

Board of Education Agenda Item

Item: _____ L. _____

Date: _____ January 15, 2009 _____

Topic: Report on the Alternative Education Programs in Petersburg City Public Schools

Presenter: Dr. Kathleen M. Smith, Director, Office of School Improvement, Division of Student Assessment and School Improvement

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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

_____ Other: _____

_____ Action requested at this meeting _____ Action requested at future meeting: _____

Previous Review/Action:

_____ No previous board review/action

X Previous review/action

date May 21, 2008

action Board requested that a review of the Blandford Academy be completed in the fall of 2008

Background Information:

The Standards of Quality require local school boards to maintain fully accredited schools and to take corrective actions for schools that are not fully accredited.

§ [22.1-253.13:3](#). Standard 3. Accreditation, other standards and evaluation.

...Each local school board shall maintain schools that are fully accredited pursuant to the standards of accreditation as prescribed by the Board of Education. Each local school board shall review the accreditation status of all schools in the local school division annually in public session. Within the time specified by the Board of Education, each school board shall submit corrective action plans for any schools within its school division that have been designated as not meeting the standards as approved by the Board.

In October 2004, the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) established criteria for identifying low-performing school divisions to undergo a division level academic review. Petersburg City Public Schools met the criteria for division level academic review as indicated in Section 22.1-253.13:3. Standard 3. Accreditation, other standards and evaluation:

... When the Board of Education has obtained evidence through the school academic review process that the failure of schools within a division to achieve full accreditation status is related to division level failure to implement the Standards of Quality, the Board may require a division level academic review. After the conduct of such review and within the time specified by the Board of Education, each school board shall submit for approval by the Board a corrective action plan, consistent with criteria established by the Board and setting forth specific actions and a schedule designed to ensure that schools within its school division achieve full accreditation status. Such corrective action plans shall be part of the relevant school division's comprehensive plan pursuant to Section [22.1-253.13:6](#).

In 2004, recognizing the need for technical assistance, the Petersburg School Board requested a division-level review and assistance from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). Petersburg City Public Schools and the VBOE signed an initial memorandum of understanding (MOU) detailing the review process on April 21, 2004. Petersburg City Public Schools has been in division level review status since 2004 and has reported to the VBOE regularly on the status of implementing the corrective action plan and the terms of the initial MOU. The VDOE has provided ongoing technical assistance and monitored the implementation of the division's corrective action plan.

Additionally, Section 8 VAC 20-131-300 of the *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia* (SOA), adopted by the Board in September 2006, requires school divisions with Accreditation Denied schools to enter into a MOU with the VBOE and implement a corrective action plan to improve student achievement in the identified schools. Since Petersburg City Public Schools had schools in accreditation denied status for the 2007-2008 academic year based on 2006-2007 results, the VBOE determined that the MOU for division level academic review would also serve as the MOU to satisfy Section 8 VAC 20-131-310. As a part of this MOU, a corrective action plan was developed.

The MOU requires the Petersburg School Board to provide a summative report on progress made in meeting or exceeding the MOU agreements and expectations to the VBOE and the VDOE, as requested. At the April 23, 2008, meeting of the School and Division Accountability Committee, members of the committee requested information on the following:

1. the number of students enrolled in alternative education programs and their status in these programs;
2. the number of students enrolled in the Individual Alternative Education Program (ISAEP); and,
3. the number of unlicensed teachers (substitute teachers) by core content area in which they are teaching.

At the May 21, 2008, VBOE meeting, a report containing the requested information was presented by department staff. At this time, the VBOE requested that a follow-up review be completed in the fall of 2008 to determine if the alternative education programs in Petersburg City Public Schools including the ISAEP program were in compliance with the Standards of Quality and the Standards of Accreditation.

