

# Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item



**Agenda Item:** L

**Date:** May 22, 2014

<b>Title</b>	Report on Gloucester County Public Schools' Proposal for a Year-Round Program for Full Circle Academy		
<b>Presenter</b>	Ms. Anne D. Wescott, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications		
<b>E-mail</b>	<a href="mailto:Anne.Wescott@doe.virginia.gov">Anne.Wescott@doe.virginia.gov</a>	<b>Phone</b>	(804) 225-2403

**Purpose of Presentation:**

For information only. No action required.

**Previous Review or Action:**

No previous review or action.

**Action Requested:**

No action requested.

**Alignment with Board of Education Goals: Please indicate (X) all that apply:**

	Goal 1: Accountability for Student Learning
	Goal 2: Rigorous Standards to Promote College and Career Readiness
	Goal 3: Expanded Opportunities to Learn
	Goal 4: Nurturing Young Learners
	Goal 5: Highly Qualified and Effective Educators
X	Goal 6: Sound Policies for Student Success
	Goal 7: Safe and Secure Schools
	Other Priority or Initiative. Specify:

Goal 6: Gloucester County Public Schools is planning to open a year-round program for two classrooms within Abingdon Elementary School for a small number of students needing additional time for instruction in reading and mathematics. The program is designed to help students be successful.

**Background Information and Statutory Authority:**

In 2012, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) conducted a study on year-round schools and found that:

- In the “single track” year-round calendar model, intersessions are used to provide the opportunity for additional instruction, and student learning loss is reduced by having a shorter summer break.
- Black students were more likely to improve their Standards of Learning (SOL) test scores at a faster rate and were more likely to score higher than predicted on 2009 SOL tests than their peers at traditional calendar schools.
- Certain school divisions may want to consider year-round schools as one method to improve student achievement, particularly those with high percentages of the student groups that appear

to benefit from year-round school: black, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and limited English proficient students.

The 2013 General Assembly appropriated \$412,500 GF for planning grants to school divisions interested in establishing year-round schools. Gloucester County Public Schools applied for and received a planning grant of \$39,724 for this purpose.

The school division used the planning grant to establish a stakeholder committee to work throughout the 2013-2014 school year on the feasibility and plans for a year-round program targeted to elementary students struggling with achievement on reading and mathematics skills foundational to long-term school success. The planning committee developed a plan and budget, conducted a needs assessment, developed a proposed calendar, made curriculum adjustments, created lesson plans for intersessions, and generated buy-in and procedures for staff and families to participate in the new program.

Section 22.1-79.1 of the *Code of Virginia* prohibits local school boards from adopting school calendars that require schools to open prior to Labor Day unless a waiver is granted by the Board for "good cause." "Good cause" includes year-round schools, which are considered experimental or innovative programs under § 22.1-79.1 (B) (3). However, the proposal is just for two classrooms within the school to open before Labor Day. The other classrooms in the school will open after Labor Day. As this is a program within a school, approval from the Board of Education is not needed. It is being presented to the Board as an informational item.

The provision that permits the Board to approve a year-round school may be found in § 22.1-79.1 as follows:

§ 22.1-79.1. Opening of the school year; approvals for certain alternative schedules.

A. Each local school board shall set the school calendar so that the first day students are required to attend school shall be after Labor Day. The Board of Education may waive this requirement based on a school board certifying that it meets one of the good cause requirements of subsection B.

B. For purposes of this section, "good cause" means:

...

3. A school division is providing its students, in the school year for which the waiver is sought, with an experimental or innovative program which requires an earlier opening date than that established in subsection A of this section and which has been approved by the Department of Education pursuant to the regulations of the Board of Education establishing standards for accrediting public schools. However, any waiver or extension of the school year granted by the Board of Education pursuant to this subdivision or its standards for accrediting public schools for such an experimental or innovative program shall only apply to the opening date for those schools where such experimental or innovative programs are offered generally to the student body of the school. For the purposes of this subdivision, experimental or innovative programs shall include instructional programs that are offered on a year-round basis by the school division in one or more of its elementary or middle or high schools...

