music	X	Others:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drama	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Grades to be Served (Please Check All That Apply)*			
Pre-K	X	Sixth Grade	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kindergarten	X	Seventh Grade	<input type="checkbox"/>
First Grade	X	Eighth Grade	<input type="checkbox"/>

Second Grade	X	Ninth Grade	<input type="checkbox"/>
Third Grade	X	Tenth Grade	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fourth Grade	X	Eleventh Grade	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fifth Grade	X	Twelfth Grade	<input type="checkbox"/>

\* If the public charter school intends to add or change grade levels at some point during the school's operation, please provide this information in the education program section of the narrative. N/A

If the public charter school is going to have a specialized focus (e.g., Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics [STEM], at-risk students, special education, career and technical education, gifted education), please describe the focus:

**Museum Learning is a model that fosters exploration and discovery**, giving students a strong sense of autonomy, interdependence, motivation and a joy for learning. The museum school model is based on the idea that children learn best through personal exploration and hands-on experience. The school partners with museums and other learning institutions to provide real-life experiences with classroom topics. Interactive learning expeditions to partner sites offer students a chance to ask questions, make observations, reflect on experiences and draw their own conclusions. Museum learning improves student engagement and achievement in a substantial.

### Contact Information

Name of Individual/Organization Submitting Application: **Bertha B. Williams Academy**

Name of Contact Person for Application: **Dr. Lois Williams**

Title/Affiliation with Individual/Organization Submitting Application: **Founder**

Office Telephone: **757-721-3547** Mobile Telephone: **757-304-7059**

Fax Number: **757-721-3547** E-mail Address: **Drlwilliams1@cox.net**

### Prior Experience

1. Has the applicant had any prior experience operating a charter school or similar school? Please check one of the following: Yes  No
2. If the response to the question above is "yes," please describe any prior experience with establishing and operating charter schools and/or similar schools. Please provide information such as the name of the school, the state where it is located, years of operation, and contact information. If the school is no longer operating, please provide the reason(s) for closure:

The Bertha B. Williams Board consists of prominent education experts from across Virginia and the nation with experience and expertise in leading and supervising public schools, including a school superintendent, charter school principals, instructional specialists, a former college president, a retired Navy Commodore, a CPA, an attorney specializing in public school law, parents, a child advocate, and many who have also served on the review board that analyzes school districts eligible for The Broad Prize for Urban Education, reviewing student achievement data received from the eligible charter management organizations. Our board is a notable community charter school management team.

3. Please describe the relevant experience of the members of the proposed management committee, and if identified, the proposed school leadership:

The Bertha B. Williams management team is composed of professional educators with decades of experience in the public school system as follows:

- Doctorate of education: 16 years as a public school superintendent with broad expertise in leadership, organization, budgets, facilities, and community engagement.
- Doctorate of psychology and former college president: Provide requisite expertise in leadership and the human mind.
- Retired naval Commodore: Provide organizational leadership, accountability, fiscal operations, and achieving outcomes through motivational human leadership.
- Retired naval LCDR: Provide experience in military training with a master's degree in engineering management and government public policy.
- School administrator: 20 years in elementary and middle schools.
- CPA: 18 years of experience working with charter schools and served as a parent advocate and community public relations.

#### Part B: Narrative

The application narrative must contain all of the elements listed below as required by Section 22.1-212.8 of the *Code of Virginia*.

- I. Executive Summary:** Provide an executive summary that addresses the need for the public charter school and its goals and objectives and any discussions to date with the local public school division or local school board on the establishment of the charter school. If there have been no discussions to date, please indicate the reason. (The suggested length is two pages.)

Vision: We envision students thirsty for knowledge who enjoy spending instructional time in the classroom, museums, libraries, and related educational sites. Students travel regularly to learning venues for research, planning, lessons, demonstrations, and challenging hands-on opportunities. Bringing museums into the charter school will inspire and engage not only student learning, but also the parents, teachers and community we serve.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) serves as the foundation within the museum learning model. This is the hands-on element of the educational program. This approach places students at work for an extended time to investigate and respond to complex and challenging questions. The intended result is that students gain knowledge, skills and confidence.

**Philosophy:** The Bertha B. Williams Academy (Academy) educates high achievers, average achievers, and learners with skill deficiencies. Therefore, our philosophy of differentiated instruction will support our educational framework for every level of proficiency. Content, process, and product will be the three areas of differentiation. This methodology will meet the needs of each student, as teachers use instruction in a variety of ways to teach all learners to exceed their last best achievement record. Teachers advocate standards and essential skills, and look for creative ways to inspire students to choose categories of study that generate and increase interest. Learning objectives remain the same, and motivation becomes intrinsic as students collaborate with teachers in selecting their study focus. Student products will also be exhibited in a variety of ways. Struggling students receive early intervention to accelerate growth as differentiation closes the achievement gap across the content area. Ongoing assessment guides instruction, and teachers capitalize on teachable moments.

**Curriculum:** The Bertha B. Williams Academy (Academy) proposes a unique and proven educational model known as “museum learning” in which the school becomes partners with museums and valued cultural institutions both locally, in Virginia, and throughout the entire world with the use of the Internet and technology. This educational partnership has consistently produced high academic achievers who are inspired, stimulated, engaged, and empowered to create and demonstrate their natural curiosity and inquisitiveness as lifelong learners in a global society. The museum learning model, integrated with Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) and Project-Based Learning (PBL), establishes an inspiring, motivational, and credible foundation for learning and empowerment for today’s children.

Real-life discovery enables teachers to become facilitators who model how to explore, explain, elaborate and evaluate. Teachers align the Common Core State Standards around interdisciplinary and intercultural themes. The curriculum is rigorous and based on the SOL Curriculum Framework and the Common Core State Standards. The instructional program is designed to allow teachers flexibility in meeting each student’s individual level of instruction while supporting the ongoing development of the whole child. Our program’s focus on using museums and related institutions to augment each child’s personal experiences guides children toward developing their own personal educational experience. This approach to instruction will teach our school’s learners responsibility for their academic development and social behavior, the ability to respect the inherent worth of every individual, an understanding of the value of cooperation and sustainability, and the confidence to perform creatively when solving problems.

Our focus on high-quality museum learning, based on the Virginia SOL Curriculum Frameworks and the Common Core State Standards, will result in students who exhibit the following skills:

- Critical thinking and problem-solving
- Collaboration across networks
- Growth of leadership
- Initiative and entrepreneurialism
- Accessing and analyzing information

- Effective written and oral communication
- Curiosity and imagination

The Bertha B. Williams Academy was established as an alternative to public education, providing a high performance, innovative, and personalized program of museum learning experiences while addressing today's broad spectrum of learning challenges. The Academy immerses all children who enter its doors with a high-quality learning experience based on real-world discovery through integrated connections with local learning institutions, such as museums, libraries, colleges and universities. Based on the philosophy that children learn best through personal exploration, discovery and hands-on experience, this museum learning model promotes an exciting learning environment resulting in academic achievements exceeding those in public education.

**Positive Learning Environment:** The Academy employs an individualized learning program prepared from the assessments of a student's abilities, skills, and learning style. The curriculum is built on the museum learning model, providing students with a strong sense of autonomy, interdependence, and motivation for learning. Students acquire knowledge of subject matter content through interactive learning expeditions to associated sites, classroom discussions, and projects that help each student articulate their personal understanding of the learned material. This model cultivates a dynamic learning environment that stimulates students to ask questions, make observations, reflect on experiences, verbalize, write and artistically represent their conclusions. The Academy's process is student-centered and project-based; employing an interdisciplinary approach that enriches each student's learning experiences.

## Education Components II-VI

**II. Mission Statement:** Provide a mission statement that is consistent with the principles of the Standards of Quality (SOQ). The following components must be addressed:

1. A description of the public charter school's mission and how it is consistent with the principles of the Virginia SOQ. (Section 22.1-253.13:1, Code of Virginia)

The mission of the Bertha B. Williams Academy is to ignite and fan the flames of curiosity for urban children with a program of academic excellence, providing opportunities that inspire, stimulate, engage, and empower lifelong learners while developing good character, community leadership, and a culturally enriched college-preparatory museum learning educational environment.

The Bertha B. Williams Academy's (Academy) mission is consistent with the Virginia SOQ because the Academy advocates for a quality learning environment, appropriate salaries and benefits to attract high-quality personnel, and quality instruction "to become a productive and educated citizen of Virginia and the United States of America". The Academy also proposes to adopt the Virginia Standards of Learning, thus assuring a "high-quality foundation educational program".

2. A description of any specialized area of academic concentration.

The Academy is not focusing on a specialized area of academic concentration, but will use the museum learning model as the heart of its pedagogical method. The museum learning model will be explained later in this application.

3. Information about the public charter school's anticipated student population consistent with Section 22.1-212.6, of the *Code of Virginia*.

The Academy will follow the mandates of Section 22.1-212.6, of the *Code of Virginia* precisely. All students are welcome at the Academy, as based on enrollment and lottery procedures explained later in this application.

**III. *Goals and Educational Objectives:*** State the goals and educational objectives to be achieved by the public charter school that meet or exceed the Standards of Learning (SOL). The following components must be addressed:

1. A description of the performance-based goals. To the extent possible, the application should include the academic performance indicators, measures and metrics that will guide the local school board's evaluations of the charter school and should include, at minimum: a) student academic proficiency; b) student academic growth; c) academic gaps in both proficiency and growth between major student subgroups; d) attendance; e) recurrent enrollment from year to year; and f) postsecondary readiness (for high schools).

Expectations for student academic proficiency and student academic growth are the same for the Academy as they are for Hampton Roads Public City Schools. Goals for closing the gaps in both academic proficiency and academic growth among the major student subgroups are also the same for the Academy, as is the goal for improved student attendance. In addition, the Academy anticipates increasing student enrollment to full capacity over a three-year period. The difference between the Academy and Hampton Roads Public City Schools is the use of the museum learning model, which motivates students to want to learn through the educational philosophy of constructivism, paired with the Academy's pedagogy of Projects Based Learning and Inquiry Based Learning. We believe the evidence is clear that the museum learning model of instruction motivates cultural minority students and students of low income parents. By adopting the Virginia Standards of Learning used by the Hampton Roads Public City Schools, the Academy will focus on the same student outcomes, but use a different pedagogical approach that is currently highly effective in museum learning schools elsewhere in the U.S.A.

2. A description of the related measurable educational objectives to be achieved by the public charter school. (Section 22.1-253.13:1.B, *Code of Virginia*)

The Academy will adopt the current Standards of Learning that are already in use by Hampton Roads Public City Schools.

**IV. *Evidence of Support:*** Provide evidence that an adequate number of parents, teachers, pupils, or any combination thereof, supports the formation of a public charter school. The following components must be addressed:

1. Information and materials indicating how parents, the community, and other stakeholders were involved in supporting the application for the public charter school.

This report describes the results of an initial pilot of the Community Engagement Participatory Research Study “to build an informed and cohesive civic voice for high quality charter school education in Virginia’s Hampton Roads”.

The pilot study was conducted between January 2014 and July 2014 and consisted primarily of focus groups with key stakeholder groups. A total of 199 participants were engaged in focus groups, including parents, students, teachers, district/state administrators, charter school advocates, and community members.

The central research question for the focus groups was “What is quality public education?” As members of the community reflected on this question, their answers invariably included an assessment of what is viewed as effective and ineffective in the current delivery of public education in Hampton Roads Public City Schools. Community members view quality as a process or a set of experiences, as well as a set of outcomes. Across stakeholder groups, members of the community expressed an appreciation for public education, but feel that charter schools in Virginia would provide the best quality education experiences for their children and what it means to the broader quality of life for the community-at-large.

A summary of the key themes which emerged from the focus groups is listed below. These themes frame the launching point for OPEN’s broader foray into engaging the community in a broad discussion to identify what really matters to Virginia parents in defining quality for public education.

The following is a summary of the themes and sub-themes which emerged from the focus groups. While this report does not provide a definitive assessment of public education in Hampton Roads Public City Schools, it does provide a framework through which a broader and deeper set of engagement opportunities can inform the future of education in Virginia.

Our Board is committed to moving forward on a constructive and community-wide conversation on the future of charter school education in Virginia.

This pilot project and report serve as catalysts to begin the conversation, and offer an initial framework and glimpse into the diverse perspectives the community brings to this important issue.

**A. Perceptions of the System of Schools:** Parents generally articulated a belief that charter schools were better schools because they were more able to make changes to improve learning. They also believed they were more fiscally accountable to their funders because they could not exist without the additional financial support. However, parents expressed significant concern regarding the stratification of schools in the current system of schools and the lack of curricular alignment across schools within the same grade.

**B. Leadership and Vision:** Community members echoed concern that leadership is very important to ensuring quality public education. Many agreed that quality administration in

schools ensures the provision of support services within the school to maintain a stable learning environment. Teachers, specifically, emphasized the importance of culturally competent school leadership. “They should know their community. They should also know how to handle the culture of students who are coming from that particular community and I think the principal needs to be fully aware of what’s going on and in contact with community resources.”

**C. Community Relations:** Participants across stakeholder group spent a significant amount of time discussing the role and importance of community relations to quality public education.

**D. Parental Involvement:** There was broad consensus that parental involvement is the center piece of a quality school. One parent framed it this way. “All of the schools that are quality schools have great parental participation. No parental participation (equals) lack of quality education.”

1. Schools themselves were seen as not welcoming and become inhibitors to parent engagement; narrow definitions of parental involvement/engagement were also obstacles to engaging diverse parents. Participants emphasized the role of socioeconomic status as being a traditional definer of parent engagement. Often, working families are unable to participate in bake sales and other gatherings. As such, framing parent involvement from such a narrow perspective necessarily excludes certain parents.

Finally, participants also discussed the challenge of the parent education level as a factor inhibiting parent engagement. Participants commonly agreed that community-organizations should play the role of cultivating and building parent leadership capacity and working with schools to help them be more parent-friendly.

2. **Extended Community Learning Environments:** Focus group participants felt strongly that tangible evidence of support for the public charter school from parents, teachers, students, and residents, or any combination thereof, including but not limited to information regarding the number of persons and organizations involved in the process and petitions related to the establishment of the charter school.

The focus group participants also expressed consensus on expanding the use of school buildings as community resources where community members in the surrounding neighborhood could access the school for various services including health services, adult literacy classes and afterschool care. The focus group participants felt that providing community, social and family supports within the school was particularly critical to the success of students whose families lived in challenging circumstances.

3. **Community Ownership and Engagement:** There was broad agreement that the community needs to better understand the characteristics of quality education in order to provide the additional resources and supports which propel quality charter schools. Charter school administrators need to further expand the conversation about community. The community needed to see itself as owners of the schools. They believed community ownership and engagement are essential elements of quality public education.

4. Instruction: Students indicate “They’re not learning on task and on target to be college-prepared or even career-prepared beyond minimum wage jobs.” One parent noted, “I see them putting trumpets and basketballs in kid’s hands before I see them putting books in their hands. The teachers weren’t challenging the kids too much.”

“We know a quality charter school education produces a student who is confident in their ability to adapt to any situation, whether it’s treading tires or landing a space shuttle. They are equipped and aren’t intimidated by having to learn information to do another task. They aren’t intimidated by having to research, by having to find out how to do something, they aren’t intimidated by asking for help to accomplish something.”

5. Teacher Capacity: Parents put great emphasis on the importance of lower class sizes, teacher readiness for the classroom, and issues of cultural competence. Parents expressed universal concern about the adequacy of preparation of first-year teachers. There was a general perception that teacher candidates were being rushed through preparation programs to address teacher shortages within public schools. Focus group participants gave even greater consideration to the diversity of instructional strategies and an expansive curriculum which focuses classroom instruction beyond preparation for the LEAP funding.

Conclusion: Charter school advocates felt that schools generally need to become more competitive and serve as a community resource. Charter schools are attracting a lot of public school students because charter schools are receptive to parents and provide the competence and confidence, through innovative pedagogy, that traditional public schools cannot.

2. Tangible evidence of support for the public charter school from parents, teachers, students, and residents, or any combination thereof, including but not limited to information regarding the number of persons and organizations involved in the process and petitions related to the establishment of the charter school. Provide information regarding discussions with the local public school division and/or local school board regarding operational and financial components of the charter school application. If there have been no discussions to date, please indicate the reason.

**Please note our survey results above.**

3. A description of how parental involvement will be used to support the educational needs of the students, the school’s mission and philosophy, and its educational focus.

Parental involvement is essential to the Academy’s academic program, and parents will be engaged with helping to create a customized Individual Education Plan (IEP) for their child. A primary focus of the Academy is our policy and practice on differentiated instruction and individualized attention to the needs of a diverse student population with varying learning abilities. Project-based learning meets the needs of each individual learner, allowing children to have a significant voice in selecting the content areas and nature of their projects.

A variety of instructional methods will be employed so each student can be guided toward achieving their full potential. One of the obstacles with today's educational practices is that students are often grouped for instruction without regard for their individual learning styles or needs. To overcome this situation, each student will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) based on each student's learning style and ability level in each of the subject areas.

Each student will be tested upon admission to identify the student's competencies as based on Virginia's Standards of Learning and Common Core State Standards. Once a student's competencies and learning needs are identified, specific instructional strategies for every content area can be developed for each child to help the student learn and retain the required abilities. Each student's IEP is the "road map" by which the teachers will construct their lessons and teaching strategies. The parents' involvement in this planning activity is critical for student progress and quality parental engagement. The Academy regards parent support with the learning process as a key element for the continual academic and social growth of the child because of the influence parents have outside the school day. Informed parents are more engaged and capable of extending student learning in the home with additional time-on-task.

**V. *Statement of Need:*** Describe the need for a public charter school in a school division or relevant school divisions in the case of a regional public charter school, or in a geographic area within a school division or relevant school divisions. The following components must be addressed:

1. A statement of the need for a public charter school that describes the targeted school population to be served and the reasons for locating the school within a particular school division.

Parents wanting access to schools that provide well-rounded educational experiences in a wholesome, welcoming and safe environment were viewed to be highly desirable by parents and community members in our study. Participants expressed value in having schools with different focal points; community members and parents expressed concern about ensuring levels of continuity across all schools. Parents felt it was important for students to have access to certain classes regardless of the focus of the school they attended; and the importance of and the need for all schools serving diverse types of students. There was a general sense that currently not all schools were serving all students. Specifically, it was viewed that some schools are not serving the city's most challenging student populations. Discussed also was the importance of creating some consistent vehicle for measuring the quality of all schools.

Charter schools are needed because minority children are not being taught the knowledge required to meet the challenges of a global society.

The Academy is interested in supervising and managing any low-achieving school in Hampton Roads Public City Schools that is not achieving in accordance with Virginia's Standards of Learning and Common Core State Standards.

2. An explanation of why the public charter school is being formed. (Is the school being formed at the requests of parents or community organizations?)

The Academy is being formed at the requests of parent and community members. Charter schools tend to serve diverse populations of students. On average, more than half of the students in charter schools are members of ethnic minority groups, 12 percent received special education services, and 6 percent are English Language Learners. Charter schools often target different populations of students than they actually attract. For example, a relatively small proportion of schools targeted special education, gifted and talented, or low-performing students, but large proportions of respondents indicated that these groups were attracted to their schools.

More than half of the charter school respondents believed that particular features of their schools were powerful in attracting parents and students, including:

- Small school size
- Small classes
- A safe environment
- The quality of the academic program
- High achievement standards
- A specialized curriculum focus.

