1. Executive Summary. For over two decades, education reform efforts and infusing technology have been consistent themes to improve American educational systems. Yet, American schools still look the same. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) in their Whole Child Approach state, "The demands of the 21st century require a new approach to education to fully prepare students for college, career, and citizenship. Research, practice, and common sense confirm that a whole child approach to education will develop and prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of today and tomorrow by addressing students' comprehensive needs through the shared responsibility of students, families, schools, and communities." Project Based Learning (PBL) which is the foundation of Virtus Academy of South Carolina (VA) is an effective instructional delivery model to foster a whole child approach. Mission Statement: *Virtus Academy will advance student achievement by preparing students for civic and career success through rigorous academics, leadership development and project-based learning.*

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Whole Child Tenets:

1. <u>Each student enters school healthy</u> <u>and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle</u>.
6.4 million American children ages 4-17 have been diagnosed with ADHD. South Carolina (SC) is ranked 5th highest in the nation with a rate of 11.7%. Students with, ADHD, compared to students without ADHD, have persistent academic difficulties that result in the following: lower average marks, more failed grades, more expulsions, increased dropout rates, and a lower rate of college undergraduate completion. PBL as discussed below addresses the needs of the ADHD learner. Also, SC is ranked 10th highest in the nation for obesity. The Florence school district where most Virtus students will live has a 77% poverty rate with high rates of ADHD and obesity. Students at VA in grades K-6 will have a complete physical education and wellness program and movement activities throughout each day, while using tables instead of desks for collaborative learning. Research shows with appropriate scheduling of recess and wellness education, children eat 54% more fruits and vegetables. There was also a 45% increase in those eating at least one serving of fruits and vegetables. By contrast, a lack of adequate consumption of specific foods, such as fruits, vegetables, or dairy products, is associated with lower grades. The Planning Committee is partnering with McLeod Hospital, other health professionals and the YMCA to educate the staff, parents and students about wellness. A nurse on our planning committee has helped develop plans for wellness activities and on Fridays during Academic, Cultural and Arts Enrichment, Girls on the Run and Stride for Boys will be offered along with intramural sports.

2. <u>Each student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe</u> <u>for students and adults.</u> "The 7 Habits of Happy Kids" and Responsive Classroom will be our character education focus to promote a caring culture including daily community meetings and regularly scheduled All School Meetings with parents and the community invited. The Guidance Counselor will plan for active engagement with students to practice the 7 habits. This modeling and practice will help students as they learn to work collaboratively in PBL (PBL) units and at our literacy and math workstations, key tools for closing the achievement gap. Our first PBL unit will be "Cool with School Rules" where students will create classroom and school rules that have logical consequences. The first four weeks of school will focus on community and culture while students also take formative assessments and teachers create Individual Learning Profiles and Plans for each student.

3. <u>Each student is actively engaged</u> <u>in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.</u> VA will instill a love of learning and involve the community in educating every child. Integrating movement and the creative arts are important for all learners. Students will have choice in how they want to learn during literacy and math workstations and choice for creative Presentations of Learning for their PBL Units. Each Friday afternoon while teachers are attending professional development (PD), students will have Academic, Cultural and Arts Enrichment staffed by partner organizations within the community including Girl/Boy Scouts, arts organizations,

McLeod Health, and YMCA. This will provide learning experiences for some children especially key for those children of poverty. Our partnership with the local homeless shelter, will allow children to remain at our school even when homeless or in foster care. Parents will be encouraged to volunteer in the classrooms, recess or during Friday enrichment. Teachers will use standards-based grading and reports through PowerSchool for Grades K-8 and letter grades with GPA according to the SC Uniform Grading Scale in high school. Parents will meet with teachers for parent teacher conferences at least twice per year and additionally as needed. The school year is 180 days; school day is 8:30 am-3:30 pm with aftercare program until 6 pm. There is a minimum of 10 days of professional training and planning days provided to staff each year. There is on-going PD every Friday afternoon and throughout the week during planning time in accordance with best practices.

