

Appendix H

Item: 2011-2012 Planning Year

Background/Historical Context: At the New Hanover County Board of Education Retreat held on January 23, 2011 Dr. Tim Markley shared his vision for a Preparatory Academy to be housed at the Virgo Middle School location. The Urban Preparatory Academy proposal reflects his plan.

Recommendation: Approval

Rationale for Recommendation: The planning year is needed to allow administration the time to execute the proposal.

Supporting Documentation: Urban Preparatory Academy Proposal

Board Action: ☐ Recommendation Accepted
 ☐ Recommendation Rejected
 ☐ Tabled for Further Study
 ☐ Other

Proposal for an Urban Prep Academy **Housed at the D.C. Virgo Middle School Location**

One of the greatest barriers preventing a 21st Century environment in education has been instructional methodology – not the curriculum itself. Many classrooms still rely heavily on textbooks and lectures with power point presentations – the former is completely outdated and the later is disengaging and turns students into bored television viewers.

This proposal endorses a middle school/high school collaboration grounded in **Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)** strategies beginning in grade six. These strategies will be implemented and supported in an extended day and school-year program through compacted curriculum, flexible student schedules, alternate graduation pathways, problem-based learning, and internship and service learning opportunities.

Students will be able to move into flexible programming beginning in eighth grade to permit the earning of partial/full high school credit through novel pathways. They will also be afforded opportunities to follow non-traditional paths toward earning high school credit by testing out of courses; demonstrating mastery of course content; or successfully completing independent studies, internships, and/or community service at the end of which they must demonstrate they meet college and career readiness anchor standards as indicated in the Common Core. This flexibility will shift the focus from seat time to performance while it permits individualization of learning experiences, addresses different learning styles, and supports the career and college readiness initiative.

A collaboration of central office departments as well as community and business partnerships will be instrumental in supporting and sustaining this initiative.

AVID Model

All students will have the same expectations/requirements for binder organization, note-taking, goal-setting, tutorials, and other components of AVID. Students will also all be involved in completing components of the AVID criteria, such as goal-setting, time management, study and test taking skills, and WICR (writing, inquiry, collaboration, and reading). Teaching the students the “hidden curriculum” (what is expected of students but rarely taught to students), would be a major emphasis of this model.

Beyond the students, teachers will take an active role in the success of students. They will need to work together as a “site team” to find ways to further support the AVID model and help students in reaching their goals. Students will be placed in courses that are challenging and will assist them in reaching their greatest potential, and teachers will not only encourage them, but provide students support to be successful. AVID tutorials will also be included to further support the students in courses they may not typically take without encouragement. The tutorials will be incorporated into the school day and will be inquiry-based.

An additional component of AVID that is instrumental for the success of the students is family and community involvement. Mentors, guest speakers, and parents will be integrated into the school day to help in guiding the students in the right direction and leading them to success. With more positive role models involved to offer guidance and support, and more information about career and college options shared, a greater level of success will be experienced by students in this school.

SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) Strategies

Regardless of the core academic organization selected for this school, a SIOP “overlay” to the basic instructional program will benefit all students. In this model, teachers of all content areas will plan lessons with two goals in mind, the first based on the curriculum of the specific discipline and the second designed to support the development of academic language skills.

SIOP was originally designed for students who are acquiring English as a second language, for whom lack of academic language proficiency is a formidable roadblock. In practice, it has been proven to benefit all students, especially those who struggle with academic performance, because a poor command of academic language is evident even among most low-performing students whose native language is English. In some districts, SIOP has been used quite successfully as a dropout reduction technique.

Academically and Intellectually Gifted Support

One Gifted Education Specialist will be assigned to the school in a team teaching/coaching model. The Gifted Education Specialist (GES) will serve both the identified gifted students at the school and students demonstrating academic or intellectual potential. These non-identified students will be actively sought out through consistent and regular analysis of data, review of work samples, and observation of behaviors.

The GES will team with core content teachers, designing differentiated units, 21st Century content projects, independent contracts for compacted curriculum, and assessment tools for assignments. At times the GES will teach lessons, modeling differentiation strategies; at other times, the GES will coach teachers in how to use these instructional strategies.

In addition, the Gifted Education Specialist will counsel identified gifted and advanced students in course selection, college review, and career readiness. The GES will access local and distant learning opportunities to expose students to learning opportunities outside the classroom walls, targeting specific under-represented populations that are at risk for dropping out of school. The types of opportunities the specialist may access include local and national contests, extra-curricular opportunities, academic or intellectual clubs based on the interest of the students and the culture of the school community. They will also organize college visits, virtual field trips/tours, and career mentors.

