



The conditions under which the Board may grant such waivers are outlined in the *Code*. Part 3 of § 22.1-79.1.B permits the Board to approve a waiver for approval of an experimental or innovative program 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 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....

The following school divisions with year-round, innovative, or experimental programs were approved for the 2007-2008 school year: Alexandria (two schools), Arlington (one school) Danville (five schools), Fairfax County (ten schools), Hampton (eight schools), and Virginia Beach (four schools). Until now, all requests submitted to and approved by the Board of Education have been for year-round programs. This is the first request for approval of an innovative or experimental program that is not a year-round program.

In accordance with requirements adopted by the Board of Education, if this waiver request is approved, the school division is required to evaluate the effectiveness of the program if the division seeks an extension of the approval for the next school year. All school divisions with approved innovative programs must provide an evaluation of these programs on an annual basis.

**Summary of Major Elements:** The Covington City School Board is requesting approval of an innovative program for Edgemont Primary School and Jeter-Watson Intermediate School. Approval of this request would permit both of these schools to open prior to Labor Day in conjunction with Covington High School. Covington High School is eligible to receive a Pre-Labor Day waiver because it meets the requirements of § 22.1-79.1 as it has dependent programs shared with Alleghany County Public Schools. In order to provide the maximum educational benefit to the students served by Covington City Public Schools, it is important that the school calendar for the primary, intermediate, and high schools operate on the same schedule.

Because Covington is a small school system in a rural area, the school division has difficulty recruiting

teachers for specific content areas and finds it challenging to recruit minority and male teachers for the elementary school. To address this challenge, the school division has developed a program, Shadowing Career Opportunities for Prospective Educators (SCOPE), which is offered to juniors and seniors at the high school. This program has two goals: (1) to encourage academically able students to consider teaching as a profession and (2) to increase the diversity of the school division teaching staff by encouraging males and minority students to become teachers. In addition, students in the primary and intermediate schools benefit academically, physically, and socially through the assistance of the high school students in this program. The high school students work collaboratively with teachers and elementary and intermediate school students assisting teachers with intervention and remediation for identified students during the school day.

Both the primary school and the intermediate schools have a significant number of minority students, students who receive free or reduced lunches, and English language learners. Since its inception, the SCOPE program has increased by five times as many students as was in the initial program. In addition, 44% of the class is male, and several minority students are involved. The school division believes the program will have a lasting impact on its students. Covington's educators, parents, students, and other stakeholders believe the relationships that are formed between older and younger students, the extra support that is provided from working/studying with "buddies," the formation of good character traits through modeling, and the focus on academic excellence are facets of the SCOPE's program vision that connect with their individual and community goals.

A copy of the complete package submitted by the Covington City School Board is attached.

**Superintendent's Recommendation:** The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education accept the request for first review.

**Impact on Resources:** The impact on resources is not expected to be significant.

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:** This request will be presented to the Board of Education for final review on May 21, 2008.



SCHOOL DIVISION Covington City Public Schools  
TITLE OF PROGRAM/ACTIVITY SCOPE (Shadowing Career Opportunities for Prospective Educators)  
Teacher Cadet

IF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM IS EXPERIMENTAL OR INNOVATIVE, 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 PROGRAMS GOALS, EVALUATION PROCEDURES, AND OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION.

**Innovative Program:**

Covington City Public School Division is located in the heart of the Alleghany Mountains in the western section of Virginia. Any approach to this city will take visitors through some of the most mountainous and beautiful scenery that can be found. There are approximately 6, 286 (2000 Census Report) residents in the city of Covington. The "blue collar" population count, compared with the 1990 Census Report, shows a decline of 11.2 percent. Rural isolation greatly influences the economic status of Covington and the Alleghany Highlands. This area consistently registers as having one of the highest unemployment rates in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

As a small school system in a rural area with limited social potential, some educators may be reluctant to come to this area to live and teach. Covington City Schools find it very hard to fill specific content area teaching positions and to attract minorities and males for our elementary school. It is very difficult to attract young people to this area because of its limited social opportunities and also very hard to entice older people to this area because of the lack of employment opportunities available for the person's spouse.

