

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: _____ N. _____

Date: April 30, 2009

Topic: Report on the Alternative Education Programs in Petersburg City Public Schools

Presenter: Dr. Kathleen M. Smith, Director, Office of School Improvement, Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement

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Origin:

Topic presented for information only (no board action required)

Board review required by

State or federal law or regulation

Board of Education regulation

Other: _____

Action requested at this meeting Action requested at future meeting: _____

Previous Review/Action:

No previous board review/action

Previous review/action

date January 15, 2009

action Board requested a follow-up review for Blandford Academy by April 2009

Background Information:

The Standards of Quality require local school boards to maintain fully accredited schools and to take corrective actions for schools that are not fully accredited.

§ [22.1-253.13:3](#). Standard 3. Accreditation, other standards and evaluation.

...Each local school board shall maintain schools that are fully accredited pursuant to the standards of accreditation as prescribed by the Board of Education. Each local school board shall review the accreditation status of all schools in the local school division annually in public session. Within the time specified by the Board of Education, each school board shall submit corrective action plans for any schools within its school division that have been designated as not meeting the standards as approved by the Board.

In October 2004, the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) established criteria for identifying low-performing school divisions to undergo a division level academic review. Petersburg City Public Schools met the criteria for division level academic review as indicated in Section 22.1-253.13:3. Standard 3. Accreditation, other standards and evaluation:

... When the Board of Education has obtained evidence through the school academic review process that the failure of schools within a division to achieve full accreditation status is related to division level failure to implement the Standards of Quality, the Board may require a division level academic review. After the conduct of such review and within the time specified by the Board of Education, each school board shall submit for approval by the Board a corrective action plan, consistent with criteria established by the Board and setting forth specific actions and a schedule designed to ensure that schools within its school division achieve full accreditation status. Such corrective action plans shall be part of the relevant school division's comprehensive plan pursuant to Section [22.1-253.13:6](#).

In 2004, recognizing the need for technical assistance, the Petersburg School Board requested a division-level review and assistance from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). Petersburg City Public Schools and the VBOE signed an initial memorandum of understanding (MOU) detailing the review process on April 21, 2004. Petersburg City Public Schools has been in division level review status since 2004 and has reported to the VBOE regularly on the status of implementing the corrective action plan and the terms of the initial MOU. The VDOE has provided ongoing technical assistance and monitored the implementation of the division's corrective action plan.

Additionally, Section 8 VAC 20-131-300 of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (SOA), adopted by the Board in September 2006, requires school divisions with Accreditation Denied schools to enter into a MOU with the VBOE and implement a corrective action plan to improve student achievement in the identified schools. Since Petersburg City Public Schools had schools in accreditation denied status for the 2007-2008 academic year based on 2006-2007 results, the VBOE determined that the MOU for division level academic review would also serve as the MOU to satisfy Section 8 VAC 20-131-310. As a part of this MOU, a corrective action plan was developed.

The MOU requires the Petersburg School Board to provide a summative report on progress made in meeting or exceeding the MOU agreements and expectations to the VBOE and the VDOE, as requested. At the April 23, 2008, meeting of the School and Division Accountability Committee, members of the committee requested information on the following:

1. the number of students enrolled in alternative education programs and their status in these programs;
2. the number of students enrolled in the Individual Alternative Education Program (ISAEP); and,
3. the number of unlicensed teachers (substitute teachers) by core content area in which they are teaching.

At the May 21, 2008, VBOE meeting, a report containing the requested information was presented by department staff. At this time, the VBOE requested that a follow-up review be completed in the fall of 2008 to determine if the alternative education programs in Petersburg City Public Schools including the ISAEP program were in compliance with the Standards of Quality and the Standards of Accreditation.

The department conducted an academic review of the alternative programs in Petersburg City Public Schools on December 11-12, 2008. The review team consisted of Department of Education staff and peer reviewers from other school divisions. A description of the programs reviewed follows:

1. **Horizons Program** – Provides high school students age 16 or older with an opportunity to complete an alternative education program enabling them to successfully meet the criteria for a traditional or nontraditional diploma.
2. **Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP) Program** – Provides high school students age 16 or older with an opportunity to work toward a general educational development (GED) certificate.
3. **Career Preparedness Program (CPP)** – Provides high school students, age 16 or older and at least two grade-levels behind, with an opportunity to work toward successfully meeting the criteria for a diploma. *Note: Students participating in the program do not meet the requirements for the Horizons or ISAEP programs.*
4. **Choices Program** – Provides educational and behavioral support to students in grades six through twelve who have violated the Code of Conduct.

