

For Immediate Release: April 14, 2010

Contact: Charles B. Pyle, Director of Communications, (804) 371-2420
Julie C. Grimes, Communications Manager, (804) 225-2775

State Superintendent Announces New Option for Public Schools to Expand Opportunity & Raise Achievement

Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Patricia I. Wright announced today that school divisions may now select a state-approved “lead turnaround partner” to provide instructional services and establish independently managed programs in chronically under-performing schools.

“This is another step to expand opportunity for students in communities served by schools that have yet to experience the progress that most of the commonwealth’s schools have made under the Standards of Learning (SOL) program,” Wright said. “Every child in Virginia — regardless of where he or she lives — has a right to an education that meets state standards and provides the knowledge and skills required for success in college and the workplace.”

School divisions may select one of four lead turnaround partners contracted by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to provide additional opportunities for students in low-performing schools. The lead turnaround partners are required to provide instructional services and programs aligned with the SOL and employ teachers who meet state standards for content knowledge and licensure.

The state contract also requires lead turnaround partners to have the capability of implementing all federal and state school-reform models and conduct programs to encourage parental involvement.

“VDOE’s plan to work with local school leaders and turnaround partners to implement innovative strategies to improve learning opportunities for students and teachers is a step in the right direction, and an approach Governor McDonnell supports,” Virginia Secretary of Education Gerard Robinson said.

“Each of these lead turnaround partners has a record of creating and implementing effective programs that offer real choices for students and parents while working collaboratively with local school boards, superintendents, principals and teachers,” said Wright. “The state contract spares school divisions from having to initiate their own requests for proposals to find a suitable turnaround partner.”

The VDOE-vetted and approved lead turnaround partners are:

- **Cambridge Education** — an educational services company based in the United Kingdom providing services to schools and districts in 22 states
- **EdisonLearning** — an education services and charter-school management company serving schools and districts in 24 states
- **Johns Hopkins University** — home of the Center for the Social Organization of Schools, developer of successful school restructuring models, including “Success for All”
- **Pearson K-12 Solutions** — a division of Pearson Education providing turnaround and transformation services to schools and districts in Colorado and Washington

(more)

After selecting a partner, a division would establish a time frame for the performance of services and development of instructional programs at the state-contracted prices — plus other costs, such as office space, equipment and materials, not covered by the state contract. Individual schools and groups of schools with similar needs also have the option of selecting a lead turnaround partner to improve instruction and expand educational opportunities for students.

Resources available to support school-turnaround services and programs include per-pupil state funding and federal funds — including school improvement grants — authorized under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (also known as No Child Left Behind).

###