



Appendix C

Key Initiatives for the Education Pipeline December 2009

Pre-K Through Eighth Grade

- **Smart Beginnings:** Directs new and improved resources to families with children from birth to age five and is comprised of an array of health, education, and parental involvement programs. The initiative highlights the connection between high quality, early childhood education and a competitive workforce, and ultimately a vital economy for the Commonwealth.
- **Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI):** Distributes state funds to schools and community-based organizations to provide quality preschool programs for at-risk four-year-olds not served by Head Start. The goal is to provide comprehensive preschool programs for 100 percent of Virginia's at-risk four-year-olds. The purpose of the grants is to reduce disparities among young children upon formal school entry and to reduce or eliminate those risk factors that lead to early academic failure. To obtain state funding, localities must develop a written local plan for programs that include quality preschool education, parental involvement, comprehensive social and health services, and transportation.
- **Early Intervention Reading Initiative:** Provides early reading intervention services to kindergartners through third grade students who demonstrate reading deficiencies on the PALS (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening) assessment. The initiative assists school divisions in efforts toward ensuring all children read at grade level by the third grade.
- **Reading First:** Authorized by No Child Left Behind, Reading First provides funds to train teachers of kindergartners through third grade in the essential components of reading and to select and administer screening, diagnostic, and classroom-based instructional reading assessments to identify those children who may be at risk of reading failure. Funds may also be used by schools to purchase resources that support reading instruction and for school-based reading coaches.
- **Even Start Family Literacy Program:** Administered by the Virginia Department of Education, the Even Start Family Literacy Program is a federally funded program designed to improve the academic achievement of children and their parents, especially in the area of reading. The program uses a family-centered approach, which embraces the whole family as the "student," and provides an integrated program of early childhood education, adult education and basic skills instruction, parenting education, and interactive literacy activities between parents and their children.
- **Middle School Mathematics Teachers Corps:** Provides the structure and incentives for school divisions to hire experienced mathematics teachers for middle schools that have been designated as at risk in mathematics. Teachers selected are dynamic, well-qualified teachers who have demonstrated success in teaching mathematics in challenging environments.



- **Algebra Readiness Initiative (ARI):** Helps school divisions prepare students for success in algebra. School divisions are eligible for incentive payments to provide mathematics intervention services and instruction to students in grades six through nine who are at-risk of failing the Algebra I end-of-course test, as demonstrated by their individual performance on diagnostic tests (pre- and post-tests) that have been approved by the Virginia Department of Education.
- **Board of Education Recommended Instructional Models/Programs:** Virginia’s Standards of Accreditation (SOAs) require schools accredited with a warning in English or mathematics to implement instructional methods that have a proven track record of success in raising student achievement. The Board of Education is required to publish a list of recommended instructional methods that are proven to work with low-achieving students. The Virginia Department of Education Office of School Improvement also publishes a wide range of resources for improving student achievement.
- **Making Middle Grades Work (MMGW):** Coordinated by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), this program is built upon a comprehensive improvement framework that successful schools address to raise student achievement. MMGW schools are developing practices for each of the elements and conditions that promise improvement in student achievement. The goal for all MMGW schools is, “to increase the percentages of eighth graders who perform at the NAEP ‘proficient’ level in core academic subjects and who leave eighth grade ready for college-preparatory work in high school.” Outstanding practices employed by MMGW schools are released regularly.