Summary of Major Elements:

The department conducted an academic review of the alternative programs in Petersburg Public Schools on December 11-12, 2008. The review team consisted of Department of Education staff and peer reviewers from other school divisions. A description of the programs reviewed follows:

1. **Horizons Program** – Provides high school students age 16 or older with an opportunity to complete an alternative education program enabling them to successfully meet the criteria for a traditional or nontraditional diploma.
2. **Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP) Program** – Provides high school students age 16 or older with an opportunity to work toward a general educational development (GED) certificate.
3. **Career Preparedness Program (CPP)** – Provides high school students, age 16 or older and at least two grade-levels behind, with an opportunity to work toward successfully meeting the criteria for a diploma. *Note: Students participating in the program did not meet the requirements for the Horizons or ISAEP programs.*
4. **Choices Program** – Provides educational and behavioral support to students in grades six through twelve who have violated the Code of Conduct.

The final report was presented to Petersburg City Public Schools on December 18, 2008. The findings of the review are included as Attachment A. Highlights from the review include areas of commendation, areas needing improvement, and essential actions. Essential actions will be the critical areas examined as part of a follow-up review in March 2009.

Areas of Commendation:

- Staff dedication to student and program success.
- Highly qualified staff with an excellent adult to student ratio.
- Caring relationships of staff with students and parents based on interactions observed during the visit.
- Apparent program improvement efforts since the last visit.

Areas Needing Improvement:

- Horizons Program curriculum should be aligned with skills necessary for transition to programs leading to a standard or advanced studies diploma or to a GED (ISAEP) program.
- The Official Practice Test for ISAEP should be used for placement purposes.
- Student Alternative Educational Plans need enhancement to include measurable academic goals and instructional strategies to achieve them.
- Student Alternative Educational Plans need to be monitored with progress noted at regular intervals.
- Hardware and software are currently in place, but necessary programs (Voyager and Odyssey, and others) are not operational.
- ISAEP documentation with chronological records must be kept on each student in the program.
- Instructional resources (textbooks) for the Choices Program need to be made available to students.
- Planning and staff communication regarding program objectives, goals and student progress need to be more collaborative.
- Building level staff development related to programs offered at Blandford Academy, specifically targeting applicable curriculum and instructional strategies, needs to be offered.

- Program placement and assessment strategies, particularly the current practice of moving Horizons' students to CPP after 18 weeks if they have not progressed toward ISAEP, need to be changed.
- Expand Career and Technical Education (CTE) course options for students in CPP; students should have access to all CTE courses available to high school students.
- Implement an aggressive intervention program to address student attendance/truancy.

Essential Actions:

- Align Horizons Program curriculum with skills necessary for transition to programs leading to a standard or advanced studies diploma or to a GED (ISAEP) program.
- Adhere to procedures for student placement that allow for parent input and are conducted in a timely manner.
- Secure the needed resources and materials for students and teachers (i.e., textbooks).
- Provide access to the CTE program to the students enrolled in the CPP program.
- Provide early intervention in elementary and middle school programs to reduce the need for alternative programs.

Superintendent's Recommendation: The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education accept the findings of the review of alternative education programs in Petersburg City Public Schools and request the department to complete a follow-up visit in the spring of 2009 to ensure that essential actions are implemented.

Impact on Resources: Cost of the academic review consultants' travel and lodging.

Timetable for Further Review/Action: April 2009

Area of Review: Mission and Purpose

Indicator(s):

- *The mission and purpose of the alternative education program are clearly defined.*
Finding: There are multiple programs at Blandford Academy and each has a clearly stated mission and purpose in published literature. In the ISAEP and Choices programs, the staff and students articulated a purpose clearly aligned with the stated mission of the program. In both the Horizons and CPP programs, there was evidence of disconnect between the stated purpose of the program and the purpose as articulated by staff members and students.
- *Parent notification letters informing them of the program's mission and purpose are readily available.*
Finding: Parent notification letters do not specifically address the program's mission and purpose.

Data Collection Activities Related to This Area of Review:

	Number	Comments
Interviews	22	All students and staff interviewed
Document Reviews	3	Policy manual, example communications, student folders
Classroom Observations	0	

Area of Review: Compliance

Indicator(s):