**Summary of Important Issues:**

The innovative year-round program reflects a goal to improve student achievement and growth to help identified children to meet or exceed standards by the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The program is geared specifically to preventing learning loss, one of the key benefits of a year-round approach for vulnerable students, as highlighted by the 2012 JLARC report. The Full Circle Academy will serve between 30-40 children who remain behind their peers in mathematics and/or reading despite other prevention, intervention, or remediation efforts.

The calendar features four 9-week instruction quarters, each followed by a three-week intercession of core remedial support, aligned resource activities, and field activities and experiences to enhance student learning as well as targeted professional development for instructional staff; these elements necessitates an opening prior to Labor Day.

Included in this packet are a copy of the complete package submitted by Gloucester County Public Schools and the proposed year-round calendar.

**Impact on Resources:** The impact on resources at the state level is not expected to be significant.

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:** Gloucester County Public Schools will open this program prior to Labor Day beginning with the 2014-2015 school year.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:** Because Full Circle Academy will not be a year-round school, but is a program operating within a school that will maintain its traditional calendar, approval of a pre-Labor Day opening waiver by the Board of Education is not required. The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board receive this report on the plans from Gloucester County Public Schools for a year-round program for two classrooms at Abingdon Elementary School.

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
BOARD OF EDUCATION  
P.O. Box 2120  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23218-2120

**REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF CERTAIN ACCREDITING STANDARDS  
AND/OR APPROVAL  
OF AN INNOVATIVE OR EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM**

The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, (8 VAC 20-131-10 et seq.) set the minimum standards public schools must meet to be accredited by the Board of Education. Accreditation of public schools is required by the Standards of Quality (§§ 22.1-253.13:1 et seq.). The annual accrediting cycle for public schools is July 1 through June 30.

This cover sheet, with the supporting documentation, must be submitted to the Department of Education for review and recommendation to the Board at least 90 days prior to the beginning of an accrediting cycle or the proposed implementation of the program or activity that precipitates the request for the waiver. The types of waivers available and the corresponding section of the standards are indicated below. Please attach additional sheets or information deemed appropriate. (The Board will consider this request in its monthly meeting and school divisions **are required** to appear before the Board **in person or electronically** to explain a waiver request.)

SCHOOL DIVISION Gloucester County Public Schools

TITLE OF PROGRAM/ACTIVITY Full Circle Academy (Year-round program)

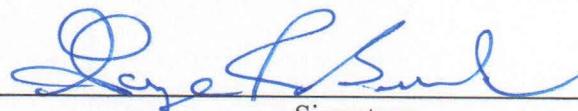
TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:

- Approval of an Alternative to the Standard School Year and School Day (8 VAC 20-131-150 )
- Approval of an Alternative Accreditation Plan (8 VAC 20-131-280.D )
- Approval of an Experimental Program (§ 22.1-79.1 of the *Code of Virginia* and 8 VAC 20-131-290.D )
- Approval of an Innovative Program (§ 22.1-79.1 of the *Code of Virginia* and 8 VAC 20-131-290.D )
- Approval of a Waiver of Other Provision(s) of the Standards (8 VAC 20-131-350 )  
(Complete Pages 1 and 3 of the application only.)

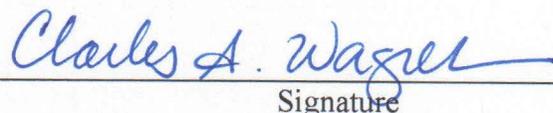
SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THE PROPOSED PROGRAM/ACTIVITY Abingdon Elementary School

4-23-14

Date Approved  
by the Local School Board



Signature  
Chairman of the School Board



Signature  
Division Superintendent

for Howard B. Kiser

Submission Date

SCHOOL DIVISION

Gloucester County Public Schools

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TITLE OF PROGRAM/ACTIVITY

Full Circle Academy (Year-round program)

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IF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM IS EXPERIMENTAL OR INNOVATIVE, FOR EACH SCHOOL EXPLAIN HOW THIS IS SO AND PROVIDE A PROGRAM DESCRIPTION, INCLUDING THE TYPE OF PROGRAM, ITS PURPOSE, THE GRADES SERVED, DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION DESCRIBING THE STUDENTS WHO WILL BE ATTENDING, THE RATIONALE FOR THE PROGRAM, THE PROGRAM'S GOALS, EVALUATION PROCEDURES, AND OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION.