Parent involvement also is a key component of the charter school movement, and most charter schools report that parents are involved in a wide variety of activities. From the perspective of charter school directors, parental satisfaction generally is high. The need for a charter school in Hampton Roads Public City Schools was determined through parent/community meetings, as referenced above. In addition, the following information was gathered, lending credence to the need for a charter school to address these issues:

- Minority and African American students are segregated in an inferior school in Hampton Roads Public City Schools
- Discussions occurred regarding evidence of unconstitutional segregation and hiring practices
- Schools where minority and African American students are placed are given used materials and used equipment, not new learning materials
- A few parents indicated their child never has homework and are often suspended for weeks at a time
- Some parents raised questions about teacher competency in segregated schools
- Funds for children with disabilities and low achieving students are siphoned and used in high achieving all-white schools
- Parents question why students have to make application to get into various programs within the same school system in which they are enrolled

2. An explanation of why a public charter school is an appropriate vehicle to address the identified need.

The Academy is an appropriate choice for a public charter school in Hampton Roads Public City Schools because the philosophy of constructivism, combined with Project Based Learning, Inquiry Based Learning, and customized instruction for every student with an Individual Education Plan focused through a museum learning model has the proven potential for inspiring student learning and accelerating academic growth, especially among ethnic minority students

and students from low income families. We believe the Academy will achieve all students' grade level achievement of Virginia's Standards of Learning and Common Core State Standards.

**VI. *Educational Program:*** Describe the public charter school's educational program. The following components must be addressed:

1. A synopsis of the public charter school's educational program.

The Academy's goal is to build upon proven learning practices as a tool to improve test scores, grade point averages, and overall student performance. The Board recognizes the student population is from an urban community, predominately with children from African-American households. The Board believes that the value of hands-on experiential involvement in the arts will equip our students to appreciate multicultural creativity and address 21<sup>st</sup> Century issues. This curriculum model will serve as the first in Virginia to incorporate museum learning in its core curriculum. Project-based learning (PBL) and inquiry-based learning (IBL) models, integrated with technology, will provide an enriched academic environment for children of all learning abilities. We will provide a high-quality museum learning model which ensures that children see a different path for themselves that involves becoming the best of oneself through scholastic achievement, going to college, and pursuing business and professional opportunities.

Although the Academy's instructional approach differs from traditional school models, the faculty's instruction begins with direct teaching methods. As explained in *Professional Development Resources for Educators and Librarians*, Larry Johnson and Annette Lamb, 2002-2007, the information processing approach will effectively influence student achievement only when teachers first demonstrate instructional quality. Teachers do this by preparing students academically and socially before guiding students into a nontraditional setting. The vast number of students attending the Academy will come from traditional schools where teachers typically dominate classroom conversations. In contrast, the museum learning experience will provide instructional approaches which reverse that behavior, placing students at the helm of their own learning process. The Academy will make instructional strategy decisions based on assessment data, observations, teacher dialogue, student work, and student and parent input. This personalized instructional program is centered on every faculty member's highest expectations for each of their students and the honest belief that every child can be taught, every child can learn, every child can create, and every child can teach.

Students learn by working with peers, questioning, discovering and doing. *Instructional Strategy Effects on Student Learning Outcomes*, Weinstein and Mayer, 1996, emphasizes that cooperative learning has a strong influence on student achievement. Cooperative learning is an essential part of our curriculum, as students work together on projects of interest with each team member having an assigned task in partnership with the other members of their team. A team approach to instruction also includes student acceptance of responsibilities and the ability to acquire and use effective communications skills with others when writing, speaking, and listening. Students synthesize new understanding from prior learning and create new information. Grade level collaborative teams are formed to plan hands-on learning experiences that support the process. Exhibitions and projects complete the evaluation phase of this theory.

A very important component of this instructional strategy will include museum partnerships. Teachers will formulate questions and thematic units at the beginning of each school year. Teachers will also plan and implement all instruction based on the state and district standards expected for successful students. Teachers will be asked to exceed grade level standards with their students as appropriate to the abilities of each child. Classroom lessons will include units in reading, math, social studies, science and other areas of student learning. Local museums, libraries, on-line research, and institutions will support active learning. Visitations from museum curators and other cultural specialists will also be arranged. Students will be expected to build the specific skills outlined in the Common Core State Standards for English/language arts, mathematics, and literacy in history/social studies, science and technical subjects.

Students will also access the museums of the world with the use of technology. A digital tablet in the hands of every student assures access to a wide variety of museums, providing the opportunity for investigations, museum information and lessons, and educational displays that can be shared through on-line courses with other classes anywhere in the world. Imagine our Academy students building communities with students from other states and countries, as they visit the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, the London National Gallery, the Apartheid Museum in South Africa, the California Science Center, or the Chicago Children's Museum at Navy Pier. The door of opportunity, with the aid of live-stream and on-line lessons, will open windows to a world of virtual instruction and unlimited student achievement.

Students will become the curators and docents of their own classroom museum displays, conducting oral presentations for other students, parents and the community. One of our academic and social goals is for students to internalize learning by fielding questions after their presentations. The exhibition effort develops and expands comprehension skills through research, writing, understanding, processing information, and oral presentation. As these skills reach a level of proficiency, the student will then be able to successfully apply those skills to the Common Core State Standards among all content areas at their grade level. Emphasis on communication between students, teachers, museum leaders, and volunteers with developing inquires, exploration and projects are vital in the museum learning process. The museum model exhibits will include both individual and cooperative learning projects, and can be anything from a physical object to a dramatization of events. This instructional approach will also build respect for the thoughts, feelings, and problems of others. Students will understand their own and their classmates' impact in the world, and develop the desire to become more familiar with the need and their own capacity for resolving world problems.

The Academy team has collaborated with professionals in developing a high level of knowledge, leadership, organization, creativity, sensitivity, and goodwill. We have fully educated ourselves on museum learning, and are now prepared to deliver our educational model to our selected community of students, parents and adults. We have also developed into a cohesive professional group with a sound working process, comfortable and effective communication, and mutual respect and trust. We share the same perspective for a successful educational stewardship with local governmental leadership. The Academy Board has selected this instructional approach to meet the needs of a global society. This Board cares about what students know and what they do with what they learn. Current circumstances require a different and more comprehensive vision of education with the innovation to meet the academic, social, and business needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Our Board is committed to this unique educational program because it will accomplish

the educational goals required by Virginia while also inspiring the joy of learning in every child attending our Academy.

2. A description of the pupil performance standards and curriculum, which must meet or exceed any applicable Virginia SOQ, Sections 22.1-253.13:1 through 22.1-253.13:9, Code of Virginia.

The Academy employs the museum learning model as the instructional focus for the Virginia SOL Curriculum Framework and the Common Core State Standards. Integrating the museum learning model and the hands-on Project-Based Learning concept with the Virginia SOL Curriculum Framework and the Common Core State Standards provides a dynamic and attractive learning environment which has proven to stimulate children of all learning abilities, while also meeting the educational mandates of Virginia. Because the curriculum is the Virginia Curriculum Framework and the Common Core State Standards, the curriculum obviously meets the requirements established in the Code of Virginia.

Project-Based Learning, and Inquiry-Based Learning, is the foundation for stimulating the learning process, empowering students in an enriched technological environment. The Academy's proactive management of each child's progress ensures successful learning because students are immersed in measureable hands-on and problem-based projects. The museum learning model places students in various museums, libraries, and cultural centers. The purpose is to develop their abilities for reflection and the verbal and written articulation of their experiences, observations, and conclusions. Routine student exhibits for the community further enhance a student's organization and communication skills. The result is increased self-motivation and empowerment so students can advance their quest for knowledge and further self-development.

The Academy's approach starts by posing questions, problems and scenarios, rather than simply presenting established facts or providing a smooth path to knowledge that is unencumbered with trial and error. This process is often assisted by teachers who function as facilitators when appropriate. Students are required to identify and research issues, and respond to inquiries so they can advance their knowledge or develop solutions. Inquiry-based learning includes problem-based learning and is generally used in small-scale investigations and projects. This design gives teachers the tools to create meaningful object-based learning activities that can be integrated into a wide variety of curricula. Students will explore strategies that emphasize literacy, critical thinking skills and connection across disciplines. The strategies and content used in courses will parallel the proficiencies outlined in the Common Core State Standards as they relate to literacy, speaking and listening, critical thinking, analyzing informational text, and citing evidence to support arguments.

Museum trips are vital to learners for the numerous skills that students can develop and apply. The skills include using evidence to support reasoning, making observations, synthesizing information, collaborating, and above all, critical thinking. As students develop their skills and naturally rely on these tools during museum experiences, they are practicing an important learning skill. This skill is not only used during museum experiences, but an individual can take it with them into institutions of higher learning. Students who learn to think and question in a holistic manner become life-long learners. The Academy's curriculum supports students in developing these skills.

The Common Core State Standards identify what students should understand and be capable of doing by the end of each grade. The Virginia SOL Curriculum Framework provides resources for the implementation of core content area curricula. The blending of the Common Core State Standards and Virginia SOL Curriculum Framework with the museum learning model is a powerful tool for improving academic achievement and maturity. Students engaged with thought-provoking studies through creative and personalized instructional guidance will more capably blend their experiences and knowledge in all content areas, meeting the required standards designed to prepare students for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. When studying historical figures, places, events and artifacts, students will be taught how to address standards in every content area, i.e., in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies/history, technology, the arts, and physical education, thus expanding the impact of the educational experience. Another standard states that all students will demonstrate their ability to communicate through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills and processes are heavily embedded in every aspect of the museum learning model.

Included in the museum learning model, as a means for implementing its curriculum, the Academy will embrace the “Vision-to-Action” whole-school model. The Board recognizes the value of instructional data as a tool for improving the school, and this information will guide the Academy in utilizing data-driven decision-making. The data collected will allow the selection of appropriate museum resources, thematic units, instructional strategies, presentations and professional development. This data will also assist in defining school goals and objectives based on community needs. Assumptions and progress will be tracked throughout the school year. This record will support the role of the classroom teacher as a member of a professional learning community that shares strategies and goals with colleagues, support staff, instructional leaders, students and parents. The data will provide insight to the instructional successes of our innovative, hands-on, flexible, and interdisciplinary museum program. Decisions based on data is a continuing commitment for improvement, and will frame an action plan rich with possibilities and opportunities to improve instruction, as needed, ultimately resulting in further school program development, which in turn effects and accelerates student learning.

To promote these interdisciplinary experiences and action plans developed and implemented during collaborative team dialogue, the Academy organizes the curriculum into 9-week thematic units across all content areas. Integrating a common theme across the content areas enables students to see relationships between content areas and internalize key concepts. The key concepts mirror the Academy’s core values of responsibility, respect, sustainability, cooperation, creativity, and kindness. Each key concept is integrated throughout the curriculum as a lens for a close-up examination of all content matter. A summary description of each key concept and its relationship to the core content follows:

**Responsibility:** A strong sense of responsibility inspires students to solve identified problems that affect many, whether or not they affect the individual. It further empowers students to recognize their role in their own success, as well as in the success of others. Within a history lesson, students will be challenged to try to determine why specific events occurred. To integrate the concept of responsibility, students are asked to investigate the reasoning of the principal figures in the event, and imagine what could have been done differently that might have altered the outcome. The museum curriculum helps and promotes students develop a deep sense of responsibility for their own learning. With teachers as guides, children are directed to make their own inquiries about a subject. Next, they experiment, observe, and investigate material. Once

they have reached their conclusions, they construct a museum exhibit presenting their knowledge in a way that can teach others.

**Respect:** In order to understand an individual's impact in the world and the desire to manage world problems, students at the Academy learn to respect the thoughts, feelings, and problems of others. Students learn respect through direct experience and real-world challenges. In the science classroom and during museum visits, students collaborate and communicate to achieve common goals. One of these goals is the end-of-unit museum exhibit that the class must construct and present together. Students come to realize that to fully achieve class goals, they must respect the points of views and impact of others. Long-term collaborative projects provide students the exposure and real-life opportunity to learn cooperative skills such as effective communication and task management, as well as teaching and instilling respect for others.

**Cooperation:** Students always have individual learning goals and plans, but also have group projects that require cooperation with others. The creation of museum exhibits is one way the curriculum focuses on cooperation. Exhibit projects span several weeks and complete each thematic unit. Cooperation is a highlight in the mathematics program which employs "Everyday Mathematics". This program was chosen because of the evidence supporting its use and its ability to reach multiple learning styles, but it was also chosen because of its use of cooperative learning and small-group instruction. Real-world experiences in cooperation provide children with the skills needed to work with others and become life-long assets.

**Creativity:** The museum curriculum naturally invites and stimulates creativity. Students identify their own problems to solve and questions to answer as a basic premise of the inquiry-based learning framework. Teachers encourage risk-taking and innovation in guiding students' explorations and investigations. Museum learning culminates in the creation of a tool for sharing knowledge with others. This can be anything from a physical object to a dramatization of events. Students have the opportunity to use creativity at every step of the museum process. Writer's Workshop, a writing program, specifically encourages creativity in students' writing. Fostering a sense of creativity and encouraging an active imagination are the means to making learning meaningful and engaging. Transforming school from an obligatory activity to a fulfilling activity is key to the development of life-long love of learning.

**Kindness:** Being kind is a vital way of making our own lives, and the lives of others, meaningful and positive. At the Academy, concern for others is contagious. Charitable words and acts lead to new displays of kindness, perpetuating a different culture. Students engage in acts of kindness toward one another, and these acts are recognized, rewarded and encouraged.

**Multicultural acceptance:** The museum learning model acknowledges a diverse array of learning styles while nurturing knowledge from a variety of experiences and people. Student visits to museums and other cultural institutions provide extraordinary opportunities to acquire knowledge of diverse histories, philosophies and peoples. Students are regularly challenged to examine information from the perspective of another culture, period in history, or set of circumstances. Teaching materials are used that present diverse racial, ethnic and cultural perspectives on events, concepts and issues.

**Communication:** Emphasizing communication between students and teachers in developing inquiries, explorations, and projects is vital to the museum process. Students are also required to communicate to larger audiences during the end-of-unit exhibit nights. Students compose placards for their museum exhibits, which helps them learn to draw a main idea from the knowledge they have compiled and present this idea effectively in writing. They also act as docents for their exhibits, where they convey the knowledge they have to others through oral presentation. Further evidence of the emphasis on communication is manifest in the Writer’s Workshop and Reader’s Workshop frameworks of the English/language arts programming. The “workshop” format encourages students to effectively communicate both by sharing and reflecting on what has been shared.

**Curriculum Map and Summary:** Describe the academic program of the school, providing an overview of curriculum objectives and content in each subject area for each grade, as well as a description of how the curriculum meets the requirements established in the Code of Virginia.

**Curriculum and Instruction:** Key elements of our academic program include a classical curriculum based on the Common Core State Standards, a blended-learning model, lead teachers assisted by teaching fellows, and pedagogy rooted in the Paideia approach.

**Curriculum Framework:** At the core of a classical education is the notion that citizens need a common body of knowledge in order to productively communicate with each other and effectively participate in their society. We believe it is critical that every child should learn the fundamentals of science, basic principles of government, important events in world history, essential elements of mathematics, widely acknowledged masterpieces of art and music, and great literature defined by the test of time. Moreover, research has shown that the current trend of teaching isolated skills is neither sufficient nor possible in the absence of meaningful content knowledge. We believe an organized, clear and sequential curriculum best serves our students. Similarly, the Common Core State Standards adopted by Virginia calls for a curriculum that is “intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades.” We believe too many start-up schools make the mistake of trying to create curriculum from scratch. Thus we intend to use the Core Knowledge Sequence to define the focus of learning in each grade.

**Core Knowledge:** We have selected Core Knowledge because of its specificity, coherence across grades, alignment to Common Core State Standards and track record. The Sequence was developed by analyzing the topics and vocabulary most frequently found in adult communication and examining curricula and standards from the United States and high-performing countries for structure and content. An advisory board on multicultural traditions proposed specific content of diverse cultural traditions that all children in the U.S.A. should share in order to develop mutual respect, knowledge, and understanding. The sequence is designed to build knowledge systematically year by year and has been refined over time.

Core Knowledge is used by schools across the country and there is research to support its efficacy. Researchers at the Center for the Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University did a series of studies in the late 1990s and found that Core Knowledge was associated with positive changes in schools, including student achievement and engagement as well as teacher satisfaction and collaboration. Controlled, independent studies on the effects of

Core Knowledge conducted in 2000 in Oklahoma City, an urban district with 67 elementary schools, found Core Knowledge students posted significantly higher scores in reading comprehension, vocabulary, science, math concepts and social studies. Currently the Icahn charter schools in the Bronx use Core Knowledge while serving students similar to our target population. Its schools outperformed their district across grades by between 25 and 50 percentage points in English/language arts and between 33 and 61 percentage points in math.

**Curriculum Development:** The Core Knowledge Sequence establishes specific knowledge to be taught in English/language arts, American and world history, geography, visual arts, math and science. Our staff will analyze all Core Knowledge materials to identify any areas where enhancements are required to ensure alignment with Virginia's Common Core State Standards. Based on the Core Knowledge Sequence, instructional leaders will develop during the planning year detailed scope and sequences for each subject in each grade that include clear topics and objectives. During Summer Institute, teachers will use these scope and sequences along with curriculum program resources to develop curriculum maps and unit plans that specify topics, daily objectives, vocabulary, texts, computer-based programs, and diagnostic and summative assessments. Armed with these guidance resources, our teachers will be free to devote their energies during the school year to planning *how* to best teach content to the children in their classrooms. Each summer's scope and sequences and unit plans will be reviewed and revised based on evaluation of program implementation and student performance.

**Instructional Planning:** Teaching pairs will have daily prep periods and grade level teams will have common planning times to review student performance data, identify instructional strategies and materials, and plan lessons. Using the guidance resources described above, teachers will submit each Thursday lesson plans for the following week that includes objectives, activities for whole-class, small group and computer-based instruction, materials, formative assessments, accommodations necessary for students with special needs as well as specific co-teaching modes and Lead Teacher and Fellow responsibilities. Instructional leaders will provide critical feedback and lesson plans will be posted on a shared server so that support staff can coordinate their intervention activities with general classroom instruction. After lessons have been conducted, teachers will reflect on implementation and annotate weekly plans to identify effective practices and areas of weakness, and then archive them for future use.

**Lead Teachers and Fellows:** The Academy will typically have two teachers in each classroom. Lead Teachers will be experienced educators who have mastered classroom management, instructional planning and delivery, and assessment with a track record of raising student achievement. Each will be paired with a Teaching Fellow, a novice educator who is still developing his or her teaching skills. Having multiple educators in the classroom increases instructional options; it models teamwork and collaboration for students, limits isolation and provides immediate peer support and coaching for teachers. Many teachers are unfamiliar with co-teaching; therefore, we will provide explicit training and support in areas such as roles and responsibilities in instructional planning, classroom management, assessment and communication with parents.