The following essential actions were presented to Petersburg City Schools as part of the December 11-12, 2008 review:

- Align Horizons Program curriculum with skills necessary for transition to programs leading to a standard or advanced studies diploma or to a GED (ISAEP) program.
- Adhere to procedures for student placement that allow for parent input and are conducted in a timely manner.
- Secure the needed resources and materials for students and teachers (i.e., textbooks).
- Provide access to the Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to the students enrolled in the CPP program.
- Provide early intervention in elementary and middle school programs to reduce the need for alternative programs.

At the January 15, 2009, Virginia Board of Education meeting, the Board accepted the findings of the review of alternative education programs in Petersburg City Public Schools and requested the department to complete a follow-up visit in the spring of 2009 to ensure that essential actions were being implemented.

Summary of Major Elements.

The department conducted a third review of the alternative programs in Petersburg City Public Schools on March 30, 2009. The report and findings are included as Attachment A.

Align Horizon's curriculum with the skills necessary for transition to a regular diploma seeking program and GED program (ISAEP).

Teachers are utilizing the Contemporary GED Exercise Book during instruction. School staff members have developed a GED study plan and timeline to be used as tools for monitoring preparation for testing. There is ample evidence that students are successfully transitioning from the Horizons program to the ISAEP program. During the initial visit in December, there was one student enrolled; however, during this follow-up visit, 17 active students have enrolled in the program.

Adhere to procedures for student placement in a timely manner which allows for parent input.
School staff members have developed a checklist for student entrance into Blandford Academy. The ISAEP folders contained the appropriate parent/guardian notification of enrollment and subsequent documentation.

There was ample evidence of compliance with ISAEP enrollment requirements. Furthermore, the Blandford staff members have collaborated with the staff members of students' home-schools to streamline entrance procedures for prospective students.

Secure the needed resources and materials for students and teachers (i.e., textbooks).
Classroom observations and interviews revealed that Horizons, CPP, and Choices teachers have been provided with adequate materials such as textbooks and computer-based programs such as Voyager and Odyssey. In addition, school administrators have ensured that teachers receive appropriate access to diagnostic tools.

Provide access to the Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to the students enrolled in the CPP program.

Interviews with students and teachers revealed that ISAEP, Horizons, and CPP students participate in the CTE programs at the high school twice a week after school. These programs are not certified CTE programs. The reviewed ISAEP plans contained evidence of participation in the career and technical education program at the high school. This practice was implemented during the start of the second semester. Two orientation programs for parents of Blandford Academy students were conducted to introduce the seven course offerings for the CTE program at Petersburg High School.

Current enrollment of Blandford Academy students who are participating in the CTE program after school:

- three students are enrolled in the carpentry program (one student is scheduled to begin on March 30, 2009);
- three students are enrolled in the childcare program (three students are scheduled to begin on March 30, 2009);
- two students will enroll in the personal care aide beginning on March 30, 2009;
- one student will enroll in the automotive program beginning on March 30, 2009; and
- one student is enrolled in the culinary arts program.

Provide early intervention in elementary and middle school programs to reduce the need for alternative programs.

Document reviews revealed evidence of ongoing efforts to address instructional and behavioral issues contributing to the need for an alternative program. Early intervention continues to be a key concern of addressing student behavior.

Recommendations based on the follow-up review.

The committee recommended the following essential actions:

- Expand the GED study plan to include goals, objectives, and evaluation methods. Students should be actively involved in the development of the GED study plan.
- Provide certified CTE programs to students during the regular school day.

The ISAEP program at Blandford Academy has met the minimum requirements for a functioning program. Document reviews, interviews, and classroom observations revealed that substantive efforts have been implemented to address the essential actions.

Superintendent's Recommendation

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education accept the findings of the review of alternative education programs in Petersburg City Public Schools and request the department to complete a follow-up visit in the fall of 2009 to ensure that students are receiving certified CTE courses as described in the essential actions based on the follow-up review.

Impact on Resources: Cost of the academic review consultants' travel and lodging.

Timetable for Further Review/Action: September 2009



**Alternative Education Program Review
Follow-up Visit Report of Findings
2008-2009**

Date of Visit: March 26, 2009

School Division: Petersburg Public Schools

Superintendent: Dr. James Victory

Program: Blandford Academy

Principal: Gail Alexander

The alternative education review team visited Blandford Academy on March 26, 2009. Team members included:

**Dr. Yvonne Holloman, VDOE
Dr. Dorothea Shannon, VDOE
Dr. Michael Nusbaum, VDOE
Mrs. Debbie Bergtholdt, VDOE**

Focus areas for the follow-up visit included the following Essential Actions:

- 1. Align Horizon's curriculum with skills necessary for transition to regular diploma seeking program and GED program (ISAEP).**
- 2. Adhere to procedures for student placement in a timely manner which allows for parent input.**
- 3. Secure the needed resources and materials for students and teachers (i.e., textbooks).**
- 4. Provide access to the CTE program to the students enrolled in the CPP program.**
- 5. Provide early intervention in elementary and middle school programs to reduce the need for alternative programs.**

Team members interviewed 5 teachers, 1 administrator, and 2 students. Five classroom observations were conducted. The following documents were reviewed:

- 17 ISAEP records**
- Lesson plans for CPP and Horizons classes**
- Student portfolios**
- Student cumulative records**
- Student alternative education plans for CPP and Horizons**

Part I: Status of Implementation: Essential Actions

Essential Action #1:

Align Horizon's curriculum with skills necessary for transition to regular diploma seeking program and GED program (ISAEP).