#### Request

Gloucester County Public schools is requesting a waiver from the Virginia Board of Education so that Abingdon Elementary School may begin the school year prior to Labor Day for an innovative year-round program called Full Circle Academy. If this waiver is granted, approximately 30-40 children in grades 1-2 will begin their school year on July 21, 2014 in a program that provides 176 days of regular classroom instruction and 8 additional intercession days of remediation and enrichment.

#### Background

Gloucester County Public Schools was the recipient of a Year Round School Planning grant for the 2013-14 SY from the 2013 General Assembly. As a result of this grant award, GCPS was able to:

- Establish an Planning Committee which consisted of representatives from all stakeholders to plan for implementation
- Conduct needs assessment for all stakeholders (parents, community leaders, staff, teachers, and principals)
- Implement parent informational sessions to provide feedback for planning process (in process)
- Revise curriculum pacing guides to align with YRS school calendar
- Develop YRS calendar
- Provide travel for teacher and administrative teams visits to successful YRS in Virginia and/or outside of Virginia
- Fund supplemental material development, marketing, and equipment costs
- Organize and plan YRS budget
- Develop opt-in and opt-out procedures for staff and families
- Develop lesson plans for intersessions that include community and cross-curricular activities.

At its April 23, 2014 meeting, the Gloucester County School Board approved Abingdon Elementary School to pursue the year-round program. This application seeks a Board of Education waiver to open these schools prior to Labor Day, as permitted under the Code of Virginia Section 22.1-79.1.

#### Purpose & Rationale

The JLARC Report (2012) suggests that year-round learning opportunities allow children extra time before moving on with new material and may reduce the amount of summer learning losses often associated with a traditional school calendar. Gloucester County Public Schools believes that, for certain children in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade performing below grade level, a year-round academic calendar may provide learning benefits and reduce summer learning regression.

Abingdon Elementary School is a Title I Targeted Assistance School, enrollment 577, that has incorporated a VTSS model of tiered instruction for three consecutive years. In Grades K-3, more than 38% of children are FRL eligible. The Full Circle Academy (FCA) year-round proposal incorporates a pre-Labor Day starting date in an effort to provide quality, comprehensive pre-assessments to eligible underperforming children in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, and then utilizes this rich data to identify and develop a timely and targeted instructional and remediation program to enhance readiness for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. FCA incorporates 9-week instructional sessions, enhanced remediation opportunities occurring at regular intervals (intercessions) between quarters, and an extended school year into mid-or late June in an effort to ameliorate some of the regressive impacts of a longer summer break.

FCA is designed to serve 15-20 students each from Grades 1 and 2 who demonstrate significant weakness in Reading and/or Mathematics as measured by classroom performance, PALS (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening), DRA-II (Developmental Reading Assessment), Division Math benchmarks, as well as Virginia's Tiered System of Supports (formerly Response to Intervention) that assesses core skills in Reading and Math at regular intervals (screenings) throughout the school year.

### Program Overview

- Two-classrooms (Grades 1-2) at Abingdon Elementary School will serve 30-40 children identified through comprehensive analysis of student performance data (PALS, universal screenings, running records, progress monitoring, tiered instructional model, local benchmark performance, teacher recommendation, etc.). Teachers and administrators at Abingdon Elementary School have identified approximately 65 children whose assessment results demonstrate consistent performance at or below the 35<sup>th</sup> Percentile when compared to grade-level peers.
- Full Circle Academy will be an optional year-round instructional alternative for identified children.
- Staffing includes:
  - Two classroom teachers (Grades 1 and 2)
  - Two teacher aides, special educator(s) as needed or required, Math and Literacy interventionists, other resource teachers as provided through the program schedule.
  - One of the two classroom teachers will specialize in Reading/Literacy; the other in Math instruction. This specialization will enable teachers to group/regroup children to maximize targeted content instruction and remediation. It is the intent of FCA also to provide specialized training for paraprofessionals in either Reading/Literacy or Math instruction to complement the classroom teachers.
- Full Circle Academy will begin 7-21-14 and conclude 6-12-15.
- Pre-Labor Day instructional days are called “non-traditional” days and will include a daily schedule that provides all food services, transportation, as well as considerable core remedial support for struggling learners.
- Classroom experiences will be augmented by aligned resource activities and local field activities/experiences, which often are challenging to incorporate into a traditional calendar—especially for vulnerable children.
- Full Circle Academy utilizes four, 9-week instructional periods (quarters), each followed by a three-week intercession. On specified intercession dates, children will be assigned to additional required remediation at school. FCA teachers also will have dedicated planning/professional development days included within part of the intercessions, as well. *One of the three weeks after each nine-week period will be used for remediation and professional development, the other two weeks will be days off for teachers and students).*
- The Full Circle Academy program satisfies requirements for instructional time in accordance with Standards of Accreditation. In the event of closure due to inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances, FCA will make-up instructional time as needed to fulfill requirements and maintain integrity of the instructional program.