Secondary and Postsecondary Education

- **Project Graduation:** Identifies and assists students at risk of not meeting the Standards of Learning (SOL) graduation requirements that became effective in 2004. The initiative includes regional academies for seniors and rising seniors and online tutorials developed specifically to prepare students for success on the SOL reading test and Algebra I SOL assessment. The academies are funded through state grants to individual school divisions or regional cooperatives.
- **GED Programs/Adult Education:** General Educational Development (GED) tests enable persons without a high school credential to demonstrate the attainment of abilities normally associated with completion of a high school program of study. The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center offers resources on the GED such as testing sites, test-taking strategies, and tutorials for GED teachers. The *Race to GED* is a workforce initiative of the Office of Adult Education to promote GED programs in order to meet or exceed 20,000 Virginians passing the GED tests annually. The “PlugGED In” pilot in Southwest Virginia allows adults without a high school diploma to prepare for technology jobs while they are studying for their GEDs.
- **Middle College:** Allows individuals without a high school degree to simultaneously pursue a GED, community college education, and a workforce certification in a college environment. The program offers targeted remedial courses, access to workforce readiness courses, enrollment in



community college courses applicable to a degree or industry-based certificate, and support services.

- **Achieve, Inc. and The America Diploma Project:** The American Diploma Project (ADP) is an initiative of Achieve, Inc., which works with its 34 partner states to restore value to the high school diploma through 1) aligning high school standards and assessments with college and career readiness standards; 2) promoting college- and career-ready diplomas; 3) building assessments into state systems; and 4) developing accountability systems that promote college and career readiness. Achieve, Inc. tracks state progress in its annual report, *Closing the Expectations Gap*.
- **Standard and Advanced Technical Diplomas:** Beginning with the ninth grade class of 2010-2011 (pending final regulations), students will have the option of graduating with a Standard or Advanced Technical diploma. To graduate with a Standard Technical Diploma, students must earn at least 22 units of credit by passing required courses and electives, including at least six verified credits (earned by passing end-of-course SOL tests or other assessments approved by the Board of Education). In addition, students must earn at least four standard credits in career and technical education in a concentration approved by the Board of Education. To earn an Advanced Technical Diploma, students must earn at least 26 units of credit and at least nine verified credits, including three standard credits in career and technical education and one additional credit either in career and technical education or fine arts.
- **High Schools That Work (HSTW):** An initiative of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) that provides participating states with a variety of staff development and technical services to implement 10 “key practices” aimed at improving student achievement and instituting a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement. Key practices include increasing student achievement expectations, college preparatory coursework, integration of career/technical studies, and use of student assessment and program evaluation data to improve curriculum and instruction. The initiative’s assessment (administered to seniors) provides data on students’ reading, mathematics, and science achievement as well as students’ and teachers’ opinions on high school curriculum and instruction. Outstanding practices identified from HSTW sites are disseminated by SREB.
- **Academic/Career Plans:** These customized plans, beginning at the middle school level and periodically updated, help guide students through course selection and preparation for post-secondary education and careers. Plans will be required for every student beginning with those entering the seventh grade during the 2010-2011 school year.
- **Graduation and Completion Index (GCI):** Under this new metric for accreditation, high schools would earn weighted “index points” towards accreditation based on the status of the 9th grade cohort and all other students in the 12th grade class. The GCI would include weighted percentage points for students who graduate from high school in four years or less, earn a GED certificate, remain in school for more than four years, or earn a certificate of completion. For full accreditation, schools would be required to meet benchmarks on the Board of Education’s GCI. School Performance Report Cards report a school’s GCI, annual and cohort dropout rates, com-



pletion rates, and diploma and credential types.