4. Each student has access to personalized learning and is supportedby qualified, caring adults. VA will use a partially integrated model of PBL. This model allows students to experience PBL with science and social studies while integrating math and reading. Students will have systematic, sequential instruction in literacy using state adopted textbooks and support materials. They will also use handwriting instruction that incorporates a multisensory approach to learning. Programs such as ABC Mouse for Grades K-1, and KidBiz3000 for Grades 2-6, will provide computer adaptive technology that personalizes learning for each student during literacy workstations. State adopted math texts and support materials along with a computer adaptive technology such as DreamBox Learning and ALEKS will be used during math workstations. Planning included up to 3 RTI Instructional Assistants to support all teachers for literacy and math interventions, with the emphasis on K-3 in having every child reading on grade level by the end of 3rd grade. Students will progress through flexible academic support groups that supports them in tiered intervention/enrichment with an adult. Students will be assigned to tiered small groups meeting with the teacher daily for 15-20 minutes during literacy and math stations (Sample Schedules Appendix F). Teachers will use data from weekly progress monitoring and other assessments to guide instruction. Teachers will have frequent RTI Grade Level Meetings with the Curriculum/RTI Coordinator (Curr. Coord.) and Reading Coach (RC) during planning to analyze data and do grade level team planning. Students will also use their adaptive technology for literacy and math that assesses where each student is and allows them to learn skills where there are gaps and to keep moving ahead beyond their grade once they have mastered their grade level standards. It will be available to students anytime at home with the internet. Extended school hours will be available for parents and students to use computers and internet.

5. Each student is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment. Virtus Academy will be the only tuition free K-12 school choice for parents in the Florence area. VA will open with 3 sections of K, and 2 sections each of Grades 1-6. Each section will have 23 students. Each year, a new grade with 2 sections will be added, (7th in year 2) while a 3rd section is added starting with K (1st in year 2). The school will add 9th grade in 2021-2022, up to 12th in 2024-2025 and full capacity in 2030-2031 with 3 sections of all grades from K-12. Students will have Spanish starting in K and Latin in high school to prepare them for growth in medical careers predicted in Florence. Computer adaptive learning will continue through 12th grade with programs like TeenBiz for Grades 6-12 and ALEKS from 2-12. Students will be assigned teams. Team 1 is 7-8 Grade, Team 2 is 9-10, and Team 3 is 11-12. Each team has 4 teachers that will teach 2 grades in their highly qualified area of Math, Science, ELA or SS. They will create PBL units together for grades 7-12 Math will continue to be taught in a separate class and integrated when appropriate. Strong partnerships with consultants such as Education Resources Group (ERG) and Francis Marion University will provide teachers with PBL training to write culturally relevant units for our students and our high school students will have the opportunity to earn dual credits. Volunteering and internships will further prepare them for the future.

2. Mission Statement

OUR MISSION STATEMENT: Virtus Academy advances student achievement by preparing students for civic and career success through rigorous academics, leadership development and project-based learning.

The School's connection to and support of the intent of the SC Charter Schools Act

The SC Charter Schools Act of 1996, as amended, is clear that the intent of legislators in the creation of public charter schools is to provide "a legitimate avenue for parents, teachers, and community members to take responsible risks and create new, innovative, and more flexible ways of educating all children within the public school system." Virtus Academy (VA), created by a planning committee of teachers, business representatives, parents and grandparents, will provide the Florence area residents with a viable K-12 choice in a public school environment that is not currently available. While one Florence district has a very small charter school focused on only a few grades, no K-12 public charter school option is currently available in Florence or Darlington Counties. The innovative personalized learning model incorporating PBL, applied technology, leadership development, internships and required community service are all research-based, innovative practices. Internships will be for high school students, with the first class of 9th grade students beginning in 2021. Collaborations with Francis Marion University will provide the teachers and staff of VA with the support and ongoing PD training to innovate for the creation of engaging curriculum utilizing effective instructional strategies to provide rigorous academic content and accelerated achievement. VA will provide students with: instruction in foreign language throughout their school career (Spanish and ELA/Latin integration K-8, Latin and Spanish 9-12) and quality engagement in the arts integrated throughout the school day, specialized classes and enrichment opportunities on Friday afternoons to support cultural understanding and creative thinking. The planning committee's intentional efforts

and commitment are to seek a diverse student body reflective of the communities of Florence and Darlington Counties further aligning with the intent of the General Assembly (see Enrollment). Florence County is poised to have high demand in the future for technical, medical and entrepreneurial professionals. VA will provide parents and teachers with a public school choice that establishes a strong foundation for readiness for success in the future economy.

