

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: _____ F. _____

Date: April 27, 2007

Topic: Final Review of the Proposed Board of Education's *Spirit of the Commonwealth Award*

Presenter: Dr. Cynthia A. Cave, Director, Office of Student Services

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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

X Other: _____

X Action requested at this meeting _____ Action requested at future meeting: _____ (date)

Previous Review/Action:

_____ No previous board review/action

X Previous review/action

date April 26, 2006

action Recommendation to the Board of Education by the Student Advisory Committee

date March 29, 2007

action *The Spirit of the Commonwealth Award* approved for first review by the Board of Education

Background Information:

On April 26, 2006, the Board of Education's 2005-2006 Student Advisory Committee presented a recommendation to the Board to create the *Spirit of the Commonwealth Award*. This award would be created and given annually to individual high school juniors who have demonstrated academic achievement, well-rounded participation in school activities, and community and civic responsibility. Individual middle/junior and high schools would also be able to receive an award by providing diverse opportunities for students to serve the community and others in co-curricular and/or extracurricular activities, such as service learning and volunteering experiences.

Summary of Major Elements:

To implement the award, the following criteria and procedures are proposed.

The Individual Student Awards

In order to be eligible for an individual award, a student must be nominated by a school division principal, teacher, guidance counselor, or a parent. Nominations should be based on academic achievement, participation in a variety of service and community/civic activities, leadership, and good character.

Nominated high school juniors would complete an application and submit it with letters of recommendation to their respective principals. Each public high school principal, with the assistance of a school team, would review all applications and select the most qualified applicants in their respective schools. The names of the selected applicants would be forwarded to the school division administration for review and submission to the Virginia Department of Education. Award recipients would receive letters and certificates of recognition from the Board of Education.

The Middle and High School Awards

In order to be eligible for an award, a school would be nominated by a principal, teacher, or parents. Nominated schools would have demonstrated success by:

- Provision of diverse opportunities for students to participate in service activities in the school and community
- Recognition of demonstrated student leadership in a variety of areas.

Principals of the nominated schools would submit applications to their respective school division administrators for review by a division team. The division team would select the most qualified middle/junior high schools and the most qualified high school recipients. Names of schools would be forwarded to the Department of Education. Award recipients would receive letters and certificates of recognition from the Board of Education.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education adopt the proposed criteria and guidelines for the *Spirit of the Commonwealth Award*.

Impact on Resources:

The impact on resources is not expected to be significant. There will be some administrative costs to school divisions in preparation and review of applications for the award.

Timetable for Further Review/Action:

Upon final approval, information will be provided to school divisions and to principals about award criteria and procedures.

VIRGINIA SPIRIT OF THE COMMONWEALTH AWARD

Purpose: Students across Virginia are using their talents and ambition to make a difference in their schools, neighborhoods and communities. On April 26, 2006, the Board of Education's 2005-2006 Student Advisory Committee acknowledged the importance of promoting student involvement by recommending that the **Spirit of the Commonwealth Award** be developed. The award recognizes:

- Student leadership in the school and community
- Student involvement in clubs, sports, societies, and service organizations
- Academic achievement
- Civic involvement through service to others and volunteerism.

The award is also designed for school divisions and parents to recognize middle/junior and high schools that make diverse opportunities available for students in the award areas. These middle/junior and high schools collaborate with community organizations to promote student leadership, involvement, service and civic responsibility.

Process: To be eligible, a student must be nominated by a principal, teacher, guidance counselor or parent. Nominated students must submit an application and at least two letters of recommendation to their respective school principals. Each division high school principal, with the assistance of a school team, reviews all applications and selects the most qualified applicants in their respective schools. The names of the selected applicants are forwarded to the school division administrator for review and submission to the Virginia Department of Education.

Middle/junior high, high schools, and combined middle/junior/high schools nominated by principals, teachers or parents will also be required to complete and submit applications. Principals of the nominated schools would submit their applications to their respective division administrators for review. The school division administrator, with the assistance of a division-level team, is responsible for selecting the most qualified middle, junior and high schools for recognition. The school division forwards the selected award recipient school names to the Virginia Department of Education.

The Department of Education (VDOE) will provide school divisions with a certificate of recognition and a letter of congratulations from the Board of Education for each award recipient.

The completed certificates will be sent to school division administrators for presentation to the recipients.

If you have questions or need additional information about the Spirit of the Commonwealth Award, please contact Vivian.Stith-Williams, student services specialist at 804-225-4543 or e-mail, Vivian.Stith-Williams@doe.virginia.gov.

Attachments

SECTION II

(To Be Completed By Student)

ESSAYS

Please respond to the two questions below on a separate sheet of paper. Your responses to the following questions should be limited to four typed pages (total for both questions), double spaced, 12 point font, with one-inch margins.

1. The *Virginia Spirit of the Commonwealth Award* recognizes students who have demonstrated academic achievement and participation in diverse opportunities in their schools and communities. Please discuss your participation in co-curricular and/or extracurricular activities, athletics, societies/clubs, and service organizations. Please include volunteer experiences, as well as any leadership experiences within your school and/or community.

2. How have the above experiences influenced your perspective on the importance of civic engagement and contributing to one's community? What lessons have you learned from your participation? How have you made a difference? Be specific.

SECTION III

(Letters of Recommendation)

Confidential letters of recommendation from at least two people (one from the person making the nomination) not related to the applicant should be filed with this application. These letters should give specific information in regard to the applicant's leadership ability, activities, and character. Letters should include the student's name, how the recommending adults know the student, if applicable, which courses and/or activities the student has pursued with the recommending adult, and the quality of the student's leadership and participation in school and extracurricular activities.

THANK YOU!

**VIRGINIA SPIRIT OF THE COMMONWEALTH AWARD
SCHOOL APPLICATION**

SECTION I

(To be completed by school principal and submitted to division administrator)

School Name: _____ School Division _____

This is a

- Middle/Junior high school: Number of students: _____
 High school: Number of students: _____
 Combined Middle/Junior/High School

Principal: _____
_____ Fax

School Address: _____
_____ Phone

_____ Zip Code

City/County

State

Nominating person: _____ Position: _____

SECTION II

(To be completed by school principal)

Please respond to the question below on a separate sheet of paper.

Describe the opportunities offered to students in the areas of co-curricular and/or extracurricular activities, athletics, societies/clubs, service organizations, recognitions (e.g., scholarships, honors, and awards), service learning and community volunteering experiences. What community partnerships and collaborations (e.g., PTA, nonprofit organizations, and businesses) have you enhanced, developed or supported to make these opportunities available? If appropriate, provide the number of students that participated in each activity/program for the past two years.

THANK YOU!