### Program Goals

To improve student achievement and growth and help identified children meet or exceed grade-level standards by the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade by reducing learning loss associated with a traditional school calendar:

- Extend learning opportunities for students over a more protracted period of time through implementation of a year-long school calendar;
- Deliver timely and targeted remediation and intervention “courses” to students at key intervals during instruction
- Provide additional days of instruction, as well as increased remediation/extension opportunities;
- Provide additional opportunities for students to explore science and social studies content that often become more marginalized in a traditional elementary calendar;
- Reassemble core instruction into more manageable “problem based units” of content/skills followed by formative assessments at more regular intervals;
- Provide teachers increased opportunities to engage in higher-quality collaboration during intercessions to analyze student performance, design instruction, and develop targeted interventions.
- Provide increased opportunities for parent involvement, parent meetings to discuss student performance, community education opportunities on “non-traditional” school days.

### Evaluation Criteria

Division staff will partner with administrators and teachers at Abingdon Elementary to compile, review, and monitor student achievement data which will include quarterly benchmark assessments, PALS, universal screenings and progress monitoring measures that assesses core skills in Reading and Math, STAR Reading reports, and DRA assessments to measure progress. Division and school staff will monitor parent involvement in conjunction with other Title I requirements to include sign-in sheets from parent information sessions, surveys, and questionnaires to measure progress towards goals. Division and school staff also will monitor student discipline and attendance data in accordance with Abingdon’s participation in Positive Behavioral Intervention Support benchmarks supported

through the VTSS process.

DOES THE PROGRAM REQUIRE THE SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS REFERENCED IN THIS APPLICATION TO OPEN PRIOR TO LABOR DAY?

YES  NO.

IF YES, EXPLAIN WHY.

Gloucester County Public Schools is seeking to implement a Year Round Program because traditional methods have not yielded desired student outcomes for a targeted group of low-performing children at Abingdon Elementary School. Starting before Labor Day will allow for more instructional time to prepare students for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and provide more opportunities for remediation. Data from the school suggests a need for more targeted instruction and remediation to support lower-performing children and increase learning retention typically lost over a longer summer break. The calendar also allows for remediation and enrichment activities to occur throughout the academic calendar rather than waiting until summer time to address areas where students need help. In order to reduce the length of the summer break and also fulfill SOA instructional clock-hour requirements, the calendar must be adjusted to include a pre-Labor Day opening. Abingdon's proposed year-round calendar for the selected classrooms is attached.

IF THE PROGRAM IS EXPERIMENTAL, FOR THE SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS REFERENCED IN THIS APPLICATION INCLUDE INFORMATION THAT EXPLAINS WHY THERE IS REASON TO EXPECT THAT THE PROGRAM WILL BE SUCCESSFUL.

The staff and administration of Gloucester County Public Schools endeavors to provide a high-quality, strong educational foundation in literacy and numeracy skills for all students and recognizes further the critical importance of ensuring that all students obtain these foundational skills by the beginning of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade.

According to the JLARC Study (2012), YRS increased SOL test performance for specific groups of students, in particular African-American students. The study indicates further that the increased student performance may be due to the intersessions.