Teachers will learn to deliberately select appropriate co-teaching modes based on lesson objectives, which include:

- **Team Teaching**: Simultaneous instruction with shared responsibility.
- **Teach and Assist**: One teacher leads the lesson while the other assists individual students, which allows targeted support to individual students with special needs.
- **Parallel Teaching**: Each teacher leads the same lesson at the same time with half of the class, which allows for increased student interaction and checks for understanding.
- **Alternative Teaching**: One teacher works with a large group while the other pulls a small group for pre-teaching, re-teaching, make-up work, assessment or enrichment.
- **Station Teaching**: Lessons are divided into multiple activities and each is taught by a different teacher in separate stations, which allows for smaller teacher-student ratios.
- **Blended-Learning Model**: Blended-learning is an evolving term that addresses the intersection of technology and instruction to maximize learning. There are many models of blended learning, including:
  - **Flipped Classroom**: Online lessons at home and coaching by teachers at school (Example: Woodland Park, CO)
  - **Flex**: Students learn primarily online at a school with teachers as facilitators (Example: Carpe Diem Schools, AZ)
  - **Lab Rotation**: Students rotate between a computer lab and traditional classrooms (Example: Rocketship Charter Schools, CA)
  - **Class Rotation**: Students rotate between computers and teacher within a classroom (Example: KIPP Empower, CA)

The Academy intends to use an innovative classroom-based model that features students rotating between adaptive computer-based and teacher-led instruction. This model is appropriate for elementary students who need consistent structure, direction and support; it is based on what current brain research suggests about the learning process: students need to be challenged at the appropriate level. As cognitive psychologist Daniel Willingham points out, in order to engage students their instruction “has to aid in presenting problems as both challenging and solvable. And many technologies can do just that.” Blended-learning provides personalized lessons at the optimum level of challenge for each student by continuously assessing mastery and adjusting content and pace. In addition, the rotational model in and of itself enhances learning. “Varying the conditions under which learning takes place makes learning harder for learners but results in better learning... varied learning conditions pay high dividends for the effort exerted.” (Wiggins) Finally, blended-learning can enhance student motivation: studies find that computer games motivate learners by offering immediate feedback, increasing participation and reinforcing knowledge that together promotes the application and transfer of skills and changes in behavior and attitudes (Sauvé et al). They can also provide positive emotional experiences and help students persist through negative experiences such as failure (Gee). The Academy is collaborating with Junyo, an organization created by the founder of Zynga, a world leader in social gaming technology, to harness the motivational power of digital games in the learning environment.

In practice, blended-learning at the Academy will look like this: each classroom will contain fifteen networked computers with head phones, and students will rotate on and off the computers throughout the day. With half the class engaged on computers, teachers can devote their attention to the other half through targeted small group lessons, doubling down on personalized instruction with teacher-student ratios no greater than 1 - 15. With two adults in the room this means small

groups of about seven students. The computer does not replace the teacher in this model; indeed, the teacher is involved in all aspects of classroom learning, from assigning specific tasks and programs on the computer to monitoring student progress to reviewing assessment results and revising groups and instructional methods.

**An Illustration of Blended-Learning:** Carmine, an inquisitive kindergarten student and English language learner, is in the blue group, which today starts the morning literacy block on the computer. She sits down at her assigned computer along the wall and puts on the headphones. She then signs on to the computer by clicking on a picture of her teacher, then on a picture of herself and finally uses a simple picture password scheme to access today's lesson. Based on her recent reading assessment and work with the teacher during guided reading, her teacher has already assigned Carmine to work on a specific phonics skill. The program explains the concept verbally along with visual graphics and then assigns her practice tasks. It is adaptive and selects each problem based on whether or not she understood the previous problem, assuring that the level of challenge is high enough to accelerate her learning without being too hard and losing her. The program gives her immediate feedback, reinforces correct answers and explains errors. The computer collects this information for the teacher to review later and use to inform subsequent instruction. After 20 minutes she signs off and rotates to her daily guided reading group with her teacher.

A blended-learning model is only as successful as the tools that help teachers customize and coordinate computer-based and teacher-led instruction. Noting the importance of effective design and implementation, an innovative and critical component of our program is the use of the cloud-based Hybrid Learning Management System (HLMS) developed by Education Elements. Key features include:

- Teachers, administrators, students and parents can log on to one system to access a range of content, assessments and student performance data.
- Organized around student groups and subjects – not whole classes and grade levels- teachers can work with smaller groups of students and target instruction.
- Content can be quickly added and changed to provide students with developmentally appropriate and engaging materials.
- Curriculum can be supplemented with remedial and advanced content for all types of learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners.
- Ongoing formative assessment provides students and teachers with immediate feedback to inform teaching and learning.
- Teacher-created assessments can be incorporated along with those offered by content providers.
- Data analysis tools allow teachers to review progress by student, group, and standard and use results to plan future instruction and facilitate Response to Intervention.
- Integrated grade book provides holistic real-time view of student progress to teachers, administrators and parents.

Education Elements has experience working with successful start-up charter schools serving students similar to our target population, including KIPP Empower in Los Angeles, IDEA Public Schools serving 16 schools in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas and Alliance College-Ready

Public Schools serving 20 schools in California. In addition, the state of Pennsylvania is using the HLMS as the backbone of its statewide Hybrid Learning Initiative.

Nevertheless, a learning management system is nothing without great content. The Obama administration recently called for states to change their calcified curriculum adoption processes and accelerate the transition to digital textbooks and software. One of the great advantages of being a charter school is the ability to quickly modify curriculum to meet students' needs. The HMLS will allow the school to select from a diverse array of content providers. With the field of education technology evolving so rapidly, it does not make sense to specify now the digital content we will use at the Academy. We will delegate this responsibility to the school's leaders using the following criteria:

- **Aligned**: engaging content must support our curriculum and instructional objectives.
- **Adaptive**: lessons must continuously personalize instruction based on frequent assessment of student progress and mastery.
- **Assignable**: teachers must have some control over assigning lessons to address identified needs of individual students and coordinate with their instruction.
- **Reporting**: programs must provide useful feedback to both students and teachers. Examples of computer-based programs that currently meet these criteria include Odyssey K-5 by Compass Learning, iStation, Dreambox and Learning.com.

While the Academy intends to implement a relatively new and innovative approach, blended learning does have a track record and research base. Corporations, the military and higher education have relied on it for years to develop critical mastery of skills and knowledge. KIPP Empower, an elementary charter school in Los Angeles, uses a model close to our design with encouraging results: last year just 9% of its kindergarten students were reading at a proficient or advanced level at the start of the school year, but 96% were doing so by the end of the school year, as measured by the STEP literacy assessment. Similarly, on the SAT-10 test, 96% of students were performing at or above the national average in both reading and math. What's more, the KIPP Empower model accelerated many students beyond grade level: 30% of kindergarten students were reading at a 1st or 2nd grade level at the end of the year.

The larger impact on K-12 education is nascent. The 2006 report *Technology in Schools: What the Research Says* notes that "[t]he research on the effect of technology in learning is emerging. Overall, across all uses in all content areas, technology does provide a small, but significant, increase in learning when implemented with fidelity." Several recent studies have examined the underlying mechanisms of technology in the classroom and identify a common theme: how the teacher uses technology contributes significantly to the effectiveness of that technology.

A review of the research on one-to-one computing (Fadel and Lemke) noted several studies that identified increased student engagement in learning. They also found that, in technology intensive classrooms with effective implementation, instructional practices shifted to more collaborative, small-group work; used curricula that were more student-centered and problem based; and produced more higher-order thinking skills.

We recognize that technology is no magic bullet and the successful implementation of this blended-learning model will require:

**Staff Development:** teachers will receive ongoing training to understand how to group students, plan and assign appropriate lessons, review data, and revise groups and instruction. To that end we will provide implementation training and employ a full-time Blended-learning Manager to support teachers throughout the year.

**Meticulous Planning:** in order to tightly integrate online content and offline instruction requires that teachers regularly review student progress data, adjust flexible student groups and differentiate instruction to optimize learning. Our schedule will provide teachers with regular planning time and guidance.

**Orderly Culture:** teachers will establish structured routines and procedures for students working independently, using computers and transitioning between activities. School culture will be a major component of staff development and ongoing support.

**Pedagogy:** BBWA subscribes to the principles of Paideia. In Greek the word “paideia” means education or child-rearing. In classical Athens Paideia was a system of instruction in which students were taught language, history, logic, math and music. In modern times Mortimer Adler resurrected the term with the Paideia Proposal, which promoted a variety of instructional methods to address different learning situations. Paideia emphasizes three specific pedagogical techniques:

**Didactic Instruction:** Typically teacher-centered, students acquire foundational information about a subject. Lecture, reading, demonstration and videos are common forms of didactic instruction. Assessment typically includes questioning and written quizzes and tests of basic knowledge. Didactic instruction will typically occur during whole class lessons and some computer-based instruction.

**Intellectual Coaching:** Through practice students acquire expertise in skills of learning, such as reading, writing, calculating and observing. Teachers model, question and provide positive and corrective feedback. Assessment is often conducted through performance tasks with the use of checklists and rubrics. Our blended-learning and co-teaching model is designed to maximize small group instruction to facilitate the coaching relationship. Adaptive instruction and immediate feedback from some computer programs can fit the coaching model as well. Targeted coaching will be especially important for meeting the needs of at-risk students.

**Paideia Seminars:** While most are familiar with Socratic seminars in college settings, the basic practice of expanding students’ understanding of ideas, concepts and values can be translated to elementary classrooms as well. Paideia seminars typically include facilitated discussions using open-ended questions and can be used with all ages in all subjects. Assessment is often based on evaluation of oral responses as well as presentations and written work. In preparing for a seminar, teachers use a variety of content reading strategies to help students build their comprehension of the seminar topic. The teacher also coaches individual students in speaking and listening skills in pre-seminar sessions, allowing at-risk students such as English language learners to effectively participate.

During the seminar, students collaboratively use their reading, speaking and listening skills. Finally, the students write in response to the discussion.

### **Subject Areas:**

Each day our students will study reading, writing, social studies, math and science; they will also participate regularly in arts and fitness education as well as structured play. Character education is integrated throughout our curriculum. Below is a discussion of our program for each subject; we reserve the right to change program components based on developments in the field or the hiring of staff who have expertise in alternative programs and make a compelling case for their substitution.

**Literacy:** Based on the experience of other successful elementary schools our program develops all five areas identified by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children as the foundation of early literacy success: oral language; phonological awareness; concepts of print; alphabet knowledge and writing; and comprehension. We intend to use the *Core Knowledge Language Arts Program*, which combines systematic phonics-based instruction in decoding skills with extensive read-alouds to build both oral language and background knowledge, i.e., word knowledge and world knowledge. The program comprises two strands. The Skills Strand teaches decoding using synthetic phonics; it includes extensive phonemic awareness activities as well as repeated oral reading to build fluency. The Listening and Learning Strand lessons, comprised of read-alouds and oral language exercises, build on the fact that students' listening comprehension abilities outpace their reading comprehension abilities throughout elementary school.

The *Core Knowledge Language Arts Program* will be reinforced by computer-based skill building activities, guided reading, writing workshops and developmentally appropriate Paideia seminars. During rotation time the class is divided into three groups: one group is with a teacher for a 30-minute phonics and fluency lesson, one group is with another teacher for a 30-minute comprehension and vocabulary lesson, and the last group is using adaptive computer programs.

The key elements of our literacy program include:

### Instructional Methods:

- **Interactive Read Alouds:** Teachers model fluent reading, develop vocabulary and comprehension skills, and expose students to seminal texts.
- **Guided Reading:** In flexible small groups based on assessed reading levels, teachers coach students in comprehension strategies as they read and discuss a single text.
- **Independent Reading:** students select and read "just right" books at their own independent reading level to develop comprehension skills and decoding strategies, build fluency and stamina, and acquire content knowledge.
- **Phonics and Word Study:** vocabulary development with focus on spelling, phonics, and grammar to teach conventions of written and oral language.
- **Writing Workshop:** Teachers lead a mini-Lesson with a clear teaching point followed by independent student writing. Teachers instruct students individually or through small group instruction while continuously assessing their growth and development.

- **Computer-based Instruction:** Based on assessed needs, students are assigned specific skill-building and comprehension activities.
- **Paideia Seminars:** Teachers will use the Touchstones Discussion Method to help students search for answers to fundamental questions raised by text, images and art. This shared inquiry approach promotes student dialogue and debate.

#### **Instructional Materials:**

- **Core Knowledge:** The Core Knowledge Sequence identifies key skills, literacy and informational texts, sayings and phrases, speeches and vocabulary that will inform our selection of reading materials. The Core Knowledge Language Arts Program provides detailed curriculum maps and unit plans, which include summary description, key ideas, core content objectives, Common Core objectives, and cross curricular connections; they also explicitly identify future learning that depends on the content to be taught. In addition, texts and vocabulary are specified by lesson.
- **Great Books for Children:** Mortimer Adler noted three key criteria for including a book on the “great books” list: it addresses universal ideas and themes that have occupied the minds of thinkers throughout history; it has relevance to the problems and issues of our times; and the book can be read again and again with benefit. He identified truth, goodness, beauty, justice, liberty, and equality as key among the ideas that have characterized the great works of the Western tradition. We intend to use materials from the Great Books Foundation, including Great Books Read-Aloud for K-1 and Junior Great Books for 2-5, which are aligned to Virginia’s Common Core State Standards.
- **Touchpebbles:** Selected to support Paideia seminars, Touch pebbles is a set of fables, poems, art, and literature selected to introduce young children to the fundamental concepts of group discussion. Once trained in the Touchstones Discussion Method, students compare their own points of view with others to improve their vocabulary and comprehension, evaluate arguments, present evidence, consider narrative context, and learn to respect the opinions of others.

**Mathematics:** We agree with recent research findings that basic math and reasoning instruction should start early in the education of our children and not wait until after children become readers. In a comparison of primary mathematics education in Singapore and the United States, the American Institute for Research concluded that the U.S. “lacks a centrally identified core of mathematical content that provides a focus for the rest of the system.” With this in mind the Academy will implement a coherent mathematics program beginning in kindergarten. It will emphasize incremental learning and extensive practice; major concepts are broken down into discrete components, put together over time, and then continuously reviewed and expanded upon. In addition, our math program will emphasize talking and writing mathematically, which are an essential part of the Common Core Standards.

#### **Instructional Methods:**

- **Math Meeting:** Every morning students will participate in a short and engaging meeting using an interactive bulletin board to orally practice math skills related to everyday life,

e.g., calendar and time, temperature and weather, counting and patterning, graphs and money.

- **Didactic Instruction**: Most topics will be introduced through short mini-lessons that explain a mathematic concept or procedure and demonstrate its application.
- **Guided Math Groups**: Students will be provided with ample time to practice and explore concepts while teachers provide targeted coaching and support during guided math groups and centers.
- **Computer-based Instruction**: Math software programs personalize practice by continuously assessing student mastery and providing increasingly challenging problems. Using response analysis, these programs also help students explore why they chose specific answers and where their assumptions may have led them astray.

#### **Instructional Materials:**

- **Core Knowledge**: The Core Knowledge Sequence will provide the foundation for our scope and sequence. It goes beyond the Common Core State Standards by including additional topics such as ordinal position, orientation in time (calendar), Roman numerals and temperature. We will supplement any areas that do not address the Common Core State Standards.
- **Singapore Math**: We intend to use the Early bird Kindergarten and the Primary Mathematics U.S. Edition programs, which are aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

Content is presented in a logical sequence throughout the grades. Students begin solving simple multi-step word problems in 3rd grade using a technique called the “bar model” method and in later grades apply this method to more and more difficult problems. The program also provides supplemental resources, including materials for enrichment and remediation as well as stories based on well-known children’s fables and rhymes with mathematical concepts represented by pictures that can be discussed.

**Social Studies**: Our social studies program aims to provide students with a deep background in history, geography and government and provide them with the information needed to be productive citizens. In concert with our literacy program, teachers will help students develop their understanding of the world and their place in it. The study of American history begins in grades K–2 with an overview of major events and figures, from the earliest days to recent times. A more in-depth, chronological study of American history begins again in 3rd grade. World History explores major civilizations, cultures and religions. Geography begins with an introduction to the seven continents and their familiar landmarks and wildlife. In subsequent grades it expands to include a spatial sense of the world, an awareness of the physical processes that shape life, a sense of the interactions between humans and their environment, an understanding of the relations between place and culture, and an awareness of the characteristics of specific regions and cultures.

#### **Instructional Methods:**

- **Didactic Instruction**: Students will be taught basic historical and geographic information necessary to understand more complex issues and concepts.

- **Project-based Learning:** Through hands-on immersive projects students will explore history and geography topics in a way that reinforces memory and understanding.
- **Paideia Seminars:** Social studies is an ideal subject for discussions designed to elicit deeper understanding, and developmentally appropriate seminars will focus on important texts and events.

#### Instructional Materials:

- **Core Knowledge:** We chose Core Knowledge because it provides coherent and specific topics to be covered in each grade that are aligned across subjects.
- **Social Studies Alive!** This program by Teachers Curriculum Institute was selected because it marries great content, meaningful technology, and interactive classroom experiences. An emphasis will be placed on analyzing primary sources such as historical documents, journals, letters, political cartoons and photographs.
- **Computer-based Content:** Our instructional staff will select programs and online content that provides engaging lessons about history and geography. Social Studies Alive! includes online resources, game-like reading challenges, and resources for English language learners and students with disabilities.

**Science:** Based on the experience of a growing number of charter schools, such as Success Academy, we intend to offer daily science classes beginning in kindergarten.

#### Instructional Methods:

- **Didactic Instruction:** Students will be taught basic scientific information necessary to understand more complex issues and concepts as well as the skills needed to employ the scientific method.
- **Inquiry-based Learning:** Through hands-on labs students will participate in experiments and investigation using the scientific method. Explicit connections are made to other subjects.

#### Instructional Materials

- **Core Knowledge:** The Core Knowledge Sequence spirals each year through topics in biology, chemistry, physics and earth science.
- **Full Option Science System (FOSS):** Modules include equipment kits, teacher guidance, and original student books that complement each FOSS module and integrate reading and language arts skills in the context of learning science.
- **Computer-based Content:** Modeling is an extremely effective way to increase conceptual understanding in science, and computer programs offer interactive lessons that allow students to individually manipulate and understand topics as small as the atom and as large as the cosmos. FOSS modules include a website folio with interactive simulations, bulletin boards, and specific links to other Internet sites to reinforce and enhance the topic.

**The Arts:** As an essential element of classical education, the arts will be infused throughout the curriculum, providing frequent opportunities to sing, dance, listen to music, play act, read and write poetry, draw, paint, and make objects. In addition, we will provide arts classes in all grades; we intend to open with one or two of the arts (visual, dance, music, theater) depending on

the expertise and skills of our first art teacher, and intend to offer additional arts as the school and staff grows. As children progress in their knowledge and competencies, they can begin to learn more about the methods and terminology of the different arts, and become familiar with an ever wider range of great artists and masterworks. A good understanding of the arts grows out of at least three modes of knowledge—creative (i.e., making artworks), historical and analytical.

### Instructional Methods

- Didactic Instruction: Students will be exposed to examples of art throughout history and taught specific terminology and techniques of art production.
- Project-Based: Students will have hands-on opportunities to create art, such as paintings or music or songs, allowing for both self-expression and the development of technique.
- Paideia Seminars: Art serves as an excellent focus for discussion, which sharpens students' critical thinking skills and allows them to make connections between their experiences and other cultures in time and space.

### Instructional Materials

- Core Knowledge: The Core Knowledge Sequence provides in each grade topics related to elements of making and appreciating art, important artists, works of art, and artistic concepts, musical concepts and terms, and important composers and musical works.
- Social Studies Alive! This curriculum uses art to help students access and understand cultures and history.
- Computer-based Content: A variety of software allows students of all ages to express themselves artistically, including drawing, video, animation and music.

Fitness: A classical education addresses fitness of the mind, body and spirit. In this age of rising obesity and cultural shifts, we will teach students how to build and maintain their own health. We will develop a year-long scope and sequence that covers physical education, nutrition and safety, and expect our fitness teachers to design rigorous units and lessons with clear learning objectives and assessments.

Character Education: Our school virtues—Justice, Self-control, Good Judgment, Courage and Kindness—will be infused throughout the curriculum and referenced regularly in classroom instruction. For example, students will study literature about and historical figures who exemplify our virtues. Core Knowledge, Junior Great Books, Social Studies Alive! and Touch pebbles all align with this approach.