3. Evidence of Need and Support. The Planning Committee has given great effort in outreach to parents and students in Florence and Darlington Counties intending to enroll their 396 children in the fall of 2018. VA needs 345 students to meet 100% of 2018 enrollment projections and enrollment interest to date surpasses this number by 15%. Parents, community members, professionals and organizations in the community, such as McLeod Health, Boys & Girls Club, Head Start, and First Steps, understand the needs of students that will be served and completely support VA. This is evident by the momentum of excitement being shared in the community, increasing daily contact to VA through Facebook, website, email, events, media coverage and personal contact with planning committee members. 184 of the 396 students and 135 new families were added since Oct. 1, 2015 and the list is growing daily.

Our intentions were to originally open as a K-5 school. However, in response to feedback and support from parents in the community, the planning committee added the additional two 6th grade classes. Furthermore, over 200 parents with children in other grades not currently offered in VA in the fall of 2018 and residents with no school aged children have expressed their support and are also reaching out to relatives and other acquaintances they know with families that do have children that will be in 6th grade or younger for the 2018-2019 school year. This is truly a collaborative effort by the entire Florence community. (Appendix B).

The VA Planning Committee (Appendix L):

1. **Bill Pickle, Planning Committee Chairman (Ex-Officio of all Subcommittees)**

Assigned Subcommittee: Community Relationships and Community Advisory

Credential: Business, Radio Host, Guardian ad Litem, Board of Eastern SC Girl Scouts

Address: Florence, SC resident

2. **Elijah Jones, Planning Committee Vice-Chair**

Assigned Subcommittee: Community Relationships

Credential: Small Business, Property Management License, Past President of S.C. Ed. Non-Profit

Address: Florence, SC resident

3. **Cherry T. Gerrald, Business - Banking**

Assigned Subcommittee: Partnerships and Technology

Credential: Assistant Vice President and Branch Manager of Citizens Bank, Florence, SC. Active

in many church and community volunteer organizations as well as business development for

Florence.

Address: Florence, SC resident

4. **Kevin Rawlinson, Planning Committee Treasurer**

Assigned Subcommittee: Fundraising, Finance and Facilities

Credential: Parent, City of Florence Controller, Accountant, CPA, and Auditor

Address: Florence, SC resident

5. **August Langley, Committee Member**

Assigned Subcommittee: Technology

Credential: Business Owner, Website Designer, Technology skills

Address: Florence, SC resident

6. **Carlos O. Washington, Planning Committee Member**

Assigned Subcommittee: Community Advisory

7

Credential: Business, Advocate for Low-Income Children, Basketball Coach for Urban Kids

Address: Florence, SC resident

7. **Amanda Connor Tyner, Planning Committee Member**

Assigned Subcommittee: Community Advisory (Health & Wellness)

Credential: SC State Board of Nursing RN, Liaison for McLeod Health, Nurse Case Manager, Experienced Event Planner; Involved in Area Economic Growth; Experienced Public Speaker

Address: Timmonsville, SC resident

Planning Committee Consulting Partner

Renee Mathews. Education and Charter School Specialist

Credential: Professional Educator Licensure in SC as a superintendent, principal, elementary and secondary supervisor, high school social studies and English and middle school ELA teacher. Thirty-two years of experience in education in K12 teaching and administration. Eight years of experience as adjunct professor for undergraduate and graduate students on the college and university level. Experienced and award winning charter school founder and administrator.

Our Planning Committee has the community connections along with business and education experience to provide capacity, establish and provide governance for a sustainable, effective school. In the Fall of 2013, concerned residents of Florence, SC partnered with Bill to conceptualize an innovative education initiative. Their experiences as parents, school board members, employers and community activists convinced them of a need for more school choice for our area. Outreach with community members validated this idea and energized a growing group who created the vision of VA. While learning about the charter application process for forming a charter school, it became clear that support from professional sources would be helpful. Mary Carmichael, Executive Director of the Public Charter School Alliance of SC (PCSASC) and Jennifer Gnann, Director of PCSASC New

School Development Incubator, McCay, Kiddy, and Associates, LLC, and Renee Mathews of AndMore Education Services, LLC provided support during the process.