Arts Education Proposal

The partnership formed by New Hanover County Schools, Office of Cultural Arts and the Watson School of Education at UNCW, and the Kennedy Center Partners in Education provides a perfect format for providing resources and instruction models for the proposed school.

Teaching artists from the approved Roster of Kennedy Center Teaching Artists are available to partnering agencies for school performances and artists residencies.

These opportunities look very different from traditional arts education classrooms. Teaching artists specialize in integrating different content areas with the arts. The Kennedy Center definition of arts integration is that “arts integration is an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form”. Both the content standards and the arts standards must be understood in order for the student to be successful.

Teaching artists are available in all content areas and are available for workshops, demonstration teaching, professional development courses for teachers, and to serve as arts coaches.

English Language Arts

The proposed school would be structured to meet the literacy needs of individual students. Using data, including EOG/EOC scores and other more diagnostic assessments, staff would “hand schedule” each student for instruction. Student schedules would be fluid with possible frequent changes.

Middle school students will attend a grade-level specific Language Arts class with a teacher who has received extensive professional development on literacy instruction for the adolescent learner, text complexity, and the Common Core standards. Texts used will be authentic and relevant with more digital access and less print.

Because of the extended day schedule, it would be possible for students to attend an additional Literacy class. During this class, teacher-directed instruction would be offered to small groups or even individual students for accelerating learning growth of specific skills and strategies in reading and writing. Another emphasis of the Literacy class would be close reading of a variety of text genres for analysis and critical response.

High school English courses will follow Common Core State Standards (CCSS) which focus on an integrated literacy model with responsibility being shared among English, history/social studies, science, and technical disciplines. These standards were developed using two-year bands, 9-10 and 11-12, to permit flexibility in high school course design. Thus, English I/II and English III/IV can be compacted with consideration also being given to possibly designing a multi-disciplinary delivery method.

Social Studies

Project based learning strategies cause students to be active participants in their learning and this leads to authentic and relevant scholarship. At the proposed school, a project based instructional approach that integrates 21st Century skills such as critical thinking, collaboration and public speaking will be utilized in Social Studies courses. Students will create artifacts such as historical articles, museum displays, or ceremonial speeches. Other examples include students who might be studying the Civil Rights Movement researching local events in Wilmington and

interviewing citizens that participated in the movement to create a documentary, a website, a piece of art, or a play. Many schools across America have incorporated this approach.

STEM

A Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) approach will be used to deliver science, math, and career and technical education courses at the proposed school. This approach is used to emphasize the need for students to become more prolific and proficient in these disciplines to be competitive in a global society in the 21st century. Providing students, especially those from typically underrepresented populations, with advanced knowledge in the STEM subjects can bridge the gap that exists between STEM related jobs and an unskilled workforce. STEM schools offer an integrated curriculum that is academically rigorous focusing on inquiry, active problem solving, profound discourse, and engaging content.

Grades 6 – 12 Athletics

Virgo Urban Preparatory School offers a unique secondary school experience for children who desire a small, personal approach to prepare for college and career. Virgo will offer many advantages not found in large comprehensive high schools, the smallness of its size will allow Virgo to offer a limited number of athletic teams.

In grades 7-8 (students are not allowed to participate in interscholastic athletics at the 6th grade level per NC State Board of Education Policy), students will have the option of participating in one sport each sport season (middle school has 4 sports seasons).

1 st Nine Weeks	Boys Football	Girls Softball
2 nd Nine Weeks	Boys Basketball	Girls Soccer
3 rd Nine Weeks	Boys Soccer	Girls Basketball
4 th Nine Weeks	Boys Track	Girls Track

(This schedule would be open to change as we are restrained due to our current middle school sports season set up.)

Students in grades 9 – 12 will participate in one sport per season (high school students have only three sports seasons per NC High School Athletic Association (NCHSAA) rules.)

Fall Season	Boys Football	Girls Volleyball
Winter Season	Boys Basketball	Girls Basketball
Spring Season	Boys Track	Girls Track

We will need to petition the NCHSAA for membership. As the school will have a small population, it will more than likely be classified as a 1A School. In addition, conference affiliation may be difficult due to the limited sports offerings at Virgo. As we move closer to bringing this proposal to fruition, we will need to include the regional athletic directors and the NCHSAA.