- **Common Core State Standards Initiative:** This multi-state initiative, entered into by Virginia in May 2009, will develop a “common core” of K-12 English-language arts and mathematics standards that are internationally benchmarked. The standards will build directly on recent efforts of leading national organizations and states that have developed college- and career-ready standards. The agreement calls for the development of a core set of high school standards by late summer of 2009 and elementary and middle school standards in both subjects by the end of 2009. Once developed, states will have the opportunity to adopt the standards or align them with their current content standards. Adoption of the common core of standards is not binding on member states. The initiative is led by the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Also involved in the standards-drafting process will be Achieve, Inc. (founder of the multi-state American Diploma Project), ACT, and the College Board.
- **Early College Scholars Program:** Allows eligible high school students to earn at least 15 hours of transferable college credit while completing the requirements for an Advanced Studies Diploma. For eligibility, students must have a “B” average or better, be pursuing an Advanced Studies Diploma, and take and complete college-level coursework (through AP, International Baccalaureate, Cambridge, or dual enrollment).
- **Dual Enrollment:** Arrangements between the boards of participating public high schools and colleges in which students may enroll in for-credit college courses while still in high school. Earned credits may then be applied to the Early College Scholars Program and/or the Commonwealth College Course Collaborative (CCCC), which provides for the acceptance of completed credit hours (for degree credit) at participating post-secondary institutions in Virginia.
- **GEAR UP:** Helps low-income students attend and succeed in post-secondary education by providing early intervention services and a scholarship program for eligible students who demonstrate financial need. Students must be a member of a selected cohort and participating Virginia school. Criteria for school selection include a school’s percentage of students attending a middle school within a school division who qualify for free or reduced lunches.
- **Path to Industry Certification/Tech Prep:** Encourages students to work toward earning an industry certification, achieving a state license, or passing an occupational competency assessment while pursuing a high school diploma. Students who earn a credential and complete a Career and Technical program may earn up to two student-selected verified credits to meet graduation requirements.
- **Virtual Advanced Placement School/Virtual Virginia:** Provides a variety of Advanced Placement (AP) courses, enabling students to earn college credit, regardless of their high school's ability to offer college-level courses. The Virginia Department of Education reimburses school divisions for tuition and test fees for students who sign an Early College Scholars Agreement.
- **Career Coaches:** Career Coaches are Virginia Community College System (VCCS) employees based in local high schools with the mission to help high school students define their career aspi-



rations and recognize post-secondary programs and services that can help students achieve their goals. Services provided to students from career coaches include assistance with dual-enrollment, career pathways and other community college and university programs, college application processes, financial aid/scholarships, and career assessments.

- **Career Pathways:** An evolving initiative involving the strategic deployment and utilization of the Commonwealth's economic, workforce, and educational resources. The Governor's Task Force on Career Pathways System Development was created to develop a strategic plan for implementing the state's career pathways system. The further development of a statewide career pathways system in Virginia is underway in accordance with the December 2008 release of *Bridging Business and Education for the 21st Century Workforce: A Strategic Plan for Virginia's Career Pathways System*.
- **Career Prep/Career and Technical Academies:** Career pathways beginning in high school that contain an integrated curriculum of core academics and career and technical education that continues through an associate degree, industry certification or licensure, or registered apprenticeship. Career and Technical Academies are programs designed to expand options for the general student population to acquire STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) literacy and other critical skills, knowledge, and credentials to prepare them for high-demand, high-wage, and high-skill careers in Virginia. Each academy is a partnership of school divisions, post-secondary institutions, and business and industry.
- **Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) Programs:** This advanced high school coursework gives students with sufficient test scores the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school. Courses are taken either individually (AP) or as a series in a prescribed sequence (IB).
- **Achieve the Dream:** This community college initiative utilizes data-driven research to boost student access and success. The initiative is particularly focused on increasing student access, success, and narrowing the achievement gap among traditionally underrepresented populations.
- **Guaranteed Admission Agreements/Transfer and Articulation Agreements:** System-wide agreements through which students who graduate from one of Virginia's 23 community colleges with an associate's degree and a minimum grade point average may obtain guaranteed admission to more than 20 of the Commonwealth's public and private colleges and universities.
- **VCCS Education Wizard:** A search engine-type technology dedicated to helping Virginia's citizens gain easy access to information about careers and educational opportunities available to them. Specifically, users can choose a career, find information on pursuing this career, enroll in one of Virginia's community colleges, pay for college, or transfer to a four-year college or university. The Wizard allows users to compare costs at different types of colleges and determine how much and what type of financial aid one might expect to receive at an institution.
- **Virginia Mentor:** A web-based system providing information on academic preparation for college, advice and mentoring on paying for college, information and comparative views on two- and four-year public and private institutions in Virginia, high school academic planning and prepara-



tion for college, and career self-assessment and matching services. Funded through the College Access Challenge Grant Program.