The Committee and interested parents, aware of the necessity to identify a student population, initiated a grassroots effort to publicize the charter school's vision. Outreach in underserved and low socio-economic status (SES) neighborhoods has been ongoing. Parents who face challenges of low performing and under resourced schools in their neighborhoods welcomed an innovative school of choice. Public meetings were held as follows: May 6, 2014, The Midnight Rooster Coffee Shop in Hartsville, SC, 15 attendees; May 12, 2014, Florence County Library, Florence, SC, 30 attendees; May 14, 2014, Sardis Baptist Church in Timmonsville, SC, 25 attendees; June 18, 2015, Florence County Library, 4 attendees, due to severe weather; September 22, 2015, Florence Boys and Girls Club, Florence, SC, 16 attendees plus additional parents picking up their children from the Boys and Girls Club who were unable to attend the meeting, but expressed interest and were provided brochures, website address and other contact information.; Sept. 29, 2015 Florence County Library, Florence, SC, 26 attendees, and Jan. 26, 2016 Church at Sandhurst, Florence, SC 13 attendees. Committee members supported a fundraiser for a new homeless shelter in Florence, SC and learned that families with boys 11 and older are only allowed to stay at the Florence Homeless Shelter if their son is not with them. The new shelter will be for any homeless child. A partnership with Barry and Jenice Green, founders of the shelter, is established for school attendance for students at the shelter. The school culture will provide a safe and supportive environment and allow stability for the children to continue to attend with grade-appropriate siblings. The projected location of the school and proximity to the city bus system along with transportation vouchers will support these students.

To meet the needs of the community, including busy families with varying work schedules or families with limited transportation, the Committee offered both morning and evening informational meetings in several locations. We advertised Public Meetings in the Morning News,

Facebook page, and by printed invitations which each task force member delivered to neighborhoods, churches, social groups, schools, work settings, First Steps, and at all area Head Start locations. Each of these meetings successfully engaged additional support from community parents, leaders, educators and interested residents. As a result of outreach, prospective students have completed interest surveys, community partnerships have been created, a committee of 7 members has matured into a team and plans for a successful charter school created. (Appendix B)

Households were contacted by email or phone to verify continued support. TV interviews with three local TV news stations (WBTW, WMBF, WPDE), local newspapers (Morning News, News & Press, News Journal) and radio/podcast broadcasts generated interest and submission of charter school surveys through Facebook page and Survey Monkey. Periodic radio shows have featured Virtus Academy and planning for the school. Continued outreach through website; Facebook, email; family and businesses outreach at workplaces, neighborhoods, daycares, and churches has provided additional enrollment and volunteer interest. Community and civic volunteers will offer expertise in a specialty area during Academic, Cultural and Arts Enrichment every Friday afternoon. Partner organizations have been contacted to re-affirm their continued support. New or previous letters of recommendation were signed. Additional partnerships continue development. (Appendix B)

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Dr. Peter King, Associate Provost for Academic Affair Enrollment Management, **Francis Marion University,** VA students, meeting the matriculated agreement outlined in the University policy, will participate in dual credit college level courses.

Dr. Joe Aniello Associate Professor of Management, **Francis Marion University, School of Business**

Suzan Orrico, Coordinator of Continuing Education and Special Projects, **Francis Marion University,** liaison with VA, dual credit and concurrent enrollment

Mark A. Roth, Vice President of Technology, **Southeastern Institute of Manufacturing and Technology** –Internship for high school students in field of rapid prototyping, augmented reality, and computer aided design.

PD SUPPORT

Francis Marion University Florence, SC (School of Education; Center for Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty, Center of Excellence College and Career Readiness)

HEALTH & WELLNESS SUPPORT

McLeod Health

Randy E. Hiatt, Ed.D, **Marriage, Family and Child Counseling Services**

Dr. Tyrone Wallace, **Wallace Chiropractic and Spinal Rehabilitation**

Brian New, CEO of **YMCA of Florence, SC,** all programs available to qualifying students

NON-PROFIT SUPPORT

Neal L. Zimmerman, Jr., Executive Director, **Boys & Girls Clubs of the Pee Dee Area-** Students will volunteer and intern at the B&GC to be an active citizen and serve their community.