Structured Play: One of our school's core virtues is self-control. Research indicates that many children start school not ready to learn because they lack one critical skill: the ability to regulate their social, emotional and cognitive behaviors. Studies show that self-regulation—often called executive function—has a stronger association with academic achievement than IQ or entry level reading or math skills (Blair; Normandeu & Guay). We intend to include a short period of structured play each day to allow students some movement and independence. Play is defined as freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated behavior that actively engages a child. Students will have the opportunity to choose to participate in a variety of centers, such as a sand box, blocks or toy work spaces. Teachers will develop a common set of rules, provide conflict resolution tools and expect positive language and inclusive behavior. Structured play

provides students with a creative outlet while simultaneously developing self-control and social skills.

3. A description of how the Virginia SOL and the corresponding SOL Curriculum Framework will be used as the foundation for curricula to be implemented for each grade or course in the public charter school. Include within the description how the goals and objectives of the curricula will meet or exceed the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL), address student performance standards, relate to state and federal assessment standards, and include measurable student outcomes (See <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/index.shtml> on the Department's Web site for more information about the SOL).

The Academy is adopting the Virginia Standards of Learning as the foundation for curricula in each grade level or course.

4. A description of any internal and external assessments to be used to measure pupil progress towards achievement of the school's pupil performance standards, in addition to the SOL assessments prescribed by Section 22.1-253.13:3, in the *Code of Virginia*.

**Learning goals plan:** As explained previously, every student will have an IEP, or Individual Education Plan, that targets the individual student's objectives and goals for the school year, both academically and socially/behaviorally. Three times during the school year, the student, parent, and teacher will review progress toward achieving these objectives and goals.

**Measurement of academic goals:** Assessment refers to all activities undertaken by teachers as well as their students that provide information, which will be used to modify teaching and learning activities. Summative assessment will provide evidence for level of competence, achievement, and program effectiveness, and includes, but is not limited to, the use of national, state, and local measures. Testing will include assessments designed to measure student growth effectively. English/language arts and mathematics will be assessed in grade 3, science in grade 4, and social studies in grade 5. Summative assessment will be used solely to make a judgment about the level of competence or achievement at a particular point in time. Symbols, letter grade, grade levels, or standard comparisons will be reported to students and parents. Results from the summative assessments will help staff to judge how many students are or are not meeting standards in certain subjects for the purposes of accountability. Our summative data will be posted, reported and available for students, educators, the Board, parents and the community.

Formative assessment instruments will provide essential feedback for teachers and parents, improve and accelerate learning to improve performance, are ongoing and carried out during the instructional process, and improve teaching or learning by providing an opportunity for immediate adjustments. For example, a norm-referenced test such as MindPlay Educational Software is designed to identify the specific learning gaps in students. The on-line evaluation takes less than thirty minutes to assess an entire class and reports are immediately available to help target instruction. Northwest Evaluation Association's Measure of Academic Program,

another computer adaptive assessment tool for primary grades, is an assessment tool for students at the earliest stage of learning in reading and mathematics. It measures foundational skills of letters and number understanding. Teacher's report, sub-skill performance report, and student's report provide formative data to drive instruction and regularly assess student's progress.

Assessments will also range in frequency from daily (journals) to quarterly (museum exhibits). All assessments are scored using rubrics and/or other methods of clearly conveying to students what is expected of them. Instructional staff works together during professional learning community's meetings to create cross-curricular assessments, thus increasing the authenticity of performance-based assessments. According to text found in *Formative Assessment and Assessment for Learning*, the power found in formative assessment is displayed in the following characteristics:

- Use of classroom discussions, classroom tasks, and homework to determine the current state of student learning/understanding, with action taken to improve learning/correct misunderstandings.
- Provision of descriptive feedback, with guidance on how to improve during the learning
- Development of student self and peer assessment skills
- Formative Assessments: Teachers will be expected to identify formative assessments in their lesson plans and conduct regular checks for understanding during instruction. Students will also be taught how to use formative feedback to maximize their own learning
- Questioning: Teachers will be trained to use appropriately rigorous levels of questioning based on Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge to ascertain students' content knowledge and conceptual understanding.
- Checklists: Teachers will develop grade-wide checklists to identify student mastery of specific skills, including checklist reading tests and checklist mathematics tests. These tests extend student assessment beyond the screening tests and are used to inform instruction relative to the skills of phonological awareness, phonics, number sense, and computation.
- Observation: Teachers will be expected to document anecdotal evidence of student learning, especially through interactions during one-on-one conferencing and small group instruction.
- Rubrics: With guidance from instructional leaders, teachers will develop grade-wide rubrics to evaluate student work, especially writing and projects.
- Computer-Based Assessments: One of the criteria for selecting computer-based content providers is built-in assessments that offer immediate feedback. This allows both students and teachers to determine mastery and pace instruction appropriately. Moreover, parents can monitor students' learning and administrators can evaluate programs and teachers.
- Benchmark Assessments: Teachers will administer benchmark assessments to measure progress towards goals.
- Reading Inventory: Teachers will use quarterly reading inventories to measure student progress in reading levels. Students identified through the RTI process for Tier 2 and 3 interventions may be assessed more frequently.
- Writing Prompts: As part of our writing program teachers will develop grade-wide writing prompts and use rubrics to evaluate mastery of skills.

- **Benchmark Tests:** In other subjects and based on our curriculum maps and scope and sequences, teachers will create benchmark assessments to evaluate student mastery of content in each subject, including familiarity with grade specific literature, poetry, speeches, sayings and phrases, historical events, geography, and mathematical and scientific concepts.
- **Summative Assessments:** Students will be regularly evaluated on their mastery of skills and knowledge as defined by state standards and the Common Core State Standards.

Results matter. We understand that our charter agreement will be a performance contract and fully expect to be held accountable for achieving high, measurable goals. We take our responsibility for educating each child seriously and view our charter as a commitment to parents to provide them with a life-changing option for their children. We have therefore designed the school with the future in mind and created an assessment system that will provide us with timely information with which to measure our progress and ensure we are on track to meeting all requirements for charter renewal in our 5th year of operation.

The Academy will implement a robust assessment system that includes the administration of diagnostic, formative, benchmark and summative assessments; protocols to ensure rigorous analysis of data and valid and reliable results; and procedures for using results to inform instructional planning, program evaluation and accountability. We intend to be a learning organization dedicated to continuous improvement based on measurable indicators of performance and growth.

We will use a combination of standardized and teacher-developed assessment instruments, including the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). The MAP uses computer-based adaptive assessments to evaluate individual students' proficiency levels. Students' scores are generated immediately, and full performance data with detailed information about specific concepts is available within 24 hours. Using backwards design techniques, teachers will also use state standards to create high quality assessments with each item purposefully aligned to a specific learning objective.

- **Diagnostic Assessments:** We will use diagnostic assessments to determine our incoming students' knowledge, skill levels and interests and to identify signs of special needs as part of our Response To Intervention (RTI) process.
- **Home Visits:** Each summer school staff will visit the homes of newly enrolled students to get to know the family, share school policies and procedures, and conduct informal diagnostic assessments. Using a protocol, they will evaluate topics such as alphabet knowledge, auditory and visual discrimination, counting and computation, and fine motor skills. They will also administer the Home Language Survey as the first step in identifying students eligible for ELL services.
- **MAP:** At the beginning of each year teachers will administer the MAP in literacy and mathematics. The MAP for Primary Grades includes screening assessments that measure the foundational skills of letter and number understanding. The MAP for upper grades covers reading, mathematics and language usage. These assessments will serve as baseline data against which growth will be measured throughout the year.
- **Reading Inventory:** The Principal will select an appropriate assessment tool, such as:

Gates-MacGinitie, Brigance, Degrees of Reading Assessment 2, or Fountas and Pinnell. Teachers and students will set goals for increasing reading levels throughout the year.

- Language Assessment Battery-Revised (LAB-R): Students who score at the beginning, intermediate or advanced levels are deemed limited English proficient and eligible for ESL services.
- Formative Assessments: Teachers will be expected to identify formative assessments in their lesson plans and conduct regular checks for understanding during instruction. Students will also be taught how to use formative feedback to maximize their own learning.
- Questioning: Teachers will be trained to use appropriately rigorous levels of questioning based on Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge to ascertain students' content knowledge and conceptual understanding.
- Checklists: Teachers will develop grade-wide checklists to identify student mastery of specific skills. MAP includes skills checklist reading tests and skills checklist mathematics tests. These tests extend student assessment beyond the screening tests and are used to inform instruction relative to the skills of phonological awareness, phonics, number sense, and computation.
- Observation: Teachers will be expected to document anecdotal evidence of student learning, especially through interactions during one-on-one conferencing and small group instruction.
- Rubrics: With guidance from instructional leaders, teachers will develop grade-wide rubrics to evaluate student work, especially writing and projects.
- Computer-Based Assessments: One of the criteria for selecting computer-based content providers is built-in assessments that offer immediate feedback. This allows both students and teachers to determine mastery and pace instruction appropriately. Moreover, parents can monitor students' learning and administrators can evaluate programs and teachers.
- Benchmark Assessments: Teachers will administer benchmark assessments to measure progress towards goals.
- Reading Inventory: Teachers will use quarterly reading inventories to measure student progress in reading levels. Students identified through the RTI process for Tier 2 and 3 interventions may be assessed more frequently.
- Writing Prompts: As part of our writing program teachers will develop grade-wide writing prompts and use rubrics to evaluate mastery of skills.
- MAP: The MAP uses an equal interval RIT scale, which provides student performance levels regardless of grade level and allows evaluation of growth over time. In addition to baseline assessments at the beginning of the year, MAP tests will be administered quarterly in mathematics and literacy to measure progress towards goals.
- Benchmark Tests: In other subjects and based on our curriculum maps and scope and sequences, teachers will create benchmark assessments to evaluate student mastery of content in each subject, including familiarity with grade specific literature, poetry, speeches, sayings and phrases, historical events, geography, and mathematical and scientific concepts.
- Summative Assessments: Students will be regularly evaluated on their mastery of skills and knowledge as defined by state standards and the Core Knowledge Sequence.
- Unit Tests: Teachers will use assessments provided with curriculum programs and/or develop their own assessments to determine mastery of unit objectives. Emphasis will be

place on performance-based assessments that require students to demonstrate mastery of skills and content knowledge.

- MAP: At the end of the year students will take the MAP tests to evaluate growth over the course of the school year and for comparison of year to year progress.

5. A description of the public charter school assessment plan to obtain student performance data, which includes how the data will be used to monitor and improve achievement and how program effectiveness will be measured over a specified period of time. Also provide benchmark data on how student achievement will be measured and how these data will be established and documented in the first year of operation and how the data will be measured over each year of the term of the charter as approved by the local school board. The benchmark data should address targets for student improvement to be met in each year.

**Data Collection and Analysis:** The Principal and Student Achievement Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating the administration of assessments with most of the implementation delegated to classroom and learning support teachers. The Blended-learning Manager will assist with incorporating data into the Hybrid Learning Management System (HLMS). In addition, the MAP provides a Dynamic Reporting Suite that allows administrators and teachers to examine individual students, classes and school-wide performance. Explicit training will be provided to teachers on how to properly administer assessments, collect data, analyze results and develop action plans. Grade level teams will be expected to conduct formal “data-dives” monthly and create concrete action plans.

With students spending so much time on computers, a tremendous amount of data will be generated. One reason we chose the HLMS is the teacher dashboard, which provides robust data collection, analysis and reporting capabilities to support action. It aggregates data from an assortment of computer-based assessments, as well as any external or teacher-created assessments administered by the school. Moreover, it will be a standards-based system, meaning assessments will measure explicit skills and knowledge that can be discretely analyzed.

Consequently, item and error analysis as well as disaggregation will be employed to:

- a) Identify topics that students have not mastered and will need to be re-taught,
- b) Identify struggling students who need remediation or advanced students who need enrichment,
- c) Identify performance by class to determine the efficacy of individual teachers,
- d) Evaluate overall program elements, such as the curriculum and professional development.

External assessments will be selected based on their validity and reliability with status norms on grade level samples of at least 20,000 students per grade. These samples were randomly drawn from a test records pool of 5.1 million students, from over rigorous post-stratification procedures, and were then used to maximize the degree to which both status and growth norms are representative of the U.S. school-age population. In order to ensure the validity of internal assessments, school leaders will examine the correlation between teacher-designed assessments and grades as well as the power of their results to accurately predict student performance on the

state and other standardized tests. Our collaboration with Junyo, a data analytics organization, will also yield an assessment engine that automatically serves students a third-party assessment to verify mastery of concepts when a digital program reports that a student has completed a lesson successfully. This will give school staff confidence in the accuracy of their data dashboard, an assurance that has been lacking in blended-learning schools to date. Instructional leaders will also work closely with teachers to increase reliability of assessments through norming activities such as collaboratively evaluating student work together using rubrics and collecting anchor papers and projects to define proficiency levels.

Use of Results: Studies have found that the most difficult part of using data is “linking it to an appropriate intervention. The challenge is not to provide more of the same, but instead to provide different instructional strategies...” (Armstrong & Anthes). Here is how we envision stakeholders using assessment results:

**Teachers:**

- Identify students’ specific learning challenges early by assessing their mastery of specific standards and objectives.
- Quickly drill down to identify concrete skills deficits.
- Create lesson plans designed specifically to remedy deficits and accelerate learning.
- Organize and rearrange flexible small group instruction to meet students’ needs.
- Select computer programs and lessons to meet identified needs of students.
- Facilitate communication between teachers and parents.
- Monitor progress of struggling students in RTI process and revise intervention plans.
- Enhance collaboration among teachers.

**School Leaders:**

- Evaluate and hold accountable teachers and other staff.
- Evaluate and improve programs, e.g., curriculum, instruction and assessment.
- Facilitate communication between teachers, intervention staff, administrators and parents.
- Monitor the RTI process and ensure students are placed in appropriate interventions.
- Enable Learning Support Team to identify students for referral to CSE for evaluation, change of IEP or decertification.
- Monitor efficacy of services and interventions for students with disabilities and English language learners.
- Identify school and individual teacher’s needs and guide implementation of staff development program.

Leadership, teaching staff, professional development, parent partnerships, and continuous review of the school culture...all these factors play a key role in creating an effective and superior school.

The school director sets the tone for the school. In addition to running the school, which entails oversight responsibilities for operations, business, finance, development, facilities, and public relations, the school director will be the chief educational leader who guides the instruction staff

and development of curriculum. This multi-dimensional person, steeped in emotional intelligence, is the face of the school.

“The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers.” Accordingly, the hiring process for teachers will be rigorous. The Academy will recruit from the top third of each college’s cohort and from reputable schools that nourish scholars with the knowledge and skills The Academy wants to instill in its students. If needed, a national search for teachers will be undertaken. The Academy teachers will be trained using student performance data to inform their teaching, and their own performance will be judged, in part, on the academic and social growth of their students.

Professional development will be a critical component of the Academy, with a goal of preserving the fidelity of the school’s instructional program and creating an adult learning community. All instructional staff will be supported in the methods, practices, and content that characterizes the Academy and distinguishes it from other schools. An emphasis on strong interpersonal relationships and a sustained focus on teaching and learning will be at the core of the Academy professional development. The Academy will encourage parents to be partners in their child’s education. Staff will promote a parent/family atmosphere. They will foster positive relationships and dedication to the child’s education and the mission of the school. The goals for parents are to actively support and model the school’s code of conduct and work ethic, to attend parent/teacher conferences and school events, and to send their child to school on time and prepared to learn. To grow the home/school partnership, the Academy will sponsor free workshops on topics of interest to their children.

Finally, a school system is only as good as its ability to reflect, assess, and learn from its successes and failures. This process includes all the stakeholders in the school community. It will be an ongoing journey that makes use of informal checklists, detailed reviews at logical ending points (the end of a teaching unit or year-end curriculum review, for example), goal setting, and pointed conversations and group discussions. An essential component in this process is the Academy’s mid-year and end-of-year parent evaluations, in which parents will weigh in on the learning environment, quality of instruction, support provided to children, and overall academic achievement. The result of the information gathering, reflection, and assessment: action that leads to continuous improvement in the Academy’s quest to create a vibrant learning organization that produces young scholars of outstanding competence.

**Data-Driven Programs and Instruction:** The Academy will engage in the rigorous assessment of students ingrained in the curriculum in order to drive curriculum and supplementary programming. The assessment data will provide evidence of student achievement for making a judgment about student competence or program effectiveness. State test, District bench-mark, common assessment, and classroom assessment will determine program effectiveness and identify students meeting performance standards. It can be used to develop programs and interventions for groups or individuals, identify program needs, and assist with revising teaching plans for future lessons. It will plan and provide feedback to students, and guide self-assessment and change in instruction, as teachers analyze data and collaborate in the professional learning community. In addition, students will also play an active and important role in understanding their data. Students will be able to establish learning and performance goals, self-assess their current level of understanding, and participate in selecting strategies that will assist them in

reaching goals. The inclusion of students in interpreting their results and encouraging them to be involved in the decision-making process also maximizes both motivation and achievement. A comprehensive system to review data, instructional strategies, including achievement, attendance, behavior/suspensions, and parent and community engagement will play an important role in assuring programs and instructional strategies are data-driven. Professional Learning Communities are defined as collaborative teams whose members work *interdependently* to achieve *common goals* linked to the purpose of learning, with a focus on a commitment to the learning of each student. Professional Development scheduled by the principal will help staff understand how the PLC helps to build a collaborative culture that benefits both staff and students. However, PLC's are not only successful due to the training, it becomes successful by doing. The School Improvement Planning Team will identify the elements of the PLC at Bertha B. Williams Academy. Each PLC will focus on learning establishing a clear purpose, goals to accomplish and strategies to meet those goals. The teams will create systematic interventions to support a climate for learning, and use relevant data to improve results. A data picture of our school will include Indicators recording Student Achievement Results, Student Engagement, Discipline, Climate and Culture, and Demographic Data. The PLC will be aligned with our mission, vision, values and goals that established the following:

- Why we exist
- What we must become in order to accomplish our fundamental purpose, values and fundamental goal to create high achievers
- How we must behave to create the school that will achieve our purpose
- How we will know if what we are doing daily is making a difference in the lives of our students, parents, and community?

The Professional Learning Community will become a collaborative approach offering a dialogue that identifies areas of focus, align instructional components, and planned common assessments. The data from the pre and post-assessments will provide a culture that encourages a team approach to analyze students' results. This can create an instructional plan and identify monitoring approaches. Reflecting on the data results can be used to guide the next steps or simply an adjustment of the instructional plan. In addition, itemized student data analysis will be used to inform and differentiate to meet individualized student needs. Criteria for proficiency will be determined at the professional learning community for a given instructional unit. Staff will target non-proficient reading and math skills using cooperative learning processes and designed learning centers with a focus on employing differentiating instruction.

As stated in the application, common preps and built-in planning time will allow the teams to analyze all data centered on their particular PLC priorities; however, the two common questions at the Academy will always be "What is it we want our students to learn?" and "How will we know when each student has learned it?" Systems data such as attendance, behavior, suspension, retention, school climate, and parent engagement will be collected by both the principal and classroom teachers, and reviewed a minimum of twice a semester. This data is fundamentally connected to student achievement and drives the continuing dialogue needed to adjust instructional and system strategies, reflect, communicate, collaborate, evaluate, and celebrate. As the documentation is collected electronically by the administrator, profiles will be available for the PLC teams to guide their focus observations and reflective conversations.

**Communication of Data to Parents & Stakeholders:** The Academy will operate with as much transparency as possible so that parents and students are kept regularly informed about both the academic progress which has been achieved, and those elements of education which still require attainment.

On an individual basis, the Academy welcomes parents interested in knowing the progress and accomplishments of their children and parents may schedule parent-teacher-student conferences at any time with appropriate notice. During these conferences, teachers will inform the parents and the student if present, about the student's progress toward achieving grade level proficiency, and any or all of the personalized goals established by the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) at the start of the school year. In addition, mid-year parent conferences will be scheduled for all parents so that parents and other appropriate stakeholders can be informed of the student's individual progress.