- **Virginia’s Career VIEW:** A web-based system providing information about educational and career opportunities for students from kindergarten through post-secondary education. The service also networks with school guidance counselors to distribute newsletters on financial aid, study skills, and college/career planning.
- **VCCS Dateline 2009 Strategic Plan:** System-wide and institution-specific goals crafted along the broad areas of access to higher education, workforce development, and economic opportunity. Progress is tracked at the system and institutional levels, with the seven goals of enrollment; workforce training; graduation, retention, and placement rates; transfer to four-year colleges and universities; affordable tuition; dual enrollment with high schools; and private funding.
- **Institutional Performance Standards under the Restructuring Act (2005):** The Restructuring Act grants all public colleges and universities, including the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), greater financial and administrative autonomy in exchange for commitments to meet specific statewide goals. These goals include maintaining affordability, offering a broad range of academic programs (undergraduate & graduate), maintaining high academic standards, improving student retention and ensuring timely graduation, developing articulation agreements with the VCCS, stimulating economic development, increasing expenditures for research and number of patents and licenses, establishing programs with K-12 schools to improve student achievement and teacher skills, developing a six-year plan stressing improvements in various academic areas, meeting certain financial and administrative standards, and ensuring student safety and security.
- **VCCS Workforce Development Services:** An array of standard and customized workforce training, skills development, and workforce certification and licensure preparation services provided by VCCS. Key initiatives include career coaches, apprenticeship-related instruction, middle college, and tech prep.
- **Career Readiness Certificates:** A statewide employability certificate that provides a workplace skills certification that businesses can directly connect to productivity, quality, business processes, and profitability. Career Readiness Certificates are graded at three levels – Gold, Silver and Bronze – depending on WorkKeys exam scores.
- **Workforce Investment Act (WIA) One-Stops:** Full-service sites that provide core employment services (including job search and placement assistance, access to computers, telephones, fax and copy machines, resume and cover letter development, employment-and related workshops) to all jobseekers, as well as training and career education services to those who are eligible. Centers also provide access to other partner program services as required by federal legislation.
- **Apprenticeship-Related Instruction (ARI):** Administered by VCCS, ARI is a collaborative effort between the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry, secondary education, technical centers, and local colleges to provide related instruction in high-skill trades and occupations. Instruction for registered apprentices includes theoretical and technical knowledge.



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- **Workforce Development Academy:** A collaboration between the University of Virginia and VCCS, the Academy provides training and professional development to workforce development instructors, administrators, educators, human resources professionals, and those interested in pursuing careers in workforce development. Offerings include a certificate in Workforce Development, a noncredit certificate for the completion of the Workforce Development Professional Competencies course, professional certification, noncredit courses, and competencies training.
 - **Liberal Education & America’s Promise (LEAP):** A signature initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) LEAP champions the value of a liberal education through the development of a common set of “essential learning outcomes” that are transferable across institutions. The “essential learning outcomes” were developed through a multi-year dialogue with hundreds of colleges and universities about needed goals for student learning, analysis of a long series of recommendations and reports from the business community, and analysis of the accreditation requirements for engineering, business, nursing, and teacher education. Virginia is one of four states now involved in a LEAP partnership.
 - **College Access Challenge Grant Program Initiatives:** A two-year federal formula grant program designed to foster partnerships among Federal, state, and local government entities and philanthropic organizations to significantly increase the number of students who enter and remain in post-secondary education. A priority of the grant is to provide services to students and families below the poverty line. Virginia’s campaign, “Information is Key to Access and Success,” is designed to demystify post-high school educational opportunities and access. Workshops provide information on the importance of post-secondary education, career planning, and how to apply, finance, enroll, and succeed in post-secondary education.