Spencer Scott, Executive Director of **First Steps** in Florence and Marion Counties, passed out

informational fliers about the community informational meetings

Dana Spivey Girl Scouts of Eastern SC (GSESC)

Uschi Jeffcoat, Director, Florence Regional Arts Alliance arts enrichment

Pastor Burton Welsh, **Sardis Baptist Church**, Timmonsville, SC

Reverend James Gray III, **Christian Assembly Church**, Florence, SC

POLITICAL SUPPORT

Ed Robinson, **Former Florence City Councilman**

Glynn Willis, **Florence City Councilman**

Tom Rice, **Congressman of the 7th District in SC**

Phillip Lowe, **Representative District Number 60- Florence and Sumter Counties**

Carl M. Pennington IV, **Mayor of Hartsville, SC**

Kristopher Crawford, **Former Representative District No. 63- Florence County**

BUSINESS SUPPORT

Stephanie McLaughlin Rawlinson, **MHA Broker in Charge McLaughlin Company**

Steven A. Vandenberg, **SC Staffing LLC dba Spherion**

Anna Toniolo, **Owner of Stephano's**, Florence, SC

Andrew and Valerie Criswell, **Owners of Pee Dee Christian and Book Supply,** Florence, SC

Srey Savann, **Owner of Sugarcoat Nail Salon and Spa in Florence, SC**

PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBER SUPPORT

VA staff will encourage parent and community members to attend All School Meetings, PBL Presentations of Learning, Parent/Teacher Conferences, and to volunteer during recess and lunch, in classrooms, field studies, shadowing, mentoring, or facilitating an enrichment class. ESOL parents and families will be encouraged to offer enrichment classes in their native language and culture (dance, art, food and traditions). All parents will be encouraged to use computers and internet at the school, attend parent education events such as Parent University and extra-curricular activities. Through our partnership with Francis Marion we will involve

college students in volunteering during the enrichment classes, especially if the college students are majoring in arts, education or foreign language. We are creating partnerships with Girl and Boy Scouts to meet during enrichment Fridays. Our partnerships with McLeod and YMCA will offer healthy nutrition and exercise classes for "Sharpening the Saw." A committee member who is a nurse is a driving force in developing healthy programs for students and their families.

4. Enrollment

VA's student enrollment process will comply with all applicable directives of State and Federal laws. Our enrollment process will not discriminate on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, gender, national origin, religion, ancestry, or need for special education services. All resident students within the state are eligible to attend. There are no prerequisites or enrollment requirements other than application and identification documents. VA will publicize the opening of the charter school, ensuring that families of students from all ethnicities, SES levels and academic backgrounds are aware of the school choice option. During subsequent operating years, VA will continue to provide outreach to a diverse population. Marketing materials will be developed, the website and logo will be refined and promoted, direct mail, press releases, open houses, door to door, printed flyers, promotional resources, and social media campaigns will spread the word. To reach as many potential families as possible, VA will utilize phone banks and advertise on radio stations catering to diverse audiences. VA will be responsive to families who may not have access to the Internet. We will identify low SES apartment complexes and neighborhoods within a 3-mile radius of the school location, distribute printed materials and host special events at local community centers. Materials will give directions on how to request enrollment and transportation assistance. If necessary, a VA representative will conduct a home visit to assist with enrollment. Hard-copy applications will be available at the school office, area businesses and churches. In order to give equal opportunity to all students to enroll at VA, the Board will allocate 30% of its advertising budget to target low SES communities. The Planning Committee consists of several independent business owners and community leaders who will collaborate with community stakeholders to continually evaluate best

practices for outreach to Low SES households and racially diverse neighborhoods.