In order to keep the community informed about the progress of the Academy in meeting its academic and non-academic goals, the Academy will issue an annual progress report that details the accomplishments of the Academy and its students. Student information will be aggregated by grade level. This annual progress report will be published at the end of every school year, after the end-of-year assessments have been received, analyzed, and summarized. The annual progress report will be published on the Academy's website, and will also be available in printed version in the Academy's main office. Furthermore, this annual progress report's availability will be announced in the local newspaper, encouraging all members of the larger community to inform themselves about the achievements of the Academy, and the continuing challenges which remain.

Parent complaints, concerns, and questions regarding the Academy's progress will be welcomed by the Academy's principal, and addressed in conference. If the principal's response is unsatisfactory, parents are welcome to approach the Board at a regularly scheduled Board meeting. The Academy's Board members will receive such comments or questions during the open forum period of the Board's agenda, and the Board will decide whether further action is warranted. The Board may decide to form a committee to review the issues that were raised, or may designate an administrator to investigate and make a report at the next Board meeting. The Board acknowledges its obligation to be receptive and supportive of all students, parents, faculty and staff, and members of the community.

6. The timeline for achievement of pupil performance standards, in accordance with the Virginia SOL.

The Academy recognizes that not all students can learn as rapidly, nor acquire all the grade level student learning objectives in as timely a manner as identified by the Virginia SOL. For this reason, the Academy has established the Individual Education Plan (IEP) to customize an educational plan that is specific to the developmental needs of each student. The IEP's purpose is to challenge each student to progress as rapidly as individually possible, with the overall goal of achieving grade level proficiency in each subject area. But we also recognize the need to be judicious and humane with our expectations for students, to build the confidence students need to know they can achieve academically and socially, and once this confidence in learning has been

established, personal and academic/social growth can advance at a more rapid pace. Our Academy's timeline is based on the abilities of each child as measured from where they are when they start the new school year. It is unlikely that a fifth grade child performing at a second grade reading level will be grade level proficient by year end; the Academy will do all it can to advance this child's reading abilities...but cannot be held accountable for the lack of skill development prior to admission. What the Academy can promise, however, is that student IEPs will be rigorously set with the full knowledge of the student and parents, and the teacher will be responsible, with the student and parents, for achieving the year's high standards of personal goals.

7. An explanation of the corrective actions to be taken in the event that pupil performance at the public charter school falls below the standards outlined in the Virginia Board of Education's Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, (8 VAC 20-131-310).

As explained, every student will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that clearly delineates each student's annual expectations for skill acquisition and performance in every subject area in the Virginia SOL. The learning objectives and goals in the IEP are carefully set to assure that each student will be thoroughly challenged during the course of the school year, but not to the point of institutionalizing failure.

The Academy anticipates there will be students who will face both academic and social challenges in their classes, and for this reason the Student Success Team (SST) is established as a review team in support of students who will need additional support. The SST is composed of the teacher in whose class the student needs review, the parent, the student, and any specialist (nurse, psychologist, therapist, interpreter...) whose presence is considered important for determining positive and appropriate solutions to the issues faced by the child. The Academy principal will lead the SST. The SST will have protocols to follow that require the team to review the child's academic and social history, and prepare, in a meeting with the child and parent (if the child is too young, the child will be welcomed to the meeting toward the end when conclusions have been determined), the nature of the concerns, a short review of the history related to the concerns, notations of the child's strengths, potential solutions to the concerns, selection of solutions, and a task and responsibility timeline for remediating the concerns.

The Academy, by continuing its philosophy of customized education for each student, will be effective in maintaining pupil performance and achieving the objectives and goals of each student's Individual Education Plan, and thereby maintaining the Academy's abilities to keep its promise of progressive education with solid results.

8. Information regarding the minimum and maximum enrollment per grade for each year during the term of the charter contract, as well as class size and structure for each grade served by the public charter school.

The proposed grade levels, age range, and additional enrollment data is as follows:

Year	Grades	Minimum classes	Maximum classes	Number of students	Minimum enrollment	Maximum enrollment
2015	K-5	8	12	22	176	264
2016	K-5	12	24	22	264	528
2017	K-5	12	24	22	264	528
2018	K-5	12	24	22	264	528
2019	K-5	12	24	22	264	528

Classes will be limited to 22 students or less with one certified teacher per class. It is anticipated that the Academy will open with two kindergarten classes and two first-grade classes, with one class each for grades two through five. This will establish the basis for minimum enrollment. Should demand dictate, two classes will be added to all grade levels, forming the basis for the maximum enrollment. Incoming 2015 kindergarten students will need to be the appropriate age in accordance with state law. Students enrolled in grade 5 may be either 10 or 11 years old. Consideration will also be given to older students who have been retained in their grade level.

9. Information regarding the proposed calendar and a sample daily schedule, including any plans to open prior to Labor Day and how and when a waiver to open early will be submitted by the local school board to the Virginia Board of Education, under § 22.1-79.1, of the *Code of Virginia*.

The school calendar shall at all times comply with Virginia state law. The Academy's school calendar shall exceed the minimum requirements. The Academy's Board will approve the school calendar for each academic year and shall submit a copy in accordance with any reporting requirement. It is anticipated that the school calendar for the 2015-2016 school year will be scheduled and submitted based on the State of Virginia's calendar requirements for the school year. Professional Development, Teacher Planning Days, Parent Teacher Conferences, and District-Wide mandatory Professional Days will be included in the school calendar based on district expectations. Classes shall be conducted on Monday through Friday of each school week except as noted on the calendar for holidays or professional development. Saturdays will be non-mandatory half days to provide tutoring, academic enrichment, project development time, extra-curricular activities and cultural enrichment. Legal holidays shall be observed by the Academy, and these days will be indicated as non-school days in the school calendar. In addition, at least four days during each academic year (32 hours) shall be devoted specifically to the professional development of staff. These days shall be indicated on the calendar. School will not begin prior to Labor Day.

**School Day Schedule:** The school day schedule will be structured to exceed the required number of instructional days and hours required by the Code of Virginia. The school day schedule shall be submitted in accordance with any reporting requirement. The school day shall begin at 8:00 a.m. each day and end at 5:00 p.m. providing 7.5 hours of instruction, one half-hour for lunch and two one-half hour breaks for recess. Additionally, the building will remain open until at least 6:00 p.m. with one hour provided for dinner. The schedule shall provide 226 days totaling 1,695 hours of instruction for the academic year, which exceeds the current minimum requirement. There will be four breaks at the end of every quarter, usually one week in duration. Both the school calendar and the school day schedule are designed with the purpose of advancing student achievement and reducing the academic loss that is known to occur during the summer months.

10. A description of plans for identifying and successfully serving: a) students with disabilities; b) English Language Learners (ELLs); c) academically at-risk students; and d) gifted and talented students. Such plans must include the extent of the involvement of the local school board in providing such services and must comply with state and federal laws and regulations.

Because all students will receive an IEP, every student will be identified for their particular differentiated needs. Whether a student is an English Language Learner, a homeless student, an economically disadvantaged student, a gifted student, a student who is not performing at grade level, or a special education student, each student's level of educational ability, particular family circumstances, and potential for motivation and accelerated instruction will be closely considered. The Academy Board recognizes that education is most effective when each student is receiving exactly what they need. Our teachers will rely on each student's individual assessment to determine the best course of instruction, realizing that the district and state standards are intended outcomes. We believe that once a student has his or her academic, physical, and emotional needs served, achievement of district and state learning objectives can be rapidly accomplished.

For those students who are assessed as requiring special education, the Academy's special education program seamlessly integrates into the mainstream classroom. Frequent, regular professional development and support for all instructional staff includes special education strategies and accommodations.

A Student Success Team (SST) will identify and plan alternative instructional strategies for students experiencing academic and/or behavioral difficulties. The SST includes teachers, parents, administrators, the school counselor, school psychologist and special education personnel. Intervention begins in the classroom with both standard based and research based instruction, and individual interventions specifically designed to meet each child's needs. The SST follows a problem-solving framework to address students with academic and behavioral difficulties that do not respond to whole class/small group strategies. The evaluation and placement of students in special education programming complies with federal and state regulations and is initiated immediately following referral from an appropriate staff member or the parent.

An initial parent conference is conducted to inform or inquire of parents of the reason for the referral, procedures that will be used in the evaluation, and the rights and responsibilities of the parent. An information release will be obtained at this time, as well as any information pertinent to the review. An evaluation will occur without a parent only in one of the following circumstances: the parent waives his/her right to attend (in writing), or the parent has neglected to respond to documented communication efforts. Parents will receive a copy of "Procedural Safeguards" upon initial evaluation, at each subsequent Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting, upon re-evaluation, upon receipt of a request for mediation or due process hearing, and/or when a change in the student's designation occurs.

Research proves that uninformed parents are often left out of the education process, while consistent parent involvement has a direct positive impact on student achievement. This is important in the advancement of students with special needs. As a result, strategies will be employed by the Academy to promote and encourage parent involvement. These strategies will include at a minimum: written information in an understandable way, a variety of means to communicate with teachers, parent training about special education issues, information that offers support to parents of students with disabilities, and encouragement to the parent(s) to participate in the decision-making process.

Students will be evaluated by a licensed vendor or on-site, licensed professional and subsequent recommendations will be immediately implemented. Any student who is designated as a student with eligible disabilities will have an initial Individualize Education Program (IEP) meeting and begin services with the special education teacher to ensure IEP compliance and monitoring of student progress. IEPs will be developed according to federal and state regulations. The IEP includes annual goals, necessary related services and environments, supports, accommodations and parameters for participation in state and local assessments. IEP meetings, which include one of the student's general education teachers, the parents, the special education teacher, relevant service providers, and an administrator, are held based on the IEPs re-evaluation and review dates as new developments in a student's IEP require, and as needed based on classroom performance. An interpreter will be provided at no cost to families whose home language is not English. The IEP is closely monitored by the special education teacher and implemented by all staff members. Professional development and ongoing support from the special education teacher facilitates the involvement of all instructional staff in the progress tracking of all special education students. The Academy shall provide services to special education students according to their Individualized Education Plans (IEP), and all IEP goals, objectives, accommodations and support services will be met.

11. A description of the learning environment (such as classroom-based or independent study), class size and structure, curriculum overview, teaching methods, and scientifically research-based instructional strategies to be used at the public charter school to ensure student achievement.

The Bertha B. Williams Academy will establish a learning environment in which all students are expected to become motivated lifelong learners dedicated to achieving academic excellence. Students develop socially and emotionally through collaborative activities and clear written and

oral communication with their peers, teachers and other adults in a safe and nurturing environment under the supportive guidance of the faculty.

The Academy's plan to create a positive, student-centered learning environment is the responsibility of the Academy's principal, who will hire the faculty and staff best suited to develop, support and expand the following criteria for a positive learning environment:

1. **Student Outcomes:** Students will master the subject matter and grade level standards of the Virginia SOL Curriculum Frameworks and the Common Core State Standards. These competencies are the foundation of the school's academic goals and students who are proficient in these skills and behaviors will become successful citizens in their communities.
2. **Collaboration:** The Academy's students will learn the value of collaborative work, and accept their assigned responsibilities seriously. Students learn how to solve problems in a team environment, which builds a supportive learning environment.
3. **Critical Thinking:** Students exhibit the ability to think about situations in a critical manner by observing situations from several perspectives, using their skills to organize and analyze information before formulating a creative response. Students know how to employ a range of strategies to achieve innovative results.
4. **Communication:** A healthy learning environment necessitates good communication between every member of the school community. Students will exhibit clear communication in their written and verbal expressions, and will be supported in a friendly, nonjudgmental and helpful manner by their peers. Project Based Learning is an effective tool for teaching strong communication with the opportunity for employing a variety of media.
5. **Character:** Students develop strong character by understanding the key principles for good citizenship, and exhibit integrity, honesty, kindness and compassion for every school member. Students demonstrate their courage and leadership in their working and social relationships, and accept personal responsibility for their behavior.
6. **Personal motivation:** Students learn the importance of setting clear and challenging personal goals and objectives, and experience the satisfaction of achieving their goals and objectives through commitment and personal desire. Students consistently empower themselves by designing their educational program and improving their performance through self-reflection.
7. **The Accomplished Learner:** Students view learning as a lifelong experience, and desire the satisfaction of improving themselves and earning the rewards of their dedication. Students recognize the value of working independently and as a collaborative member of a group, confronting challenges and triumphing over adversity.

The principal will meet with teachers to ensure that these criteria are being supported in the classrooms so that this positive learning environment will be immediately established at the start of the school year and reinforced regularly through student recognition.

The Academy offers a collaborative and non-competitive learning environment that builds, encourages, and secures a strong and sustainable community of creative and compassionate learners committed to the advancement of their own education and supportive of each other.

In addition, the learning environment at the Academy will employ the Museum learning model. Research about the Museum learning model follows:

Constructivism: Museum learning is based on the constructivist philosophy of education which states that a learner learns through constructing knowledge through experiences. Constructivist theory is recognized as having started with the work of Jean Piaget, the Swiss developmental psychologist known for his studies on the nature of how knowledge is acquired.

Constructivism usually appears as the underlying philosophy for education for those instructional practices focused on activity learning, or learning by doing. This pedagogical strategy encourages the learner to grow educationally through exploration and discovery. This genre of instruction has become very popular in the last two decades as educational theorists have seen the value of learning that is based on the learner's intrinsic motivation to understand his or her environment, which is different than the traditional learning model of teachers instructing passive students who merely absorb and reflect what they are told.

With constructivism, learning is an active process in which the learner uses their senses to examine, evaluate, and educate themselves about the object of learning. As every educator knows, every theme, as well as every artifact, can engage a learner in every subject area. For example, the study of a Chinese vase can activate a student's learning in the areas of language, mathematics, the arts, science, history, and social studies. In addition, human interest in the areas of health, technology, and politics are also essential elements to a study of this nature.

The act of constructing meaning depends on the capacity of the learner, and it is the teacher's role, as facilitator, to use their students' innate curiosity as the gateway for inspiring intrinsic motivation for learning, and to model how to engage with objects from the human or natural world, and guide their students with the intellectual, emotional and intuitive tools that reveal the range and depths of the educational experience, and the subsequent maturity of this experience into wisdom.

Project Based Learning: Museum learning also incorporates the theory of Project Based Learning (PBL), which is, obviously, activity-based learning. The roots of Project Based Learning are commonly considered to have originated with John Dewey who proposed in his book, "My Pedagogical Creed", 1897, that the teacher is not supposed to impose ideas on students but is to assist the child with "expressive or constructive activities..." Dewey recognized the value of activity learning as opposed to rote, teacher-led instruction.

Thom Markam, a psychologist, educator and proponent of Project Based Learning, in his book of the same name, 2011, states "PBL integrates knowing and doing. Students learn knowledge and elements of the core curriculum, but also apply what they know to solve authentic problems and produce results that matter. PBL students take advantage of digital tools to produce high quality, collaborative products. PBL refocuses education on the student, not the curriculum--a shift mandated by the global world, which rewards intangible assets such as drive, passion, creativity,

empathy, and resiliency. These cannot be taught out of a textbook, but must be activated through experience." (Markham, T., 2011. Project Based Learning. *Teacher Librarian*, 39(2), 38-42.)

*Phyllis C. Blumenfeld*, a professor at the University of Michigan, School of Education, in a study that appeared in *Educational Psychologist*, 1991, stated "Project Based learning is a comprehensive perspective focused on teaching by engaging students in investigation. Within this framework, students pursue solutions to nontrivial problems by asking and refining questions, debating ideas, making predictions, designing plans and/or experiments, collecting and analyzing data, drawing conclusions, communicating their ideas and findings to others, asking new questions, and creating artifacts." (Blumenfeld et al. 1991, *Educational Psychologist*, 26(3&4) 369-398 "Motivating Project Based Learning: Sustaining the Doing, Supporting the Learning." Phyllis C. Blumenfeld, Elliot Soloway, Ronald W. Marx, Joseph S. Krajcik, Mark Guzdial, and Annemarie Palincsar.)

Blumenfeld et al. formed the following conclusion, "Projects in which students pursue long-term investigations of a significant question and produce artifacts that represent answers to those questions have the potential to motivate students and help them better understand subject matter content. The idea of Project Based Learning certainly is not new; however, considerable advances in knowledge about motivation, learning, teachers, and classrooms increase the possibility of success now." (Blumenfeld et al. 1991, *Educational Psychologist*, 26(3&4) 369-398 "Motivating Project Based Learning: Sustaining the Doing, Supporting the Learning." Phyllis C. Blumenfeld, Elliot Soloway, Ronald W. Marx, Joseph S. Krajcik, Mark Guzdial, and Annemarie Palincsar.)

As you can see, Project Based Learning is an important influence that motivates students with the desire for learning, and through that intrinsic motivation, the desire for knowledge and the will to overcome learning obstacles, an essential outcome for promoting continued educational success.

**Inquiry Based Learning:** Another important feature of the Academy's pedagogy is Inquiry Based Learning. "Inquiry Based Learning poses questions or problems that require students to make observations, conduct research and gather information, develop methods for experimentation, collect data, analyze and interpret the data, outline possible explanations, and make predictions for further study." (Bell, T., Urhahne, D., Schanze, S., and Ploetzner, R. 2010. Collaborative inquiry learning: Models, tools, and challenges. *International Journal of Science Education*. 3(1), 349-377.)

**Benefits of Inquiry Based Learning.** "We teach a subject not to produce little living libraries on that subject, but rather to get a student to think...for himself, to consider matters,...to take part in the process of knowledge-getting. Knowing is a process, not a product." (Jerome Bruner, *Toward a Theory of Instruction*, 1966, p. 72).

Robert Slavin, the Director of the Center for Research and Reform in Education at Johns Hopkins University, wrote, "Inquiry learning is a student-centered approach that allows students to have more control over their process of knowledge-getting. It arouses students' curiosities and motivates students to continue to seek until they find answers."

In a report at the 2010 American Association for Agricultural Education, a study was presented entitled “The Impact of Inquiry Based Learning on the Academic Achievement of Middle School Students”. The conclusions of the study indicate the type of academic growth that is possible through Inquiry Based Learning, and which the Bertha B. Williams Academy is eager to achieve:

“This study ... found that in all units, students on average experienced over 40% growth from the pre-assessment to the post assessment. Academic growth is important because it demonstrates that learning has taken place. The sixth grade students averaged over 60% growth in the inquiry-based unit which shows a significant increase in students understanding of fractional operations. This growth could be due to the nature of Inquiry Based Learning and the way it encourages students to “discover or construct information” by themselves. In turn this information is more meaningful to students and they are better able to retain it, which would support the theoretical framework of the study. The constructivist methods used in this study supported Dewey’s (1902) suggestions for more learner-centered and more meaningful approach to learning.” (2010 Western AAAE Research Conference Proceedings; The Impact of Inquiry Based Learning on the Academic Achievement of Middle School Students; Christy Witt, Jonathan Ulmer Texas Tech University.)

Here is a further finding from the study: “This study found that the constructivist approach to instruction yielded increased student academic growth in both the sixth and seventh grade courses, with the sixth grade students growth scores having a statistical significant difference between the mean scores for the two instructional methods (traditional versus inquiry-based).” (2010 Western AAAE Research Conference Proceedings; The Impact of Inquiry Based Learning on the Academic Achievement of Middle School Students; Christy Witt, Jonathan Ulmer Texas Tech University.)