Status of Implementation:

This essential action is ongoing. Teachers are utilizing the *Contemporary GED Exercise Book* during instruction. School staff members have developed a GED study plan and timeline to be used as tools for monitoring preparation for testing.

There is ample evidence that students are successfully transitioning from the Horizons program to the ISAEP program. During the initial visit in December, there was one student enrolled; however, during this follow-up visit, 17 active students have enrolled in the program.

Recommended Interventions:

Expand the GED study plan to include goals, objectives, and evaluation methods. Student should be actively involved in the development of the GED study plan.

Measure of Effectiveness:

Revised GED study plans for the appropriate students.

Recommended Follow-up Technical Assistance:

Not applicable

Essential Action #2:

Adhere to procedures for student placement in a timely manner which allows for parent input.

Status of Implementation:

School staff members have developed a checklist for student entrance into Blandford Academy. The ISAEP folders contained the appropriate parent/guardian notification of enrollment and subsequent documentation.

There was ample evidence of compliance with ISAEP enrollment requirements. Furthermore, the Blandford staff members have collaborated with the staff members of students' home-schools to streamline entrance procedures for prospective students.

Recommended Interventions: None

Measure of Effectiveness: Not applicable

Recommended Follow-up Technical Assistance: Not applicable

Essential Action #3:

Secure the needed resources and materials for students and teachers (i.e., textbooks).

Status of Implementation:

Classroom observations and interviews revealed that Horizons, CPP, and Choices teachers have been provided with adequate materials such as textbooks and computer-based programs such as Voyager and Odyssey.

In addition, school administrators have ensured that teachers receive appropriate access to diagnostic tools.

Recommended Interventions:

None

Measure of Effectiveness:

Not applicable

Recommended Follow-up Technical Assistance:

Not applicable

Essential Action #4:

Provide access to the CTE program to the students enrolled in the CPP program.

Status of Implementation:

Interviews with students and teachers revealed that ISAEP, Horizons, and CPP students participate in the CTE programs at the high school twice a week. These CTE programs only allow students to receive a certificate of participation. They are not CTE completer programs. The reviewed ISAEP plans contained evidence of participation in the career and technical education program at the high school. This practice was implemented during the start of the second semester,

Two orientation programs for parents of Blandford Academy students were conducted to introduce the seven course offerings for the CTE program at Petersburg High School.

Current enrollment of Blandford Academy students who are participating in the CTE program:

- three students are enrolled in the carpentry program (one student is scheduled to begin on March 30, 2009);
- three students are enrolled in the childcare program (three students are scheduled to begin on March 30, 2009);
- two students will enroll in the personal care aide beginning on March 30, 2009;
- 1 student will enroll in the automotive program beginning on March 30, 2009; and
- 1 student is enrolled in the culinary arts program.

Samples of student work products (i.e. jewelry boxes) completed in the CTE program are displayed in the school. When student attendance in the CTE program becomes a concern, home visits and telephone calls are made by the supervisor of career and technical education. Her efforts are documented in a contact log.

Recommended Interventions:

Continue to provide Blandford students with access to the CTE completer programs at Petersburg High School and permit them to attend classes with their peers during the regular school day. It is further recommended that Blandford students begin participating in CTE completer programs at the start of the school year.

Measure of Effectiveness:

ISAEP plans and Student Alternative Education plans will contain evidence of participation in the CTE completer programs at the high school.

Recommended Follow-up Technical Assistance:

None

Essential Action #5:

Provide early intervention in elementary and middle school programs to reduce the need for alternative programs.

Status of Implementation:

Document reviews revealed evidence of ongoing efforts to address instructional and behavioral issues contributing to the need for an alternative program.

Recommended Interventions:

Continue early intervention efforts at the elementary and middle schools to address instructional and behavioral issues that may impede student success.

Measure of Effectiveness:

Documentation of intervention efforts such as Response to Intervention and Child Study referrals as deemed appropriate for individual students.

Recommended Follow-up Technical Assistance:

None

Part II: Conclusion

The ISAEP program at Blandford Academy has met the minimum requirements for a functioning program. Document reviews, interviews, and classroom observations revealed that substantive efforts have been made to address the essential actions.