The Principal and charter committee members will attend community meetings and events at the local Chamber, Rotary, Head Start and day care centers, churches, and other civic groups to promote the mission and enrollment. VA will have a student body that is comparable to the statistical demographics of the areas served which is currently approximately 42% African American, 2.4% Hispanic, 52.9% Caucasian, 1.5% Asian and 77% percent Free or Reduced school lunch count. Investigation of desegregation orders revealed that The Charter Institute of Erskine College is not under a desegregation order. We have and will continue to meet with our local, county, state and federal officers to inform and update them as needed. Applications for enrollment will be available no later than the first Tuesday of November of each year. A parent or guardian must enroll each student. In the first year the applications will be received online, by email, or via US mail. The deadline for submitting an application is 5 p.m., the last Friday of February during the first year and dates for application will be updated and publicized annually.

Applications may continue to be received after the deadline, but will be placed on the wait list and not included in the lottery if applicable. If the number of applications received before the application deadline does not meet or exceed capacity, then applications will be received and admission will be given on a first come, first served basis. If the number of applications received before the deadline exceeds the number of slots available, a public lottery will be held. If the number of applicants exceeds capacity prior to the application deadline, a public lottery will be conducted on the last business day of February. Participants in the lottery will be notified by phone or electronic communication. All attempts to contact families will be documented. The lottery will be conducted in the school facility or similar public place. The lottery will be conducted in the following manner: 1) a card with the name of an individual applicant will be sealed in an unmarked envelope; 2) each envelope will be placed in a transparent, plastic bin by grade level which will be sufficiently large enough to allow the envelopes to be thoroughly shuffled; 3) a volunteer from the community will draw and open each envelope, reading aloud the name of the applicant; 4) the

name drawn and announced will be recorded on separate ledgers. The procedure will continue until all envelopes have been drawn and all names announced and recorded. Parents will be notified of the results of the lottery via electronic and US Mail. All students not admitted in the lottery process will be placed on a waiting list in order in which they were chosen in the lottery. As slots open during the school year, students will be admitted from the waiting list. Prior to the school year beginning, parents have 5 (5) business days after receipt of notice to respond before the school will move to the next student on the waiting list. Within 10 business days of school starting and during the school year, parents have two (2) business days after receipt of notice to respond before the school will move to the next student on the waiting list. Every effort will be made to reach each student's parent or guardian.

If a question arises concerning enrollment procedures not covered by the lottery process, and that cannot be resolved through efforts of the Principal and Board, the school will follow the SC law, "If a charter school denies admission to a student for reasons other than the results of a lottery, the student may appeal the denial to the sponsoring district. The decision will be binding on the student and the charter school." VA will not limit or deny admission or show preference to any individual or group. However, in accordance with Charter School law, the school will give enrollment priority to siblings of a pupil already enrolled and attending, children of a school employee, children of the Charter Committee, provided the enrollment of employee preference and charter committee preference does not constitute more than twenty (20) percent of the total enrollment of the charter school.

Educational Program. For over two decades, education reform efforts and infusing technology into the curriculum have been consistent themes in attempts to improve American educational systems. Yet, American schools still look the same. The ASCD in the Whole Child Approach recognizes, "The demands of the 21st century require a new approach to education to fully prepare students for college, career, and citizenship. Research, practice, and common sense confirm that a whole child approach to education will develop and prepare students for the

challenges and opportunities of today and tomorrow by addressing students' comprehensive needs through the shared responsibility of students, families, schools, and communities." ASCD's Whole Child Tenets for each student are: enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle; learns in environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults; actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community; has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults; challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment. While focusing on the whole child, the Committee examined research and data available regarding our population of students in SC and specifically in the Florence area. Students with ADHD experience more problems with school performance than their non-ADHD peers. 6.4 million American children ages 4-17 have been diagnosed with ADHD. SC is ranked 5th highest in the nation with a rate of 11.7%. Studies found that students with, ADHD, compared to students without ADHD, had persistent academic difficulties that resulted in the following: lower average marks, more failed grades, more expulsions, increased dropout rates, and a lower rate of college undergraduate completion (Weiss & Hechtman as cited in Johnston, 2002; Ingersoll, 1988). The disruptive behavior sometimes associated with the disorder may make students with ADHD more susceptible to suspensions and expulsions. A study by Barkley and colleagues (1990) found that 46 percent of their student study group with ADHD had been suspended and 11 percent had been expelled. In the US Dept. of Education's, *Identifying and Treating Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: A Resource for School and Home* suggested these tips for teachers to help students with ADHD: work on the most difficult concepts early in the day; give directions to one assignment at a time instead of directions for multiple tasks all at once; vary the pace and type of activity to maximize the student's attention; and structure the student's environment to accommodate his or her special needs. The committee researched ways to help all children have the most successful experience at VA and many of the strategies were already in our school model such as those detailed in ASCD's featured book

