

INSTRUCTION

Theme-Based Academies

In support of the mission of Virginia Beach City Public Schools, the School Board promotes and supports the development of extended educational opportunities that will empower every student to become a life-long learner who is a responsible, productive, and engaged citizen within the global community. Academies are one form of these extensions that provide students with learning experiences that enrich and expand upon their interests, talents, and strengths through a common theme. By design, an academy in Virginia Beach City Public Schools is an integrated school-within-a-school that uses a common theme to organize curriculum and instruction within the comprehensive school setting.

The Superintendent shall develop internal guidelines for the implementation of processes outlined in this Policy.

A. Guiding Principles for New and Continuing Academies

To ensure fiscal responsibility for academy initiation including capital improvement, implementation, and continuation, the School Board supports the following guiding principles:

1. Demographic and geographic equity across the School Division shall be demonstrated in the academy proposal.
2. Progression from elementary school to middle school to high school will be considered.

B. Process for School Board Approval of a New Academy Theme and Proposal Development

Prior to the development of a new academy proposal, the School Board shall review and approve the theme and authorize the development of an academy proposal based upon identified citywide needs. If approval and authorization are granted, applicants may begin the process for developing the academy proposal and the initial implementation plan. The proposal shall set forth goals and objectives and include a defined evaluation and budget plan.

All new academy proposals shall include in the timeline for implementation a sunset provision, whereby the School Board must take action to continue the academy.

C. Process for Academy Proposal Development

The Academy Proposal Development process includes review and/or representation from targeted school-based groups including students, teachers, parents/legal guardians, administrators, community stakeholders and the Academy Steering Committee made up of representatives from the Department of School Leadership, the Department of Teaching and Learning, the Department of Budget and Finance, the Department of School Division Services, Department of Technology and the Department of Planning, Innovation, and Accountability. Upon approval by the Academy Steering Committee, the proposal will be submitted to the Superintendent. Upon the Superintendent's approval, the proposal will be forwarded to the School Board for review and approval.

1. Process for New Academy Proposal Evaluation Review

Each Academy Proposal shall include a plan for ongoing evaluation of the academy to ensure that the intended goals of the academy are met. The

proposal, including the evaluation plan, is submitted for review to the Department of Planning, Innovation and Accountability. Results of this review are forwarded to the Academy Steering Committee.

2. Process for New Academy Proposal Budget Plan Review

Each academy proposal shall include a budget plan. The proposal, including the budget plan, is submitted to the Department of Budget and Finance for review. Results of this review are forwarded to the Academy Steering Committee.

D. Process for Academy Implementation, Evaluation, and Continuation, Expansion or Phase Out

1. Implementation

Upon the School Board's approval, the academy implementation plan may be initiated. Academy administrators develop and carry out an action plan that guides the implementation.

2. Evaluation

Each academy shall be evaluated in accordance with procedures outlined in Regulation 6-24.2. In addition, each new academy will be evaluated when it reaches full implementation with a focus on the accomplishment of the academy's established goals and objectives.

Each academy evaluation will be formally reported to the School Board and will include a recommendation regarding the status of the academy (e.g., continue,

expand, or phase out in accordance with Regulation 6-24.2).

3. Continuation, Expansion or Phase Out of an Existing Academy

a. Continuation

The continuation of an existing academy is at the discretion of the School Board. This decision will be based on the availability of funds, academy enrollment and the recommendations from academy evaluations.

Unless the School Board approves a phase out of an academy during the evaluation process, the academy will remain in operation through the year it reaches full implementation to provide adequate time to properly evaluate the academy's effectiveness in meeting established goals and objectives. Based on recommendations during the evaluation process, academy programs may be modified to improve delivery of instructional services. At the end of full implementation of an academy, the School Board will receive the evaluation with a recommendation regarding the status to continue, expand, or phase out the academy.

b. Expansion

The expansion of an existing academy is at the discretion of the School Board. Based

on recommendations during the evaluation process, effective academy programs may be recommended for expansion to other schools within the School Division.

c. Phase Out

The phase out of an existing academy is at the discretion of the School Board. If the enrollment for an incoming academy “class” is 25% less than projected for three (3) consecutive years after the year in which the academy is fully implemented, modifications, to include a phase out, may be recommended to the School Board by the Superintendent.

If an academy is phased out, all students who are currently enrolled in the academy shall have the opportunity to complete their course of studies wherever feasible.

Legal Reference

School Board Regulation 6-24.2, New Program Proposal Development and Approval Process, as amended.

Related Links

School Board [Regulation 6-24.2](#)

Adopted by the School Board: August 21, 2007

Amended by the School Board: February 5, 2008

Amended by the School Board: June 2, 2009

Scrivener's Amendments: September 28, 2011
Amended by School Board: April 18, 2017

Amended by School Board: February 13, 2024