Virtual Virginia Evaluation Update

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Dr. Jennifer Piver-Renna
jennifer.piver-renna@doe.virginia.gov
804.225.3698

We conducted two surveys in the Fall of 2016 to capture staff and students' perceptions of Virtual Virginia courses. Beginning in the Spring of 2017, we will begin planning for an outcomes-based evaluation and cost assessment of Virtual Virginia.

Student Survey
For the student survey, we received 1,580 responses from 1,256 students. We estimate the survey response rate to be 10% based on Virtual Virginia enrollment of 12,364 during that time. Students who took the survey reported being satisfied with their instructors/mentors, including receiving responses to questions within 24 hours and communicating about progress when needed. Student also indicated they had the reading skills to be successful in the course and that they were comfortable using the online tools and software.

Staff Survey
We received 222 responses for the staff survey. Approximately 40% of respondents reported participating in supplemental Virtual Virginia only, 4% participated in the full-time pilot only, and 16% participated in both supplemental courses and the full-time pilot. The remaining 40% of survey respondents were from schools that did not participate in Virtual Virginia.

Among schools participating in either the supplemental Virtual Virginia program or the full-time pilot, respondents identified a decrease in scheduling conflicts, an increase in positive student attitudes towards virtual learning, and an increase in student achievement as the primary benefits of participation. In addition, staff reported being very satisfied with the rigor of Virtual Virginia courses. Students' experience with coursework and students' use of "soft skills" necessary for virtual learning (e.g., motivation, work ethic) were identified as the most challenging barriers by staff.

The most common reason staff cited for not participating in Virtual Virginia was that no students requested to enroll. Among staff not yet participating, more information about the program and more training and professional development on Virtual Virginia programs were the most common types of additional support requested.

Next Steps
The Virginia Department of Education is beginning a new partnership with the Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia (REL AP) to conduct an outcomes-based evaluation of Virtual Virginia and to examine program costs consistent with the recommendations put forth in the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) report. The REL AP is a federally funded technical assistance center that provides data- and research-related support to state and local education agencies. The planning process for this evaluation will begin May 2017.