<u>Alternatives in the Classroom</u> by Thomas Armstrong,

Incidental Learning: Incidental (non-directed) learning is the way that all of us learned during the first few years of life. It is knowledge we acquire by absorbing learning from the environment such as when infants are learning to talk. Research suggests this approach to learning can be very powerful in acquiring certain kinds of knowledge, such as a foreign language (Druckman & Swets, 1988). Drama is also used as a part of accelerative learning. Overcrowded conditions increase evidence of aggressiveness (Weinstein, 1979). Studies have linked overcrowded conditions such as in housing to hyperactive behavior in children (Thomas, Chess, Sillen, & Menzez, 1974). Weinstein noted, "Nowhere else [but in schools] are large groups of individuals packed so closely together for so many hours, yet expected to perform at peak efficiency on difficult learning tasks and to interact harmoniously." Best practices include providing different types of spaces (a private nook for quiet reflection, a social area for interpersonal interaction, a hands-on area for creating projects) and a variety of ways in which students can complete work (sitting, standing, lying down, working alone, working in pairs, working in groups). Technology can help students with academic and behavior challenges to learn more effectively. Students with attentional and behavioral difficulties may be particularly well-suited to technology, given their propensity for high stimulation (Zentall, 1993). Research suggests that computer technology is a highly effective approach for students (Bender & Bender, 1996; Ford, Poe, & Cox, 1993; Millman, 1984). The advantages of the computer for students with attentional and behavioral difficulties include the following: high-speed, instant feedback; ability to self-control stimuli; bright colors and sounds; and interaction. Students at VA will have access to personalized and interactive technology. Students will be provided formative assessments with adaptive technology and personalized pathways that are research-based to quickly accelerate learning and close the achievement gap. Examples of these technologies to be used include MAP, Achieve 3000 Series, DreamBox Learning, and ALEKS. RAZ-Kids provides animated interactive e-books

specific to each student's instructional and independent reading levels.

Some students may experience deep feelings of unworthiness because of the effect of negative school, peer, or parenting experiences which may require a proper referral to a licensed mental-health professional. VA will have a full time guidance counselor on staff. We also have partnerships with McLeod Health and Dr. Randy Hiatt who provides marriage, family and child counseling services. The educator should directly address the affective domain in school so that emotions serve to enhance and not disrupt the classroom experience. Strategies like encouraging the expressive arts, holding a positive image, and using positive role models can help accomplish this objective. The 7 Habits of Happy Kids will support all students having a positive affective classroom climate and developing a positive self-image. (attention *deficit disorder*), it formalizes or institutionalizes the negative experiences of the student.

VA will set aside regular class time to hold meetings based on William Glasser's educational ideas (Glasser & Dotson, 1998). Community and Small Group Meetings provide more opportunities to create social settings within which students can learn new kinds of social behavior and experience themselves as positive social beings. Run properly, these meeting can provide opportunities for students to get supportive feedback on how they are interacting with others, to receive social recognition for positive outcomes in class, to share their own constructive feelings and ideas about class issues, and to feel like an equal member of a total social unit. Each day students will participate in a Community Meeting that supports these concepts. Using a collaborative form of discipline, students have *input* into the rules of the classroom and into designing the rewards and "response costs" that will ensue if they do not follow the rules. The Responsive Classroom Model establishes collaborative behavior management. For example, the PBL unit "Cool with School Rules" begins the year with students and staff collaborating rules and logical rewards/consequences. There are logical consequences with reflection for a bad choice about why the choice was made and what the student could do next time for a good choice. A student that wrote on a desk might have to wash the desk, or all desks, instead of losing recess,

which is a common although many times ineffective punishment for students.