Covington City Public Schools has identified two major goals for its SCOPE program. The first goal of SCOPE is to encourage academically able students who possess exemplary interpersonal and leadership skills to consider teaching as a career. Currently, all of the students that have gone through the SCOPE program have gone on to higher education. We have former SCOPE students applying for substitute work, while attending college, and requesting a placement to do their student teaching or observation work in our schools. The second goal of SCOPE is to increase the diversity of the Covington City teaching staff by enticing young, highly qualified students to become educators (especially males and minorities) and return to this area to teach. (When the SCOPE program began in 2003-2004, we had one male participate. Today, 44% of the students are males and 12% are minorities. We have 6% of the class on free/reduced lunch.)

The SCOPE program is offered to juniors and seniors at Covington High School. The SCOPE instructor lays the foundation for all of the unique experience that will happen during the year. Students will be provided direct instruction dealing with various educational issues/topics. Examples of those topics include:

- Program Overview, Expectations, and Procedures
- Understanding Child Development
- Investigation of Learning Styles
- Research-based Instructional Strategies
- Leadership Development
- First Days of School (Harry Wong)
- Legal and Ethical Issues in Education
- Mandates and Policies in Virginia Schools
- Effective Teaching

The majority of student time in the Covington High School SCOPE program is spent in classrooms at Edgemont Primary School and Jeter-Watson Intermediate School. Students from the high school are placed into our elementary and intermediate schools to work directly with classroom teachers at various grade levels and content

areas. Students start their shadowing experience by observing classrooms and then progress into becoming elementary/intermediate school student mentors and tutors during their shadowing experience.

SCOPE students work directly with teachers and students in a collaborative manner, assisting teachers with intervention and remediation for identified students during the school day. Most SCOPE students use the experience to help younger students focus on Standards of Learning review items, develop an interest in reading by reading with an older "buddy", and connect academics during the school day with after school activities.

The SCOPE instructor works closely with each SCOPE student to make sure that their school placement is a match. The instructor also works closely with the principals of Edgemont Primary and Jeter-Watson Intermediate Schools to make sure that the internship experience is a successful one for not only the SCOPE student, but also the students, teachers, and administration from the other two schools.

The SCOPE instructor will plan cooperatively with Edgemont Primary and Jeter-Watson Intermediate to provide them with students that can help support academic rigor and remediation efforts as well. The SCOPE instructor will support each SCOPE student in his/her understanding of each day's shadowing assignment/s.

#### **Evaluation:**

At the end of the year the program will be assessed in a number of different ways. First, the students will be asked to evaluate the program on its coursework, the internship experience, guest speaker's topics, observations, and the positive influence/s that were made due to their support at Edgemont and Jeter-Watson. The program and student goals will be monitored throughout the year and as a culmination of the project, students will be asked to have a one-on-one discussion with the SCOPE instructor, highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the program from the student's perspective.

Other evaluations will determine if there should be adjustments made to the program selection process and also how many seniors are planning to attend a college and major in education. A five-year longevity study will be done as a follow-up to find out how many students actually are employed/certified as teachers and how much this program has had a positive impact upon the students at Edgemont Primary and Jeter-Watson Intermediate.

Over the past 4 years, Edgemont Primary's free and reduced lunch rate has gone from 47 percent to over 72 percent. Students, especially struggling readers and at-risk students, seemed to have benefited tremendously from this program through the interaction with older students, having a "big brother/sister" to help with review, homework, and study skills...not only during school, but after school as well. Edgemont Primary's Standards of Learning scores, over the last three years have progressively increased. This year their scores were: English 97 %, Math 100%, History 100%, Science 100%.

Jeter-Watson Intermediate's free and reduced lunch rate has gone from approximately 39% to approximately 50% in 4 years. Most of the older students in this school did not reap the benefits that Edgemont Primary School gained from its Reading First grant. Several students still struggle with reading skills like comprehension and fluency and dislike reading because of their struggle. SCOPE students lend credibility to "buddy-reading". They often bond with these struggling readers and encourage them, in a non-threatening way, to practice reading more often, to listen and think about what has been read (comprehension), and to read with more expression (fluency...often imitating their buddy-readers voice).