- *The program meets the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (SOA) and the Standards of Quality (SOQ) requirements for the number of clock hours of instruction for students who are seeking a diploma.*
Finding: The programs at Blandford Academy meet the SOA /SOQ requirements.
- *The program meets the SOA and SOQ requirements for course offerings for students who are seeking a diploma.*
Finding: The programs at Blandford Academy meet the SOA /SOQ requirements.
- *The program meets the SOA and SOQ requirements for SOL testing in the appropriate courses for students who are seeking a diploma.*
Finding: The programs at Blandford Academy meet the SOA /SOQ requirements.
- *The program meets the requirements of the Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP).*
Finding: Cannot yet determine from evidence provided. There have been improvements noted. The team will conduct a follow-up visit to review the program again in spring of 2009.
- *The program ensures that diploma-seeking students enrolled in alternative education programs other than ISAEP receive instruction and are tested as described in the SOA.*
Finding: Choices program is in compliance. The review team has significant concerns about the CPP (Career Preparedness Program) with respect to this indicator.
- *The program ensures that diploma-seeking students enrolled in alternative education programs other than ISAEP are tested as required in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) if funding was provided under NCLB.*
Finding: Choices program is in compliance. The review team has significant concerns about the CPP (Career Preparedness Program) with respect to this indicator.
- *Student scholastic records are maintained in the manner prescribed in the "Guidelines for Management of the Student's Scholastic Record in the Public Schools of Virginia" 8 VAC 20-150-10.*
Finding: Student cumulative folders are available and in order. Current ISAEP records meet requirements; previous records are not available for review. ISAEP records should be reviewed again in spring of 2009 as part of the follow-up visit on ISAEP.
- *Individualized Education Programs (IEP) are developed and implemented in the manner prescribed in the "Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia" 8 VAC 20-80-62.*
Finding: There are no identified special education students currently enrolled at Blandford Academy.

Data Collection Activities Related to This Area of Review:

	Number	Comments
Interviews	22	
Document Reviews	All	
Classroom Observations	11	

Area of Review: Characteristics of Program Population

Indicator(s):

- *The criteria used to determine students' placement in this program are clearly defined.*
Finding: Choices, ISAEP and Horizons meet the requirement. CPP does not meet the requirement fully; while there are stated criteria, there are other routes to placement which are not articulated in the written program documents.
- *The criteria used to determine students' placement ensures that students enrolled in the program have not been successful in other programs or at their home-schools.*
Finding: All programs meet the requirement.
- *Demographic information identifying the subgroups attending this program is readily available.*
Finding: All programs meet the requirement.
- *The policies governing parental involvement in determining student placement in the program are clearly defined and implemented.*
Finding: All programs have clearly defined policies and three of four programs follow those policies. The CPP program does not fully implement stated policies with respect to parent involvement in decision making.

Data Collection Activities Related to This Area of Review:

	Number	Comments
Interviews	7	Selected students and staff
Document Reviews	2	Program descriptors and placement procedures
Classroom Observations	0	

Area of Review: Instructional Program

Indicator(s):

- *The instructional program and support services offered by this program are clearly defined and implemented.*

Finding:

- **Choices – Meets the requirement.**
 - **ISAEP – Meets the requirement.**
 - **Horizons – Students and staff in this program state that the program goal is to transition to the ISAEP program by improving scores on the TABE and OPT. This goal is supported in writing. In contrast, the curriculum materials do not support the transition to ISAEP; the curriculum is not aligned to do so; research-based resources and instructional strategies have not been implemented toward that end.**
 - **CPP - Students in this program state that the program goal is to transition to the ISAEP program by improving scores on the TABE and OPT. This goal is documented in writing as one possible exit from the CPP program. In contrast, the curriculum materials do not support the transition to ISAEP; the curriculum is not aligned to do so; research-based resources and instructional strategies have not been implemented toward that end.**
- *Characteristics of the program that qualify it as a special purpose program are clearly defined.*
- #### **Finding:**
- **Choices – Meets the requirement.**
 - **ISAEP – Meets the requirement.**
 - **Horizons – Meets the requirement.**
 - **CPP – Meets the requirement.**
- *Differentiated instructional methodologies are implemented by all instructional staff.*
- #### **Finding:**
- **Choices – Meets the requirement.**
 - **ISAEP – Meets the requirement.**
 - **Horizons – Does not meet requirement.**
 - **CPP – Does not meet requirement.**
- *Transition plans for students are developed and implemented by the appropriate instructional staff.*
- #### **Finding:**
- **Choices – Meets the requirement.**
 - **ISAEP – Meets the requirement.**
 - **Horizons – The plan is extremely limited and appears to be formulated by students rather than staff members. There are no detailed academic goals with action plans to accomplish those goals. There is no clear articulation between the Horizons curriculum and ISAEP entry requirements. There is limited communication and collaboration between the staff of the two programs. Staff stated only 2-3 students successfully transitioned from Horizons to ISAEP during the 2007-2008 school year.**
 - **CPP – Student folders supplied did not contain transition plans.**
- *A written policy is implemented regarding changing schedules or dropping/adding courses for students who are enrolled in courses for high school credit, or changing schedules or adding/dropping courses by secondary school students.*