Here is yet another example of the power of Inquiry Based Learning: “Research shows that such inquiry-based teaching is not so much about seeking the right answer but about developing inquiring minds, and it can yield significant benefits. For example, in the 1995 School Restructuring Study, conducted at the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools by Fred Newmann and colleagues at the University of Wisconsin, 2,128 students in twenty-three schools were found to have significantly higher achievement on challenging tasks when they were taught with inquiry-based teaching, showing that involvement leads to understanding. These practices were found to have a more significant impact on student performance than any other variable, including student background and prior achievement.” (“Powerful Learning: What We Know About Teaching for Understanding”, a book reviewing research on innovative classroom practices, by Linda Darling-Hammond, Brigid Barron, P. David Pearson, Alan H. Schoenfeld, Elizabeth K. Stage, Timothy D. Zimmerman, Gina N. Cervetti, and Jennifer L. Tilson, published in 2008 by Jossey-Bass. Published with support from The George Lucas Educational Foundation.)

The evidence seems clear that an educational program built upon constructivism, which incorporates Project Based Learning and Inquiry Based Learning is effective with motivating students and with achieving significant academic gains.

In our review of the evidence for the museum learning concept, and our own rationale for employing this pedagogy at the Academy, we would like to draw your attention to the Normal

Park Museum Magnet School in Chattanooga, Tennessee as an example of how effective a museum learning school can be.

Established in 2002, Normal Park has been the recipient of the Magnet School of America Excellence Award, and the J.F. Kennedy School of Distinction in Arts Education. In addition, Normal Park regularly scores higher than other schools in math, reading and science on the state standardized tests. The school also records higher attendance than the state average. Here are the awards and recognitions Normal Park has achieved:

- *Ronald P. Simpson Award*, Magnet Schools of America (2005), "America's Number One Magnet School"
- *Magnet School of Excellence Award*, Magnet Schools of America (2005-2012)
- Magnet Schools of America's *National Principal of the Year* - Jill Levine (2012)
- 1st Place in East Tennessee for Highest Value Added Scores, *Educational Resource Foundation* (2012)
- Featured on the Edutopia website, a George Lucas Educational Foundation, as a "School that works" (2014)
- National Council of PTA's *Hearst Award* for outstanding parent involvement (2009)
- *J.F. Kennedy School of Distinction in Arts Education* (2008)

The museum learning model is an effective pedagogy for initiating, sustaining and inspiring student educational motivation when incorporated with Projects Based Learning and Inquiry Based Learning. The Bertha B. Williams Academy anticipates similar success in Hampton Roads Public City Schools, developing a community of excited learners, and supportive, enthusiastic parents.

12. A description of co-curricular or extracurricular programs to be offered and how they will be funded and delivered.

The Academy will create an after-school program consisting of a variety of clubs and sports teams. This program will be a combination of activities designed by the Academy, and activities coordinated through collaboration with community agencies. Students will have the option of participating in an intramural sports program that may include soccer, volleyball, basketball, softball, and baseball. In addition, parents and community members will be asked to volunteer their time and offer after-school activity-clubs based on their personal interests, such as cooking, remote control vehicles, hobby train layouts, etc. A mentoring and tutoring program staff voluntarily by college students the local area will also be implemented.

If applicable, the following components should be addressed by the proposed public charter school:

13. If the public charter school plans to utilize virtual learning in its educational program, identify the virtual learning source, describe how virtual learning will be used and estimate how many students may participate.

As you know, the Academy is offering a museum learning program for all its students. As previously explained, the Academy's museum learning program will make visits to local and regional museums, and invite educators and docents from the local and regional museums to visit the school and give presentations which have merit for the academic focus of the various classrooms. In addition to these field trips and guest presentations is the use of virtual learning that will be conducted in the Academy's classrooms. Under the guidance of the teacher, students will visit the websites of museums around the world, as appropriate for student investigation and study. For example, a class or group of students who are interested in studying the history of radio, could choose to visit the online websites of the SPARK Museum of Electrical Inventions in Washington state; the Museum of Television and Radio in New York City; the British Vintage Wireless and Television Museum in London, Britain; the Kurrajong Radio Museum, New South Wales, Australia; the Radiomuseum in Lucerne, Switzerland; and the Japan Radio Museum in Nagano, Japan. The use of the Internet and virtual learning will be an exceptional application of a significant educational tool in the Academy's museum learning theme.

In addition, as explained elsewhere in this application, a variety of virtual learning materials will be employed as appropriate for student academic advancement, as prescribed in each students Individual Education Plan.

14. A general description of any alternative accreditation plans, in accordance with the Virginia Board of Education's Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (8 VAC 20-131-280), that the public charter school would request the local school board to submit to the Virginia Board of Education for approval.

Not applicable.

15. A general description of any alternative accreditation plan for serving students with disabilities, in accordance with the Virginia Board of Education's Regulations Governing Special Education Programs For Children With Disabilities in Virginia (8 VAC 20-80-40) that the public charter school would request the local school board to submit to the Virginia Board of Education for approval.

Not applicable.

## Logistical Components VII-X

**VII. Enrollment Process:** Describe the enrollment process that is consistent with all federal and state laws and regulations and constitutional provisions prohibiting discrimination that are applicable to public schools and with any court-ordered desegregation plan in effect for the school division or, in the case of a regional public charter school, in effect for any of the relevant school divisions. (Section 22.1-212.6, Code of Virginia) The following components must be addressed:

1. A description of the lottery process to be used to determine the public charter school enrollment.

Lottery: If applications for a specific grade level exceed capacity, a lottery will be held at a Board meeting on March 26, 2015 to determine admission to that grade level. Preference will be given to a sibling of a student already enrolled. All completed and accepted applications submitted during the enrollment period are publicly drawn in random order until grade level capacity is reached; the remainder of applicants is placed on the waiting list. Parents will be notified by letter of a child's admission to the school, or placement on a waiting list. If accepted to the Academy, parents of the accepted student will be notified they have four weeks to complete formal registration. Any student not fully registered within the four weeks automatically releases their seat to the next student on the waiting list at that grade level. Registrations for grade levels with no available space will be put on a waiting list ordered by date and grade.

Enrollment process: Parents who wish to enroll their children in the Academy shall contact the Academy and submit a completed enrollment application, which shall be time and date stamped. If admitted, parents are to complete and submit all forms and provide all required documents, including but not limited to the student's original birth certificate, student's immunization records, student's complete physical examination report, proof of residency, and, if applicable, a copy of the student's IEP (if the student qualifies for special education services), or a copy of the student's 504 Plan if the student is eligible, and a copy of the student's most recent report card from their current school. New parents will attend a new parent orientation, and continued enrollment forms must be completed each year. All parents choosing to withdraw their students are encouraged to give advance notice so the Academy can make preparations for the return of loaned books and materials and maintain accurate school enrollment reports.

2. A lottery process shall also be developed for the establishment of a waiting list for such students for whom space is unavailable.

As spaces become available, they will be offered to the applicants in the order of placement on the waiting list. The Academy will continue to develop its waiting list, organized by grade level, based on submission dates of the applications throughout the school year. The Academy will maintain a current waiting list in the main office. The Academy will include special needs students in its regular lottery.

The waiting list is only valid for one school year, and the Academy will begin a new "enrollment-lottery-waiting list" process each school year. The Academy's description of its enrollment process will include its policy for accepting transfer students during the school year. The Academy will report the number of spaces available (if any), and the number of applications received by the end of the enrollment period organized by grade level.

3. A description of a tailored admission policy that meets the specific mission or focus of the public charter school, if applicable.

Admission to the Academy shall be open to all age-appropriate children for grade levels offered in accordance with the Academy's charter contract without charge for tuition and without discrimination on the basis of intellectual or athletic abilities, measures of achievement or aptitude, disability, status as a handicapped person, homeless status, English proficiency, religion, creed, race, sex, color, national origin or any other basis that would be illegal for an existing school district. Admission shall comply with all applicable federal and state laws. Admission shall be limited to those students who are residents of the state, except a foreign exchange student. The Academy will remove barriers to the enrollment and retention in school of children and youth experiencing homelessness by developing and implementing practices and procedures consistent with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act and applicable state law.

The Academy will ensure that all identified homeless children and unaccompanied youth receive a free and appropriate education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in the Academy. It is the policy of the Board that the Academy develop and implement practices and procedures that control the admission and enrollment of students, including public notice, lottery and random selection drawing to be used when the number of applicants exceed the number of available spaces for grades offered. Detailed application, lottery and admission practices and procedures shall be available to parents and the general public at the school office. The Board will annually approve offered seats and maximum class size of the Academy.

Open Enrollment Period And Notice: The "Open Enrollment Period" is from the first day of school of the current school year until 5:00 p.m. on the last day of business in February of the current school year. Notice of the Open Enrollment. And application process will be designed to inform the persons most likely to be interested in the school. The school will provide notice of open enrollment by (a) printing a legal notice of the enrollment. In a local newspaper of general circulation; (b) mailing a written notice of the Open Enrollment Period, and an application to all families who inquire about school enrollment; and (c) posting a written notice of the Open Enrollment Period at the school. In addition, notice may also be provided by airing a public service announcement on local television or radio. As part of the enrollment process, the school staff will communicate to meet with families, parents and students prior to the first day of school.

Application procedures: Interested parties may obtain applications at:

- The Academy's website
- The offices of the Academy
- Applications will be mailed or faxed to anyone requesting an application by telephone.

Applications for the current school year will be accepted until the end of the current school year and available seats will be filled. Applications for the subsequent school year are received during and after the Open Enrollment Period. If applications received during the Open Enrollment Period exceed offered seats in any grade level (“over-subscribed grades”), a random selection process will take place for all grade levels including under subscribed grade levels. If applications received are fewer than offered seats in each and every grade level (“under-subscribed grades”), all eligible applicants will be accepted and a random selection process will not be conducted.

All applications received after the Open Enrollment Period will not be eligible to participate in the random selection process, and will be added to the end of the accepted list if offered seats are still available after the random selection process, or to the resulting waiting list created at the time of the random selection process. Accepted applicants must confirm that their intent to attend the school within four weeks of acceptance by returning certain initial forms, including an Admissions Form and an Official Release of Records Form. The Academy will send letters to parents reminding them of this obligation in order to enroll their child. The Academy will send all applicants a postcard to inform parents that if the student does not attend the first day of school or call in to request an excused absence by the date and time indicated, the student will forfeit his/her registered status in the Academy and will not be enrolled. The Academy may attempt to call all applicants who have not responded to inquire whether the applicant is still planning to attend. Once students are enrolled and remain enrolled, they will remain eligible to be re-enrolled at the Academy for successive years without having to reenter the random selection process. However, they will be requested to complete a re-enrollment form by the end of the Open Enrollment Period showing intent to re-enroll for the subsequent school year. All applicants on a waiting list must resubmit an application for the following school year during the next Open Enrollment Period.

**Standby Opportunity Plan:** The Standby Opportunity Plan (SOP) is a procedure by which the Academy may decide to revise its waiting list on the first day of school. If the Academy follows this procedure, the Academy will send all applicants on the waiting list a registration card prior to the first day of school. To be included in the SOP, the applicant must return the card to the Academy by 1:00 p.m. on the first day of school, providing phone numbers where the applicant can be reached the first day of school between the times listed on the card. In the event of an offered seat becoming available, the school will attempt to reach the parent participating in the SOP and offer the seat. If the Academy cannot reach the parent at the phone numbers and during the times provided on the card, the Academy will contact the next person on the waiting list who is participating in the SOP. If a student participates in the SOP and a seat is not available for them, they may receive a higher waiting list priority than those students who did not participate.

**Random selection process:** The random selection process shall be open to the public, and the Academy will notify all applicants of the time and place. A neutral third party person will be present during the random selection process. This person will not be related to any school, staff member, anyone applying to the Academy, or any Academy employee. Names will be randomly selected until all offered seats have been filled. Any remaining names will be randomly selected to establish waiting list priority used to fill offered seats prior to and during the school year for which the student applied. After all eligible names have been randomly selected; the Academy

will add the names of applicants who submitted applications after the Open Enrollment Period in the order in which they were received. The random selection process will be video recorded. In the event of any discrepancy, the video recording will be the official record of placement of students.

Class Size and Offered Seats: Class size and offered seats will be recommended by the Academy and submitted to the Academy's Board for approval. In order to make provision for student attrition (re-enrolling students who indicate that they are coming back but did not return on the first day of school) and erosion (new students who have been accepted for offered seats but are absent without excuse on the first day of school), the school may over-subscribe grades. The number of students to be over-subscribed will be determined based on historical and forecasted attrition and erosion. In addition, the number of classrooms may fluctuate in the event the number of students enrolled warrants the increase or decrease in the number of classrooms. In no event will over-subscription, or fluctuations in the number of classrooms, result in a violation of any provision or limit contained within the Academy's charter or applicable law.

4. A timeline for when the lottery process will begin for the first academic year of enrollment and when parents will be notified of the outcome of the lottery process.

Admissions: A timetable for registering and enrolling students will be confirmed by the Board, upon charter school approval. At present, the time frame for the process of recruitment, applications, admissions, notification, and related matters is proposed as follows; since the Academy has not yet been authorized, these dates indicate the normal pattern we would institute:

January 1 to March 16, 2015: The school will disseminate accurate and up-to-date information about the school's educational program, services, amenities, application procedure, and the admissions process through a variety of sources that may include, but are not limited to local newspapers, local radio stations, local public television, open houses at the Academy, the Academy website, direct mail to parents, and community fliers.

During this time applications will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility of students (e.g. appropriate grade levels, non-district applicants, etc.). Parents will be advised of the status of their child's application, student eligibility, and date of final notification.

March 16, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. is the deadline for receiving enrollment applications for the 2015-2016 school year. Parents will be notified by letter of a child's admission to the Academy, or placement on a waiting list. Parents will be notified they have four weeks to complete formal registration. Any student not fully registered within the four weeks releases their seat to the next student on the waiting list at that grade level.

March 17, 2015 to Opening Day: The ongoing registration of students continues throughout the spring and summer until all seats are filled. Registrations for grade levels with no available space will be put on a waiting list ordered by date and grade.

5. A description of any enrollment-related policies and procedures that address special situations, such as the enrollment of siblings and children of faculty and founders and the enrollment of nonresident students, if applicable.

Enrollment preferences: Enrollment preference is first given to currently enrolled students. Next preference is given to the following ordered categories of applicants:

- Siblings of currently enrolled students
- Siblings of students selected in the random selection process
- All remaining applicants

If permitted by law, other enrollment preferences may be granted. If a student is selected for a grade level that still has offered seats available and the student has a sibling applying for a grade that no longer has offered seats available, the student will be accepted for his/her grade level and the student's sibling will be placed on the waiting list for his/her grade level with sibling preference. Therefore, while sibling preference applies, siblings are not guaranteed a seat.

6. An explanation of how the applicant will ensure that, consistent with the public charter school's mission and purpose, community outreach has been undertaken so that special populations are aware of the formation of the public charter school and that enrollment is open to all students residing in the school division where the public charter school is located or in school divisions participating in a regional charter school.

Recruitment and retention of students is at the heart of the Academy's marketing and publicity initiative. An optimum-sized enrollment provides the ability to build a solid educational program and the flexibility to be innovative. The recruitment plan includes goals and specific expectations and responsibilities for the Board, principal, staff, and community partners. The principal will be the catalyst, actively involved with providing leadership and support to volunteer efforts.

The Academy realizes that our program will rely heavily on personal contact. Visits to the Academy are at the heart of effective recruitment. Advertisements will be placed in newspapers serving the community, and public service announcements will be broadcast on radio and television. Local businesses have agreed to place recruitment posters in their windows and on community bulletin boards. Community meetings will be held at churches and meeting halls to inform the public, win support, and recruit students. A brochure will be created that explains the mission and vision of the school. The Academy's website will be used to promote the school, and e-newsletters will be transmitted regularly to supporters and interested parties. Mailings will be distributed to families in the community showing why the school is a superior choice. The school will also align itself with advertisers and community organizations so our school's name and contact information is widely disseminated. Continuing research will be conducted to determine new effective ways to promote the school. Recruitment will be conducted year-round through activities for engaging the public with exhibitions, volunteering and mentoring. The

message of our education program will be shared by “word of mouth” as the museum learning curriculum results in improved student achievement, motivated students, and active parental involvement. Media interest will be encouraged in documenting the exciting instructional program that is a renaissance education option for Hampton Roads Public City Schools children.

In order to reach academically low-achieving students, students with disabilities, ELL students and their families, youth at risk of academic failure, and families living in poverty, the Academy will contact and provide information to local churches, community organizations, food banks, social workers, welfare officials, and people in similar occupations so they can inform parents about the opportunity available to them at the Academy. The Academy will also ensure these students are provided a fair and equitable education.

7. A description of how the transfer of student records and other program information to and from the public charter school will be accomplished.

As part of the official registration with the Academy, the Academy will request information about each student’s former school. The Academy will request the transfer of student records from each school in a timely manner so the Academy has all student records prior to the start of the school year and with sufficient time to review each file. It is the Academy’s intention to create an Independent Education Plan for each student as early as possible.

8. A description of how students seeking enrollment after the school year begins will be accommodated.

After the school year begins, and if there is room in the classroom for which the student is applying for enrollment, the student will be registered according to the Academy’s enrollment process. The student’s prior school will be contacted to confirm that the student has withdrawn from the prior school, and to inquire about the transfer of records between the school and the Academy. Assuming all protocols have been appropriately met, the student will attend class within two business days of applying. Enrollment can be the same day if the transfer intentions have been confirmed between the two school offices. If, however, the class for which the student is applying is full, the student will be placed on a waiting list per the Academy’s policy.

**VIII. *Displacement:*** Describe the plan for the displacement of pupils, teachers, and other employees who will not attend or be employed in the public charter school, in instances of the conversion of an existing public school to a public charter school, and for the placement of public charter school pupils, teachers, and employees upon the decision to revoke or fail to renew the charter. (Section 22.1-212.10, and Section 22.1-212.12 Code of Virginia) The following components must be addressed:

1. Identification of a member of the school’s leadership who will serve as a single point of contact for all activities that may need to take place in order for the school to close, including but not limited to the transfer of students to another

school, the management of student records, and the settlement of financial obligations.

The Academy's principal is the point of contact. The principal may delegate responsibilities for individual tasks to members of his or her staff, but the principal is the point of contact.

2. A notification process to parents/guardians of students attending the school and teachers and administrators of the closure date.

Once the Academy is informed that the charter school is being closed, the Academy will send announcements to all parents about the closure date and that the parents need to enroll their children in another school within the district. The Academy will also place announcements in the Academy's newsletter, on the Academy's website, and several announcements in the local newspapers.

All teachers and staff members will also be informed via a letter from the Board and placed in all employees' school mailboxes. Teachers and staff will be advised to find positions in other schools either within the district or at other locations.

3. A notification process to parents/guardians of students attending the public charter school of alternative public school placements within a set time period from the date that the closure is announced.

Assuming that there are other alternative public school placements in the school district, the announcements to parents of students who attend the Academy will include information about the availability of enrolling at these other locations. Of course, the Academy's office staff will first have researched the options available for parents, and will then relay this information to the parents in the announcements.

4. Provisions for ensuring that student records are provided to the parent/guardian or another school identified by the parent or guardian within a set time period. If the student transfers to another school division, provisions for the transfer of the student's record to the school division to which the student transfers shall be made upon the request of that school division. (Section 22.1-289, Code of Virginia).

The Academy will set office protocols for transferring student records to another school within an appropriate set time period as required by Hampton Roads Public City Schools.

5. Notification to the local school board of a list of all students in the school and the names of the schools to which these students will transfer.

The Academy will set office protocols for notifying the local school board with a list of all students in the school and the names of the schools to which the students are transferring within an appropriate set time period as required by Hampton Roads Public City Schools.

6. A placement plan for school employees that details the level of assistance to be provided within a set period of time from the date of closure. For teachers and administrators, the level of assistance should address finding employment within the school division where the public charter school is located or other public school divisions.