**DOES THE PROGRAM REQUIRE THAT SCHOOLS IN THE DIVISION OPEN PRIOR TO LABOR DAY?**

YES       NO

**IF YES, EXPLAIN WHY.**

Covington City Public Schools has applied for a waiver for Covington High School to open prior to Labor Day. This is necessary because we share a regional career and technical center and a regional alternative program with Alleghany County Public Schools. Should this essential waiver for Covington High School be granted, it would

create a situation where Covington High School would operate on one schedule and Edgemont Primary and Jeter-Watson Intermediate Schools would operate on a different calendar. The calendars could be offset by approximately 2 weeks throughout the entire school year.

### **Impact for the Division and Rationale for Waiver Request:**

At-risk students who are identified by the spring of the previous year or during the summer can begin specific remediation on the first day of school. The teacher remediates and the SCOPE students reinforce that learning through an engaged learning activity addressing the same skill. In order to provide maximum educational benefit to this group of students, it is important that the school calendar of the elementary, middle, and high school in Covington City be on the same schedule.

During the first week of school, high school students from the SCOPE program receive their placement and first experiences of the program. This requires students to have an extensive orientation which includes mentor teachers from both Edgemont and Jeter-Watson to attend. The orientation is a necessity in student planning and teacher planning at Covington High School, Edgemont Primary and Jeter-Watson Intermediate...in order for students to have the most successful experience possible. Also, SCOPE students from Covington High School exchange placements mid-semester. If the school division runs two separate calendars, the high school program would not receive student placements for approximately two weeks before school and two weeks after the next semester begins. This would disrupt the relationship that SCOPE students build with elementary and middle students and would not allow for a completed transition of educational services.

Because of the connection that our SCOPE program has upon Edgemont Primary and Jeter-Watson Intermediate School students, we are currently showing positive academic results, but also feel confident that our evaluations will show, over a five-year period, that this program is having a positive, lasting effect upon the younger students in our division. Covington City Public Schools will monitor progress through SCOPE teacher and student evaluations, Standards of Learning, PALS, Stanford 10, and other assessment scores, teacher and administrator evaluations, community awareness, and the enrollment of students in the SCOPE program.

Covington City's educators, parents, students, and community feels that the relationships that are formed between older and younger students, the extra support that is provided from working/studying with "buddies", the formation of good character traits through modeling, and the focus on academic excellence are facets of the SCOPE program's vision that connect with our individual and community goals.

Already the SCOPE program has increased its number of participants by five times as many students as in the first year. Again, 44% of the class is non-traditional (males) and we have several minority students in the program, as well. This year, we actually had our first student that graduated from our SCOPE program return to Jeter-Watson Intermediate to do her student teaching.

This program has a direct impact upon Covington City and Covington City Public Schools in being able to recruit potential teachers or future community and civic leaders back into our community with an understanding of educational issues. It also provides the opportunity for children of our residents to return to our community and their extended families to work in a professional occupation. This program has an economic impact upon our area...providing lasting benefits, not only to our school division, but to the community.

A School Efficiency Review was conducted for both Covington City Public Schools and Alleghany County Schools in 2007. An Efficiency Review study revealed the need for cost effective strategies to be implemented; therefore, it would be clearly ineffective to open the Covington High School before Edgemont Primary and Jeter-Watson Intermediate Schools. Running two separate calendars would cause the following disruptions:

- Bus drivers would need to work an additional day on either side of the calendar.
- Gas prices would increase (18 extra days to run separate calendars).
- Maintenance costs would increase due to additional wear and tear on buses.