Finding: Requirement only applicable to the Choices program which meets the requirement.

Data Collection Activities Related to This Area of Review:

	Number	Comments
Interviews	22	
Document Reviews	3	Teacher lesson plans, student classroom folder, student record folder
Classroom Observations	11	

Area of Review: Teacher Certification and Development

Indicator(s):

- *A profile of the teaching staff and information about their qualifications is readily available.*
Finding: All programs had information available.
- *All instructional staff members are “highly qualified” to teach their assigned courses.*
Finding: All instructors are licensed and endorsed in area; only one teacher had a provisional license.
- *On-going, job-embedded professional development opportunities are provided for all instructional staff.*
Finding: Blandford Academy Staff have access to divisionwide staff development. The principal also articulated that she provided staff development in dealing with student emotional issues. Based on observations and interviews, Horizons staff members clearly need training in GED curriculum and instructional delivery strategies as well as using assessment data to drive instruction.

Data Collection Activities Related to This Area of Review:

	Number	Comments
Interviews	5	Selected staff
Document Reviews	1	Divisionwide staff development calendar
Classroom Observations	0	

Area of Review: Evaluating Student Progress

Indicator(s):

- *The strategies and instruments used by the program are adequate to evaluate student progress toward established goals and objectives.*

Finding:

- **Choices – Meets the requirement.**
 - **ISAEP – Current student population does not allow adequate assessment of this requirement. Team will review in spring of 2009.**
 - **Horizons – Does not meet the requirement. There are insufficient opportunities to measure student progress to transition to the ISAEP program or to drive targeted individualized instruction.**
 - **CPP – Does not meet the requirement. Despite teacher assessment of individual course content, there is no evidence that students are reassessed for progress toward transition to Horizons or ISAEP once they enter this program.**
- *The progress of individual students is consistently communicated to parents and the home-schools.*

Finding:

- **Choices – Meets the requirement.**
 - **ISAEP – Meets the requirement.**
 - **Horizons – Meets the requirement.**
 - **CPP – Meets the requirement.**
- *Assessment results and other data are used to determine the viability of transitioning students back to their home-schools.*

Finding:

- **Choices – Meets the requirement.**
- **ISAEP – Not applicable; re-entry to home school is not a program goal.**
- **Horizons – Not applicable; re-entry to home school is not a program goal.**
- **CPP – Not applicable; re-entry to home school is not a program goal.**

Data Collection Activities Related to This Area of Review:

	Number	Comments
Interviews	2	Selected staff
Document Reviews	3	Student academic records, student classroom folders, data files
Classroom Observations	0	

Conclusion

Areas of Commendation:

- Staff dedication to student and program success.
- Highly qualified staff with an excellent adult to student ratio.
- Caring relationships of staff with students and parents, based on interactions observed during the visit.
- Apparent program improvement efforts since the last visit.

Areas Needing Improvement:

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- Student Alternative Educational Plans need to be monitored with progress noted at regular intervals.
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- ISAEP documentation with chronological records kept on each student in the program.
- Instructional resources (textbooks) for the Choices Program.
- Collaborative planning and staff communication regarding program objectives, goals and student progress.
- Building-level staff development related to programs offered at Blandford Academy, specifically targeting applicable curriculum and instructional strategies.
- Program placement and assessment strategies; particularly the current practice of moving Horizons students to CPP after 18 weeks if they have not progressed toward ISAEP.
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Essential Actions:

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- Adhere to procedures for student placement which allow for parent input and are conducted in a timely manner.
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