To ensure success, Gloucester County seeks the following commitments:

- Selected teachers will opt-in to the program and work a 202-day contract and be compensated for additional time, as needed.
- Students at year-round schools will attend selected remediation days during intersessions. The proposition of a year-round school calendar for students most at risk of not meeting grade level standards by the time they begin 3<sup>rd</sup> grade may be a reasonable and effective strategy for providing an alternative instructional model already shown to have positive impacts on achievement and growth among certain subgroups of children.
- Identified families and children are expected to commit to the year-round program for the 2014-15 school year. Commitments beyond the 2014-15 SY are dependent upon available funding.

DESCRIBE THE ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRAM FOR EACH SCHOOL.

The anticipated outcomes are:

1. Grade-level proficiency and growth as measured by the battery of standardized diagnostic assessments described herein, general outcome measures, teacher records, and grade-level expectations.
2. Improved student attendance, reduced student discipline, stronger parent involvement and increased parent and teacher satisfaction.
3. Increased interest in year-round alternatives that can be incorporated in other elementary schools in Gloucester County.

SCHOOL DIVISION Gloucester County Public Schools

TITLE OF PROGRAM/ACTIVITY Full Circle Academy (Year-round program)

IF YOU ARE SEEKING A WAIVER OF A PROVISION OR PROVISIONS OF THE ACCREDITING STANDARDS, STATE THE PROVISION AND THE RATIONALE FOR SEEKING A WAIVER FOR EACH.

Code of Virginia §22.1-79.1. Opening of the school year; approvals for certain alternative schedules.

A. Each local school board shall set the school calendar so that the first day students are required to attend school shall be after Labor Day. The Board of Education may waive this requirement on a showing of good cause.

B. For purposes of this section, "good cause" means:

3. A school division is providing its students, in the school year for which the waiver is sought, with an experimental or innovative program which requires an earlier opening date than that established in subsection A of this section and which has been approved by the Department of Education pursuant to the regulations of the Board of Education establishing standards for accrediting public schools. However, any waiver or extension of the school year granted by the Board of Education pursuant to this subdivision or its standards for accrediting public schools for such an experimental or innovative program shall only apply to the opening date for those schools where such experimental or innovative programs are offered generally to the student body of the school. For the purposes of this subdivision, experimental or innovative programs shall include instructional programs that are offered on a year-round basis by the school division in one or more of its elementary or middle or high schools.

DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WAIVER/PROGRAM/ACTIVITY. (Include information that includes measurable goals, objectives, and student academic achievement that will be expected as a result of the implementation of the program/activity.)

Division and school staff will compile data and monitor progress of Full Circle Academy each quarter to determine whether the year-round calendar is having a positive impact on student achievement. The proposed year-round program will provide more instructional time to implement current and new research-based strategies to accomplish goals and increase student achievement. Strategies will continue to be reviewed and monitored by staff. Data will be collected and analyzed quarterly to evaluate performance against program goals. Staff will incorporate any programmatic adjustments and professional development as needed to ensure progress toward program goals and desired student achievement measures.

Number of students involved in the program 30-40

What is the anticipated length of the program or duration of the waiver?

July 21, 2014 through June 12, 2015. Gloucester County Public Schools is confident of a successful implementation and as such, intends to support continuation of the program in subsequent school years as resources permit.

Questions should be directed to the Division of Policy and Communications at (804) 225-2092, or by e-mail to [policydata@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:policydata@doe.virginia.gov). This application and supporting documentation must be sent to:

Division of Policy and Communications  
Department of Education  
P. O. Box 2120  
Richmond, VA 23218-2120

# Academic Calendar

July		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	8	S		
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2014-15	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	
August					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	18	S	
September	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30						14	S	
October			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			15	S	
November						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	13	S	
December	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31					15	S	
January			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			14	S	
February						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28			20	S	
March						1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	15	S
April			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				14	S	
May				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31		20	S	
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July			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31					

## 9-week model

- Begins **July 21, 2014** ends **June 12, 2015**
- 176 student days
- 202 teacher days
- Calendar by quarter:
  - 1- July 21-Sept. 19. Student days- 40
  - 2-Oct. 13-Dec. 19. Student days- 43
  - 3- Jan. 12-Mar. 20. Student days- 49
  - 4- Apr. 13-June 12. Student days 44
- The next school year starts July 20, 2015

	Instructional day
	Holiday-closed
	Teacher Work Day (TWD)
	ALL OFF (FCA Only)
	Remediation
	Buildings closed