- All jointly attended programs that foster collaboration between schools would be non-existent. (Example: Yearly kick-off program, professional development, inservice for new teachers, special training sessions for teachers or aides, etc.)
- Summer School Program – Currently our program runs the month of June for all schools. Our schools do not have air conditioning; therefore, we have the students during the time that we typically have less “heat” issues. Extending the elementary and intermediate calendars pushes summer school into a less accommodating situation for dealing with heat.
- Combined Professional Development- A separate calendar would not permit common days for staff development with instructional staff from all schools (Currently Covington City has common days built into its calendar for extensive professional development for all schools on the same day.)
- Parents who have children on two separate calendars would incur additional costs. For parents who have a child at the high school and another child at Edgemont Primary there will be additional costs for those who drive their children to school, additional costs to take off from work to attend parent/teacher conferences on two separate days instead of one combined day, additional stress in trying to keep up with two separate grading periods and calendars. Parents could also have an additional need for increased amounts of day-care.
- Possible increase in extended contracts (example: hearing impaired teacher that works with middle school and high school children each day would be working more contract days)

#### **From SCOPE Students’ Perspectives**

Students write:

- 1) I’ve always had an interest in special education and speech therapy, and SCOPE provided me with the chance to be involved in speech classes at both a primary and intermediate school level. It was amazing to see how they were very similar in some ways, and extreme opposites in other. I got to work with children that amazed and inspired me. Despite their obstacles, they were still optimistic and eager to learn.
- 2) Working with the children really gave me the feel of what it would be like to be a teacher. The only complaint is that we didn’t have enough time. I feel that it (this class) has influenced my career direction.
- 3) Being the first year (of SCOPE) I really didn’t know what to expect. I found it to be very educational and tremendously enlightening. Although I enjoyed the students, I found it very challenging, adapting to so many different personalities. I (am) now able to realize the rewards of teaching children new things.
- 4) Education is one of the most challenging careers available, but is also the most rewarding. It is (and always will be) one of the most powerful gifts we can share with others. I plan on attending Radford University in the fall where I will major in interdisciplinary studies with a minor in elementary education. I want to become an educator so I can reach out in so many ways to today’s youth, because they are our futures!
- 5) I’d never really thought about what role teachers play in society, but SCOPE has given me an in-depth perspective on the life of a teacher, and I can honestly say that teachers are the bravest group of people that I’ve ever had the pleasure of working with. They deal with everything from sick kids to stubborn parents, and anything in between. Before job shadowing in the schools, I thought that teaching was something that I could pursue. I’ve always been able to work well with children, but I see now that teaching just isn’t something I could spend the rest of my life doing. I’m happy to have realized this now rather than following it through and being stuck in a profession for the rest of my life that I just couldn’t handle doing full time and still enjoy doing after many years.

**Anticipated Outcomes:**

In order to maintain this innovative program, Covington City Public Schools is requesting a waiver so that Covington City High School, Edgemont Primary School, and Jeter-Watson Intermediate School will open before Labor Day and run the same school calendar. The success of this innovative program rests upon all schools being on a common calendar-year schedule.

**Impact that SCOPE has upon Edgemont Primary School and Jeter-Watson Intermediate students:**

- It provides a lasting bond between older/younger students that carries over from the academic arena into sports, community activities, and other opportunities.
- It gives students a “buddy” with which to read, study, practice weekly spelling words, work on homework, play educational games that support the Standards of Learning, and practice automaticity of math facts, problem solving, etc.
- SCOPE students volunteer additional time either before or after school to help students academically, physically (through physical activities/games), and socially (character development)
- It helps teachers and students work on Standards of Learning objectives through interactive play, games, drill, and other study skills. These SCOPE students often become so “connected with his/her younger buddy” that they will encourage students to succeed in areas where...sometimes...teachers struggle to find a way to reach that child.

SCHOOL DIVISION  
TITLE OF PROGRAM/ACTIVITY

Covington City Public Schools  
SCOPE (Shadowing Career Opportunities for Prospective Educators)  
Teacher Cadet

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.

Listed in summary above.

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.)

Listed under Evaluation heading above.

Number of students involved in the program

515

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

The program is on-going and if approved by the Board, the division will continue to renew its waiver each year.

Questions should be directed to the Division of Policy and Communications at (804) 225-2092 or by e-mail to [policy@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:policy@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