The Academy will create a placement plan for school employees to help all school employees find placement in other Hampton Roads Public City Schools locations, or in other school districts. The plan will include information about relevant job boards, and will also prepare the school office for rapid responses for information on employee employment history with the Academy. In addition, the Principal will make preparations in advance for writing letters of recommendation for all employees.

7. A close-out plan related to financial obligations and audits, the termination of contracts and leases, and the sale and disposition of assets within a set period of time from the date of closure. The plan shall include the disposition of the school's records and financial accounts upon closure.

The Academy's close-out plan will include the legal distribution of all financial materials related to the Academy's activities; this information will be transferred to a location determined by Hampton Roads Public City Schools. Upon notification of the Academy's closure, notices will be sent to all associated business associates regarding the termination of contracts and leases, with a request to discuss termination terms. Of course, all contracts and leases will have a clause that stipulates this arrangement in case of unexpected closure. All the physical assets of the Academy will be transferred to Hampton Roads Public City Schools to locations as stipulated by the administration at that time.

**IX. *Transportation:*** Describe how the public charter school plans to meet the transportation needs of its pupils. The following components must be addressed:

1. A description of how the transportation of students will be provided: a) by the local school division; b) by the public charter school; c) by the parent(s); or d) through a combination of these options.

During the first year of the Academy's operation, parents are responsible for delivery and pick-up of their children. Thereafter, if Hampton Roads Public City Schools is willing, the Academy might enter into a contract with Hampton Roads Public City Schools for bus services. However, special needs students will receive transportation to the Academy as required by law, and paid by the Academy.

2. If transportation services will be provided by the public charter school, explain whether the school will contract for transportation with the local education agency or with another entity or have its own means of transportation and indicate whether transportation will be provided to all students attending the school.

Not applicable.

3. A description of transportation services for students with disabilities in compliance with Section 22.1-221 of the Code of Virginia and the Board's Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia.

As stated above, special needs students will have transportation provided for them, at the Academy's cost.

**X. Residential Charter School:** If the application is for a residential charter school for at-risk students, the following components must be addressed:

1. A description of the residential program to include: a) the educational program; b) a facilities description to include grounds, dormitories, and staffing; c) a program for parental education and involvement; d) a description of after-care initiatives; e) the funding the residential facility and other services provided; f) any counseling and other social services to be provided and their coordination with current state and local initiatives; and g) a description of enrichment activities available to students.

Not applicable.

2. A description of how the facility will be maintained including, but not limited to: a) janitorial and regular maintenance services and b) security services to ensure the safety of students and staff.

Not applicable.

### **Business Components XI-XV**

**XI. Economic Soundness:** Evidence that the plan for the public charter school is economically sound for both the public charter school and the school division or relevant school divisions. The following components should be addressed:

1. A description of the public charter school's financial plan, including financial controls and audit requirements in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

The Academy has created a three-year operating budget which describes anticipated revenue and expenditures. The Academy's Board will require a monthly report by the principal and the

business office that details the flow of revenue and expenditures. The Board will be particularly interested with assuring that expenditures are contained within appropriate limits, given the financial expectations for the entire school year. Should revenues decline, the Board will require the principal to curtail expenses for the rest of the year to accommodate the decrease in revenue. If revenue increases, the Board will be cautious with these unexpected funds. All financial activities will be in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The Academy will hire a CPA to create an annual end-of-year report for the Board and for Hampton Roads Public City Schools' review.

2. Proposed start-up and three-year budgets with clearly stated assumptions and information regarding projected revenues and expenditures.

The budget is attached as an appendix.

3. Proposed start-up and three-year cash flow projections with clearly stated assumptions and indications of short- and long-term sources of revenue.

LOIS: This will need your attention.

4. Evidence of anticipated fundraising contributions, if claimed in this application.

Not applicable.

5. A description of the funding agreement that the public charter school intends to have with the local education agency, including information regarding anticipated local, state, and federal per-pupil-amounts to be received and any information pertaining to the maintenance of facilities. In accordance with Section 22.1-212.14 of the *Code of Virginia*, the per pupil funding provided to the charter school shall be negotiated in the charter agreement and shall be commensurate with the average school-based costs of educating the students in the existing schools in the division or divisions unless the cost of operating the charter school is less than that average school-based cost. To the extent discussions have been held with the school division, please describe the outcome of those discussions. If there have been no discussions to date, please indicate the reason.

The Academy will meet with the local education agency to discuss financial information regarding anticipated local, state, and federal per-pupil amounts that are anticipated to operate the Academy. The Academy would like to enter these discussions immediately upon approval as a charter school in the Hampton Roads Public City Schools district. The Academy understands that the Academy will receive funding based on the specifics of its student population. Once the Academy can begin enrollment and registration proceedings, the actual budget expectations can be more closely described. At this point, only general considerations are available. In addition, because the Academy does not yet know its facility's location, the degree of facility maintenance is unknown. Of course, the Academy will engage maintenance and custodial services to keep the facilities in safe operating order, and clean for use by our staff, students, and parents. At this point, there have been no discussions with Hampton Roads Public City Schools because the

Academy would first like to receive charter authorization and not needlessly consume the administration's time; the Academy is eager to begin discussions with Hampton Roads Schools as soon as authorization has been granted.

**XII. *Management and Operation:*** Describe the management and operation of the public charter school, including the nature and extent of parental, professional educator, and community involvement in the management and operation of the public charter school. (Section 22.1-212.7, Code of Virginia) The following components must be addressed to the extent the applicant is able, pending negotiations with the local school board:

1. A description of any discussions, to date, with the local public school system or local school board where the charter school will be located regarding the management and operation of the public charter school.

No discussions have occurred to date. We are eager to address this issue with the Hartford City Schools' Board.

2. A description of the functions, roles, and duties of the management committee, the school's leadership, and any other entities shown in the organizational chart, as defined in Section 22.1-212.6 of the *Code of Virginia* and its proposed composition and bylaws.

The Academy's management team is composed primarily of the principal. Should funding allow, the next hierarchy of management will be the Director of Operations, who will supervise the business director, the nurse, the office staff, the custodial and maintenance staff, and the food services staff; otherwise, the principal will supervise these staff positions. The principal will also supervise the Blended-learning Manager, and the assistant principal, teachers and other instructional staff, and will be the liaison between the parents and the community. If there is no Blended-learning Manager or assistant principal, the duties of these positions will belong to the principal. Thirdly, the management team includes the position of Student Achievement Coordinator, whose responsibilities include supervising the learning support teachers (ELL, special education, reading and mathematics specialists), and the school counselor. Again, if there isn't sufficient funding for the Student Achievement Coordinator, supervision will belong to the principal.

The Academy anticipates the need for several committees, and these committees will be staffed with teachers, parents and community members. The four committees envisioned to date include the budget committee, the facilities committee, the school improvement committee and the curriculum and assessment committee. These committees will be chaired by the principal.

3. An explanation of how support services will be funded and delivered. These services, include, but are not limited to: 1) food services; 2) school health services; 3) custodial services; 4) extracurricular activities; and 5) security services.

1) As the Academy does not yet have an identified facility, it is difficult for us to know if food services can be offered to staff and students. Therefore, at the present time, the Academy will require that staff and students bring their own lunch and snacks to the school. Should it be possible to offer warm lunches at the school, the Academy will gladly consider the options and make a decision at that time. In fact, the Academy is interested in providing breakfasts and dinners for those families that require this additional service. We want the Academy to be recognized as a safe haven not only for education, but also for those human services that contribute to the well-being of our children and our community.

2) The Academy will provide the services of a registered school nurse for the review of health records and other services as required by state law. The frequency of the nurse's visit will be determined by the needs of our students and available funding.

3) As mentioned above, contracted custodial services will be provided for regularly scheduled cleaning; also, the Academy believes students need to take responsibility for the condition of the classrooms, halls and outdoor areas, so a small portion of the day will be used for managing student contributions to general custodial activities such as recycling, disposing of litter, and other light duties.

4) The Academy will create an after-school program consisting of a variety of clubs and sports teams. This program will be a combination of activities designed by the Academy, and activities coordinated through collaboration with community agencies. Students will have the option of participating in an intramural sports program that may include soccer, volleyball, basketball, softball, and baseball. In addition, parents and community members will be asked to volunteer their time and offer after-school activity clubs based on their personal interests, such as cooking, remote control vehicles, hobby train layouts, etc. A mentoring and tutoring program staffed voluntarily by college students from the local area will also be implemented.

5) The safety of all individuals at the Academy is the first priority. The Academy Board has established a comprehensive school safety plan which will be reviewed annually at a regularly scheduled Board meeting. The Academy safety plan is to ensure a safe, secure, orderly, peaceful, and drug-free environment where both teachers and students can feel secure and where effective learning takes place. At the start of the school year, upon authorization as a charter school, the faculty, staff, and selected volunteer parents and community members will be asked to participate in a safety survey, and their comments will be considered for further development of the school safety plan. A system will be established for tracking and recording school crime and violence, with reporting procedures for teachers and other staff. This system will include regular checking of the National Sex Offender Registry to identify sex offenders in the community and notifying parents so we can protect our children from these offenders.

A school discipline code has been drafted with a means to implement, evaluate, and supervise the following elements of this code: sexual and racial harassment policies; staff in-service training for cultural and ethnic sensitivity and conflict resolution; comprehensive crime and violence prevention approaches. The plan includes procedures for emergency evacuation and crisis management. When the Academy has been authorized as a charter school, a school safety council with representatives from school staff, older students, parents, and community

representatives will be responsible for providing advice and offering solutions for critically important cases of violence and crime, evaluating the state of school safety, and proposing revisions to the school discipline code and school safety plan as deemed necessary.

The principal will work with all school personnel to create a climate of school ownership and pride. All individuals and agencies responsible for school order and safety will become familiar with current state and federal laws affecting school crime and violence. All people involved with the school will be carefully screened and selected and receive training on intervention on bullying behavior as well as racial and sexual harassment, addressing of student discipline issues in a non-shaming but firm manner that does not incite violent behavior, and development of interagency partnerships directed at creating a safe school within a safe community. Particular attention will be given to the recommendations of the National School Safety Center.

The Academy safety plan also establishes that all school staff members have a primary obligation to ensure student safety in the school. Therefore, given the expectations for having a safe, secure, and orderly school environment, every staff member observing a breach in safety is required to take immediate steps to remedy the situation. All staff members are responsible for monitoring, advising and mentoring students with regard to student behavior. Behavior issues will be referred to teachers and administrators so parents can be informed and steps taken collaboratively to prevent further concerns. Teachers, administrators and staff:

- Respond to students in a caring and respectful manner
- Provide consistent and firm guidelines and rules regarding student behavior
- Regard the teaching and modeling of pro-social behavior to be as important as the teaching of academic subjects.
- Display diligent and impartial behavior when supervising students
- Use a consistent and prompt manner to grant rewards for good behavior and sanctions for unacceptable behavior.

4. An explanation of any partnerships or contractual relationships (education management organization, food services, school health services, custodial services, security services, etc.) central to the school's operations or mission, including information regarding the relationship of all contractors to the governing board of the public charter school, and information regarding how contractors and the employees of the contractors having direct contact with students will comply with the provisions of Section 22.1-296.1, of the *Code of Virginia*.

As explained above, the Academy may enter into contractual relationships with some of the service organizations listed in this application. None of these relationships yet exist, but will be considered once the Academy is authorized as a charter school. The governing Board of the Academy will authorize all contracts after due diligence performed by the Board's agent, who is the principal. If the Hampton Roads Public City Schools protocols require a bid process, the Academy will abide by such policy. Otherwise, the Academy's Board recognizes that thrift is essential, and will award contracts based on the appropriate service for the least dollars

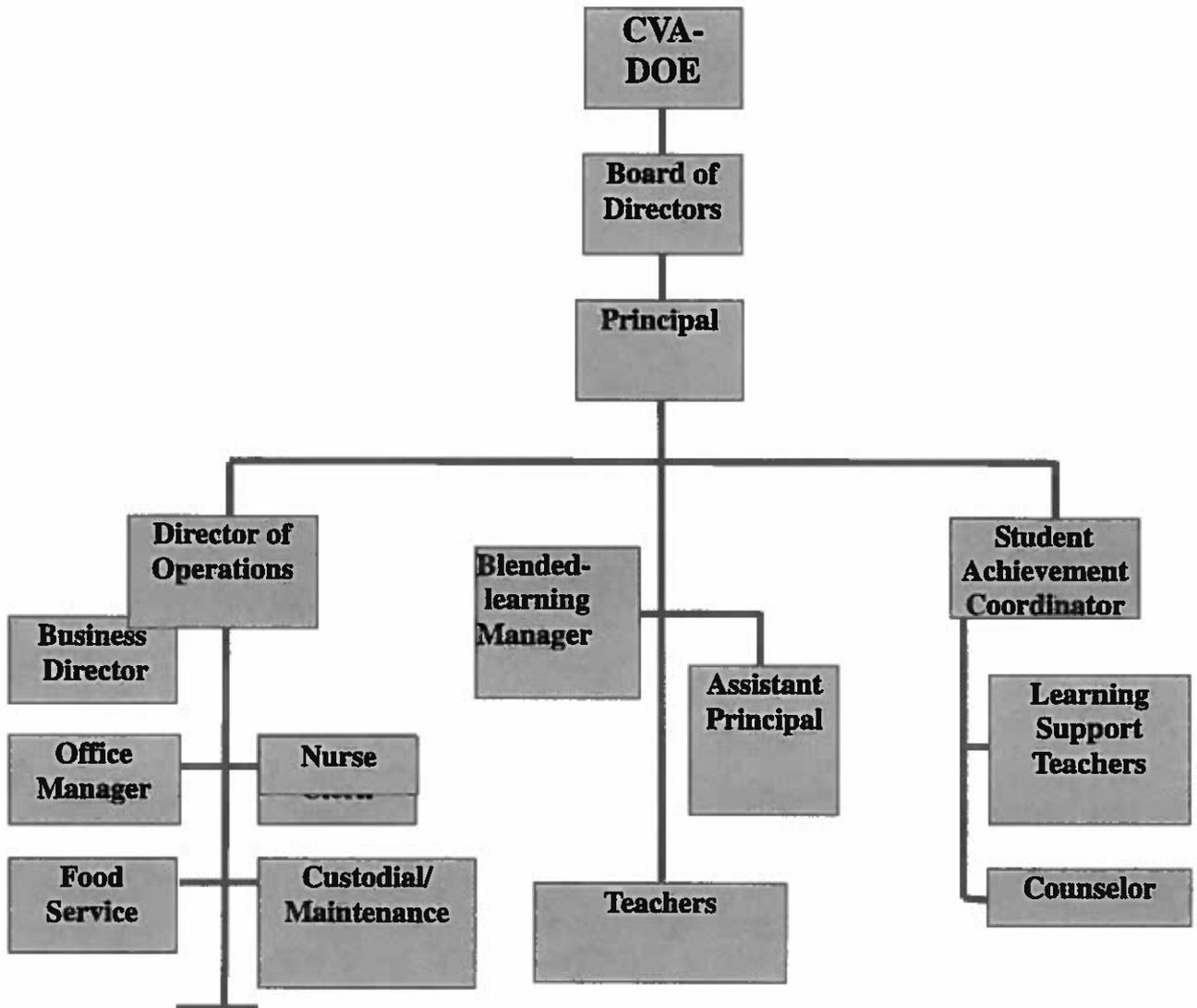
expended. All contractors and employees of contractors having direct contact with students will comply with the provisions of Section 22.1-296.1, of the *Code of Virginia*.

5. A proposed start-up plan, identifying tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals.

Upon approval as a charter school, the Academy will activate its start-up plan. The Academy's Board will authorize the distribution of job placement ads to initiate the process of hiring faculty and staff. In addition, announcements will be made in the Hampton Roads Public City Schools district, through every means available, to parents about the availability of enrolling in the Academy. The announcement will be repeated frequently, directing interested parents to the Academy's website for detailed information. Until a principal has been interviewed and hired, the Board will delegate start-up tasks to its members. Once a principal has been hired, all tasks will be supervised through the principal. The Academy's location will need to be identified, and the facility will need to be inventoried; based on the inventory, a needs list will be developed with a timeline to accommodate the completion of these needs in a sufficient time frame so the facility is ready in advance of the arrival of staff and students. It is the Academy's hope that the facility will be ready for occupation no later than July 15. The principal will create a timeline for completing all facility needs, acquiring all furniture, and all classroom supplies. Furthermore, an interview calendar will be established, along with a hiring deadline. All contracts for additional services such as custodial, maintenance, and special education services will be reviewed by the Board and authorized as soon as possible. The Academy's revenues per child will be estimated with the latest information available, and the Academy will hire staff based on the enrollment pace of new students; the Academy will not be able to hire teachers and staff members except as funding allows, so it is imperative that the enrollment advertising is frequent enough to establish a student population as quickly as possible. The Board will meet at least twice monthly to ensure that all policies and procedures are in place, and to assist the principal with any deliberations that are necessary for the timely opening of the Academy. Once the teachers have been hired by the Board, the principal will acclimate the teachers to the Academy's programs and guide the teachers toward preparing for the opening of the school, such that the teachers are prepared for their assignment as educators in a museum learning school based on constructivism, Projects Based Learning, and Inquiry Based Learning.

6. A proposed organization chart that clearly presents the school's organizational structure, including the lines of authority and reporting between the management committee, staff, any related bodies (such as parent teacher organizations, the school division and any external organizations) that will play a role in managing the school.

Please see the proposed organization chart below:



Parents

Community

7. Plans for recruiting and developing school leadership and staff.

The Academy will recruit highly qualified teachers whose educational philosophies resonate with the Academy’s mission. Recruitment strategies include engaging the placement offices at local, regional and national colleges and universities, recruiting at historically African American and Hispanic educational institutions, attending job fairs to familiarize new teachers with the advantages of teaching at our Academy, providing teacher employment information via a

telephone hotline, and participating in employment services offered through appropriate websites. The Academy will also utilize the recruiting opportunities offered through the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

The Academy will also recruit non-faculty staff members, such as classroom instructional aides, office and facility staff, and other support personnel by advertising locally in the community to fill available positions. Preference will be given to community members; if staff vacancies cannot be filled by the local community, the Academy will hire from outside the community.

Prior to recruitment, the Board will review all written documentation relative to the interview and hiring process, including but not limited to:

- Policies and procedures
- Employment application forms
- Recruiting sources
- Applicant/Employee EEO/AA self-identification forms
- Interview/candidate review questions/forms
- Applicant tracking systems
- Reference checking methodology
- Proposal for employment letters
- Check the application process by taking the role of an applicant and applying through the sites posting our employment opportunity. Evaluate ease of process for applying, compliance with data/legal requirements, and overall representation of the Academy
- Analyze the process with members of the interview team to evaluate the process flow and determine if procedures are followed consistently
- Provide recommendations for enhancements or modifications of the existing procedures
- The hiring committee will then follow specific steps in the assessment of applicants:
- Training and experience of the applicant
- Passion for teaching; enjoys working with children if non-faculty
- Criminal and child abuse background checks as required by law
- Review of credentials sent from institutions
- Previous experience
- Length on previous job
- References review
- Response to interview questions
- Determining applicant status with regard to immigration rules
- Compliance with continuing education requirements
- Awards
- Future goals

The hiring team selects the top candidates and recommends them to the Board and the Board reviews and selects the best qualified candidates. Staff development is discussed at length below.

**XIII. *Employment Terms and Conditions:*** Provide an explanation of the relationship that will exist between the proposed public charter school and its employees, including evidence that the terms and conditions of employment have been addressed with

affected employees. (Sections 22.1-212.13, 22.1-296.1, 22.1-296.2, and 22.1-296.4, *Code of Virginia*) At the discretion of the local school board, charter school personnel may be employees of the local school board, or boards, granting the charter. Any personnel not employed by the local school board shall remain subject to the provisions of §§ 22.1-296.1, 22.1-296.2, and 22.1-296.4. The following components must be addressed:

1. A plan that addresses the qualifications of teachers and administrators at the public charter school, including compliance with state law and regulation regarding Virginia Board of Education licensing endorsements.

All teachers, special service professionals such as counselors, and all administrators at the Academy will be required to possess appropriate credentials for their job assignments, as defined by the provisions of §§ 22.1-296.1; 22.1-296.2; and 22.1-296.4.

2. A plan to provide high-quality professional development programs (Section 22.1-253.13:5, *Code of Virginia*).

The principal and teachers will acquire job-related professional development to support the Academy's mission, pedagogical abilities, the curriculum, museum learning applications, and the use of technology to maximize student achievement. During the hiring process, teaching and administrative candidates will be informed of the school's commitment to professional growth and development. Professional development may include the following, as an example: methods for providing individualized instruction for each child, understanding assessment results to improve student learning, and improving reading and math literacy when teaching inner-urban minority children.

The principal will develop an individual professional development plan for each teacher and instructional assistant based on the principal's assessment of coursework which will benefit the achievement of students and the Academy. Non-instructional staff will also attend professional development in-services as directed by the principal. In addition, the Board will direct the principal to participate in professional development as the Board recommends.

The principal will measure the professional development plan's success by the faculty and staff's achievement of the academic goals as measured by student assessment, and the advancement of the Academy's non-academic goals. The principal will determine which faculty and staff members need intervention, and will create a remediation plan for each individual as necessary. The Board will also do so in its evaluation of the principal if the principal requires performance improvement.

3. Provisions for the evaluation of staff at regular intervals and in accordance with state law and regulation.

Principal's evaluation: The Principal will be evaluated by the Board on the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to meet school and district performance objectives. Established outcomes will measure individual and organizational results the leadership is expected to achieve. The principal shall participate in his/her evaluation by self-assessing his/her personal development priorities. The "Principal Evaluation Self-Assessment" tool supports goal-setting, and leads the principal and the Board in meaningful discussions about current performance, personal development goals, and school improvement goals. This tool allows the principal to reflect on the standards guiding principal evaluations, the indicators to support the evaluation standards, and the areas of strengths and areas of growth. The principal's evaluations and goal setting conferences will be held with the Board to review self-assessment reflections, review goals based on leadership standards, revise goals when needed to assure they are attainable and accurate based on the areas of focus, identify data and sources that are reviewed and progress monitored, and recognize next steps to lead the next meeting.

If the Board determines that the principal is performing unsatisfactorily, or if the principal determines that a staff member is performing unsatisfactorily, then a meeting will be held with the school employee and their supervisor to discuss the nature of the unsatisfactory performance. Minutes will be kept of this discussion and filed in the employee's personnel file. In addition, a plan of action will be developed that identifies the exact areas of job performance needing improvement, the remedial steps that will be taken to improve job performance, which includes supervisory guidance on a daily or weekly basis, and may include professional training in the areas needing remediation. A timeline will be established for corrective behavior, and if job performance remains unsatisfactory, steps for dismissal will begin.

Teacher evaluation: The Academy's policy on staff evaluation will be guided by the approved evaluation tools mandated by the Commonwealth of Virginia, and will be introduced to the staff, along with evaluation procedures, timelines, and performance indicators at the beginning of each school year. Evaluation will include the achievement of school goals, personal goals, performance assessment based on the principal's formal and informal observations, the quality of relationships with other staff members and volunteers, and the measured success of students under the employee's authority. The process, comprised of impromptu walk-throughs, two formal observations per semester, and evaluation conferences each semester will be conducted by the principal. The domains observed will contain the four categories featured in the TNTP CORE TEACHING RUBRIC: A Tool for Conducting Common-Core Aligned Classroom Observations

- Student Engagement
- Essential Content
- Academic Ownership
- Demonstration of Learning

As outlined in the TNTP Core Teaching Rubric the focus is on four basic essential questions.

- Are all students engaged in the work of the lesson from start to finish?
- Are all students working with content aligned to the appropriate standards for their subject and grade?

- Are all students responsible for doing the thinking in this classroom?
- Do all students demonstrate that they are learning?

In addition TNTP provides a Core Classroom Walk-Through Tool “companion” that can be used with the Core Teaching Rubric for note-taking and feedback conversations after classroom observations are completed. Reflective conversations before and after formal evaluations, will provide an opportunity for the principal to offer coaching questions that probe, clarify, guide, and assist the staff in drawing conclusions, making adjustments, and considering next steps that build growth.

Staff will be supervised and supported on a daily basis so their talents and skills are directed toward meeting the Academy’s mission and school improvement goals. If a teacher is rated “minimally effective” or “ineffective”, based on categorical evidence, a collaborate effort between the principal and teacher will occur with developing an Individual Development Plan. This plan will include goals and professional development training selected to assist the teacher in improved effectiveness in the areas of concern. Professional development may occur in-house, at the district level, or any training that has been identified as appropriate to the needs of our staff and students, and is aligned with the Common Core State Standards supporting our curriculum. Target staff will receive a mid-year report based on the Individualized Development Plan, and will include classroom observations, lesson plans, student data, and the alignment of the museum program with Common Core State Standards and grade level expectations. After multiple observations and mentoring support assigned by the principal, a year-end review will outline growth, opportunities for continuing growth, student progress, reflections, and qualitative and quantitative classroom data.

The principal will continue to review and revise professional development goals for each teacher, instructional assistant and non-instructional staff members on an annual basis. Professional development goals and their attainment are incorporated into the annual employee performance evaluation.

If a teacher’s or staff member’s improvement standards are not attained, the principal will provide weekly mentoring and guidance to help the school employee remediate their performance, based on a new plan devised by both the principal and the employee that more completely clarifies and supports the performance goals and objectives.

Limited progress will result in a formal meeting between the principal, school employee and supervisory staff to discuss the nature of the unsatisfactory performance. Minutes will be kept of this discussion and filed in the employees’ personnel file. In addition, a plan of action will be developed that identifies the exact areas of job performance needing improvement, the remedial steps already taken, and will be taken to improve job productivity. A timeline will be established for corrective behavior. If job performance remains unsatisfactory, steps for dismissal will begin.

4. Provisions for a human resource policy for the public charter school that is consistent with state and federal law.

The Academy will adopt the human resource policy currently in effect in Hampton Roads Public City Schools.

5. Notification to all school employees of the terms and conditions of employment.

The Academy will employ the same notification to all school employees of the terms and conditions of their employment as is currently being used by Hampton Roads Public City Schools.

6. A staffing chart for the school's first year and a staffing plan for the term of the contract.

In the first year, the Academy will hire the following positions:

- One principal
- One teacher per grade, assuming sufficient enrollment, not to exceed a ratio of one teacher per 22 students; potentially two kindergarten and two first grade teachers
- One Director of Operations
- One business director, part-time
- One office manager
- One Blended-learning Manager
- One Student Achievement Coordinator
- Learning Support Teachers, as needed, and part-time at first (reading specialists, ELL teachers)
- One school nurse, as needed, and part-time
- One office clerk, depending on funding
- One assistant principal, depending on funding; may be part-time
- One school counselor, depending on funding; may be part-time
- One custodian/maintenance person; part-time

Thereafter, additional staff will be hired based on enrollment and results of the annual needs assessment survey.

**XIV. Liability and Insurance:** Describe the agreement between the parties regarding their respective legal liability and applicable insurance coverage. (Section 22.1-212.16, Code of Virginia) The following components must be addressed:

1. The types of insurance for the public charter school, its property, its employees, the charter school management committee, and the board and the levels of coverage sought. Types of insurance include, but are not limited to: a) general liability; b) health; and c) property.

All insurances required by Hampton Roads Public City Schools will also be purchased by the Academy. With permission from Hampton Roads Public City Schools, as a courtesy, the Academy will contact the district's current insurance providers to determine coverage and cost. Upon approval as a charter school, the Board will consult with a local insurance broker to determine which insurance programs are appropriate for the charter school and steps will be taken to procure the policies that best serve the Academy, the students, the Academy's employees, and parent and community members.

2. A justification for each type of insurance coverage sought.

General liability insurance is important because it protects the Academy from a variety of claims including bodily injury, property damage, personal injury, and other damages that may arise from the business of operating a school.

Health insurance is coverage that provides for a portion of the cost of an insured individual's medical and surgical expenses. Health insurance will be provided to employees based on the amount of hours of employment; full-time employees will receive full health insurance, while part-time employees may receive partial or no health insurance, depending on Virginia state law.

Property insurance is insurance that protects against property risks such as fire, theft, and some forms of weather damage, all of which may occur to a school facility in Virginia.

3. A description of any plans of the public charter school to provide indemnity for the local school division.

Indemnity will be provided to Hampton Roads Public City Schools if requested.

**XV. Disclosures:** Disclose ownership or financial interest in the public charter school by the charter applicant and the governing body, administrators, and other personnel of the proposed public charter school, and require that the applicant and the governing body, administrators, and other personnel of the public charter school shall have a continuing duty to disclose such interests during the term of the charter. The following components must be addressed:

1. A description of how the applicant and members of the management committee will disclose any ownership or financial interest.

The Academy has established a conflict of interest policy as follows:

#### **I. Purpose**

The purpose of this Conflict of Interest Policy (this "Policy") is to protect the interests of a District of Columbia non-profit corporation, when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interests of an Officer or Board of Bertha B. Williams Academy or might result in a possible excess benefit transaction. This Policy is

intended to supplement, not replace the requirements of the applicable state and federal laws governing conflict of interest situations with respect to non-profit and charitable organizations.

## **II. Definitions**

### **A. Interested Person**

Any Director, Officer or member of a committee with powers delegated by the Board of Directors (a “Committee”), and who has a direct or indirect financial interest, as defined below, is an “Interested Person.”

### **B. Disinterested Person**

Any person who is not an interested person is a “Disinterested” person.

### **C. Financial Interest**

A person has a “Financial Interest” if the person has, directly or indirectly, through business, investment or family:

1. An ownership or investment interest in any entity with which Bertha B. Williams Academy has is proposed to enter into a contract, transaction or other arrangement;
2. A compensation arrangement with Bertha B. Williams Academy or with any entity or individual with which Bertha B. Williams Academy has proposed to enter into a contract, transaction or other arrangement; or
3. A potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which Bertha B. Williams Academy is negotiating a contract transaction or other arrangement.

Compensation includes gifts and favors that are not insubstantial, as well as any other direct or indirect remuneration. A Financial Interest is not necessarily a conflict of interest. Under Section III.B below, a person who has a Financial Interest may have a conflict of interest, as determined by the Board of Directors or appropriate Committee.

## **III. Procedures**

### **A. Duty to Disclose**

All Boards, Officers and Committee Members must, as soon as possible after learning of the relevant circumstances, disclose the existence of any Financial Interest and all BERTHA B. WILLIAMS ACADEMY related material facts to the Boards and/or Committee Members considering the relevant contract, transaction or other arrangement.

### **B. Determining Whether a Conflict of Interest Exists**

Based upon the disclosure of the Financial Interest and all related material facts, the Boards who are Disinterested Persons shall decide if a conflict of interest exists. The Board, Officer or Committee member with the Financial Interest must leave the meeting during the discussion of and vote regarding the existence of a conflict of interest. If the Board or determines there is no conflict of interest, it will advise the Board, Officer or Committee Member that his/her Financial

Interest does not constitute a conflict of interest and permit Bertha B. Williams Academy to proceed with the contract, transaction or other arrangement.

If the Board determines there is a conflict of interest, it will advise the Board, Officer or Committee Member that he/she is an Interested Person with respect to the relevant contract, transaction or other arrangement, and will follow the procedures set out below for addressing the conflict of interest. No contract, transaction or other arrangement involving a conflict of interest may be entered into by Bertha B. Williams Academy except in accordance with the following procedures.

### **C. Procedures for Addressing the Conflict of Interest**

1. An Interested Person may make a presentation to the Board or Committee meeting reviewing the matter, but he/she must leave the meeting during the discussion of and vote on the relevant contract, transaction or other arrangement.
2. The Chair of the Board or Committee, or if the Chair has a Financial Interest, the Board or Committee as a whole, shall, if appropriate, appoint a Disinterested Person or committee to investigate alternatives to the relevant contract, transaction or other arrangement.
3. After exercising due diligence, the Board or Committee shall determine whether Bertha B. Williams Academy can obtain with reasonable efforts a more advantageous contract, transaction or other arrangement from a person or entity that would not give rise to a conflict of interest.
4. If a more advantageous contract, transaction or other arrangement that would not give rise to a conflict of interest is not reasonably possible under circumstances, the Board or Committee shall determine by a majority vote of the Boards or Committee Members who are Disinterested Persons whether the contract, transaction or other arrangement is in Bertha B. Williams Academy's best interest, for its own benefit, and whether it is fair and reasonable. In conformity with that determination, it shall decide whether to enter into the contract, transaction or other arrangement.

### **D. Violations of the Conflict of Interest Policy**

1. If the Board or Committee has reasonable cause to believe a Board, Officer or Committee Member has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, the Board or Committee shall inform the individual of the basis for such belief and give him/her an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.
2. If, after hearing the individual's response and after making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the Board or Committee determines the individual has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, the Board or Committee shall take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.

## **IV. Records of Proceedings**

The minutes of the Board or Committee meeting shall contain:

A. The names of persons who disclosed or otherwise were found to have a Financial Interest in connection with an actual or possible conflict of interest, the nature of the Financial Interest, any action taken to determine whether a conflict of interest existed, and the Board's decision as to whether a conflict of interest in fact existed.

B. The names of the persons who were present for discussions and votes relating to the contract, transaction or other arrangement; the content of the discussion, including any alternatives to the proposed contract, transaction or other arrangement; and a record of any votes taken in connection with the proceedings.

#### **V. Compensation**

A. A voting member of the Board who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from Bertha B. Williams Academy for services shall not vote on matters pertaining to his/her compensation.

B. A voting member of a Committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from Bertha B. Williams Academy for services shall not vote on matters pertaining to his/her compensation.

C. Voting members of the Board or of any Committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receive compensation, directly or indirectly, from Bertha B. Williams Academy either individually or collectively, may provide information to the Board or any Committee regarding compensation.

#### **VI. ANNUAL STATEMENTS**

Each Board, Officer and Committee Member shall annually sign a statement affirming that he/she:

A. Has received a copy of this Conflict of Interest Policy,

B. Has read and understands this Policy,

C. Agrees to comply with this Policy.

D. Understands that Bertha B. Williams Academy is a non-profit corporation and in order to maintain its federal tax exemption must engage primarily in activities that accomplish its tax-exempt purposes.

#### **VII. Periodic Reviews**

To ensure that Bertha B. Williams Academy operates in a manner consistent with its charitable purposes, and does not engage in activities that could jeopardize its tax-exempt status, the Board shall ensure that the following matters, at a minimum, are reviewed periodically:

A. Whether compensation arrangements and benefits are reasonable, based on competent survey information and the results of arm's length bargaining.

B. Whether partnerships, joint ventures and arrangements with management organizations conform to Bertha B. Williams Academy's written policies, are properly recorded, reflect reasonable investment or payments for goods and services, further charitable purposes and do not result in:

1. Any impermissible private benefit,
2. Anyone working for Bertha B. Williams Academy receiving a benefit greater than he/she provides in return or
3. Any transaction in which Bertha B. Williams Academy provides an economic benefit, directly or indirectly, to or for the use of any person in a position to exercise substantial influence over Bertha B. Williams Academy's affairs, including any substantial donor, where the value of the economic benefit provided by Bertha B. Williams Academy exceeds the value of the consideration it receives.

#### **VIII. Use of the Outside Experts**

When conducting the periodic reviews provided for in Section VII above, Bertha B. Williams Academy may, but need not, use outside advisors. If outside experts are used, their use shall not relieve the Board or its responsibility for ensuring periodic reviews are conducted.

2. Information regarding the frequency by which such disclosures will be made during the term of the charter (Section 2.2-3114, *Code of Virginia*).

During the term of the charter, disclosures will be made upon appointment to the Board, and additionally, disclosures will be made annually at the start of each school year.

3. A description of ownership or financial interest of the applicant and/or members of the management committee in the proposed charter school. This includes any relationships that parties may have with vendors performing services at the school.

Dr. Lois Williams is founder and will resign from Board once the charter is granted. The academy is named in honor of her mother-in-law. It is the policy of the Board to conform to statutory conflict of interest laws and, in addition, act in a manner that will avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance thereof.

## Part C: Assurances

Assurances in the Code of Virginia: The assurances in the *Code of Virginia* represent the policies and procedures that must be developed and addressed in the application by the public charter school to carry out the provisions of the law. By signing and submitting this application for a public charter school, the applicant expressly assures the Board that:

1. No tuition will be charged to students attending the public charter school.
2. The school will be nonreligious in its admission policies, employment practices, instruction, and all other operations.
3. The public charter school policies and procedures will comply with the federal *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act* (FERPA) and the records retention schedules for public schools, and that such policies and schedules will be acceptable to the local education agency.
4. The public charter school programs, services, and activities will operate in accordance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, including the federal *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA), the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* (IDEA), Section 504 of the federal *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, and the *Virginia Freedom of Information Act*.
5. The applicant has knowledge of and will comply with the *Virginia Conflict of Interest Act*.
6. Transportation will be provided consistent with state law and regulation. (Sections 22.1-176, 22.1-182, 22.1-186, 22.1-191, 22.1-221, 22.1-216, 22.1-218, Code of Virginia and the Virginia Board of Education's Regulation Governing Pupil Transportation)
7. The applicant will provide information regarding the proposed term of its contract with a local school board and notification of closure, should the charter be revoked or fail to be renewed. (Section 22.1-212.12, Code of Virginia)

Assurances approved by the Virginia Board of Education: By signing and submitting this application for a public charter school, the applicant expressly assures the Board that:

1. If the application is approved by the local school board, the applicant will take all actions necessary to enter into a contract with the local school board not later than nine months prior to the opening date of the public charter school.
2. If the application is approved by a local school board, the school leadership of the public charter school will be retained on contract no later than 60 days prior to the opening date of the school.
3. If the application is approved by a local school board, all requests for waivers from the Virginia Board of Education will be made by the local school board, on behalf of the applicant, no later than six months prior to the opening date of the school. (This does not preclude a public charter school from working with the local school board to request additional waivers once the school is operational.)
4. Facilities information will be provided, including but not limited to:
  - a. Suitable instructional space;
  - b. Provisions for library services;
  - c. Provisions for the safe administration and storage of student records and student medications;

- d. Information regarding compliance with building and fire codes and compliance with the federal *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA);
  - e. General information on emergency evacuation plans;
  - f. Information regarding site location and preparation;
  - g. The structure of operation and maintenance services; and
  - h. Financial arrangements for facilities, including any lease arrangements with school divisions or other entities and whether debt will be incurred.
5. The public charter school will comply with all provisions of the Virginia Board of Education's *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs For Children With Disabilities in Virginia*.
  6. The applicant will provide a model Student Code of Conduct policy that addresses student behavior, discipline, and participation in school activities. The plan should identify the role of teachers and administrators in discipline and mentoring and must demonstrate compliance with the code of conduct policy of the applicable school board.

Pursuant to the requirements, I hereby certify that to the best of my knowledge the information in this application is correct, and that the applicant has addressed all application elements that pertain to the proposed public charter school, and that the applicant understands and will comply with the assurances listed above.

Name of Authorized Official: Dr. Lois S. Williams Title: Founder

Signature of Authorized Official:  Date: 2-15-15  
Lois S. Williams Date: 2-15-2015