Howard Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences (MI) provides a rich framework for designing learning experiences that mesh with the special "proclivities" (intelligence areas of greatest interest or competence) of students experiencing learning or behavior challenges. The eight intelligences in MI theory—linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist—provide teachers a way to create an activity or strategy to suit a particular student's learning style. Teachers will focus on MI when they are developing the Individual Learning Profile and Plan for each student. Instructional planning will incorporate MI in all tiers of instruction, enrichment, and in PBL units.

Research shows that many students do not display as much disruptive behavior when engaged in arts-oriented activities, such as painting, drama, dance, and play, as they do when involved in more traditional school-based tasks (O'Neil, 1994; Smitheman- Brown & Church, 1996). Arts Enrichment is an important component of the learning environment at VA. We will have regularly scheduled music and art classes each week. Every Friday afternoon, students can choose which type of enrichment class they would like to participate during our Academic, Cultural, and Arts Enrichment. We are in the process of partnering with many arts organizations and college students majoring in the arts to lead the arts enrichment classes. Teachers will be encouraged to think about students experiencing learning and behavioral challenges as untapped creative potential and an opportunity to help these students realize their giftedness.

If there are no meaningful hands-on materials available for learning, children will grab whatever is available (student's hair, a toy, somebody else's pen) as tactile and kinesthetic experiences are important for children. VA will provide students with opportunities for hands-on learning so that they can readily access materials that relate directly to success in the classroom. Some examples: manipulatives to learn math concepts (e.g., Cuisenaire rods, Dienes blocks, UNIFIX cubes) (Davidson, 1996); and form letters out of clay to learn alphabet shapes. Just as teachers encourage students to write down or draw their ideas in class, there also should be

opportunities for students to create hands-on models that represent their current thinking on a school-related topic. Graphic Representation of Fully Developed Educational Program

Virtus Academy advances student achievement by preparing students for civic and career success through rigorous academics, leadership development and project-based learning.

Virtus Academy

- 7 Habits of Happy Kids
- School Culture
- Responsive Classroom
  - Parents
  - All Employees
  - Students
  - Community Partners
  - Academic, Cultural and Arts Enrichment
    - Internships
    - Community Service
    - Dual Credit Classes

Classroom Teachers

- Math
  - enVision
    - Math Workstations
      - DreamBox Learning/ALEKS
      - Academic Choice with Arts
      - Guided Math with teacher
        - Weekly Progress Monitoring
          - RTI Grade Level Meetings
            - RTI Leadership Team
              - RTI CARE
          - Weekly PD
            - Curriculum/RTI Coordinator
      - RTI Instructional Assistant
      - Parent Volunteers
- Science/ SS
  - Project Based Learning
    - Presentation of Learning/Arts
- Language Arts
  - Harcourt Trophies
    - Literacy Workstations
      - ABC Mouse/Achieve 3000
      - Academic Choice with Arts
      - Guided Reading with teacher
        - Weekly Progress Monitoring
          - RTI Grade Level Meetings
            - RTI Leadership
              - RTI CARE
          - Weekly PD
            - Reading Coach
            - Curriculum/RTI Coordinator
    - RTI Instructional Assistant
    - Parent Volunteers

Literacy and Math Workstations and using PBL for science and social studies standards will allow all students to have a hands-on approach. Tier 1 instruction will use manipulatives provided by state adopted math, reading and writing texts and supplemental manipulatives as needed to meet the needs of all students. A resource such as Handwriting Without Tears will provide a multisensory method using manipulatives to learn handwriting. VA students will have tables instead of desks and movement will be incorporated into the instructional day. At least 100 minutes per day of literacy and 75 minutes per day of mathematical concept instruction will be provided to students per day through integrated studies and workstations. Projected based learning and content focused workstations will provide movement throughout the day. Whatever it takes to accelerate learning will be the philosophy followed at VA. For example, students needing movement while sitting for short periods of time may use a reading rocking chair, a mini-trampoline, wiggle cushions or squeeze balls to enhance concentration.

In the 2014 State of Obesity.org report, the obesity rate for adults in SC was 32.1% up from 21.1% in 2000. SC is ranked 10th highest in the 2014 US Adult Obesity Rating. The obesity rate by race is 42.7% for Black, 32.2% for Latino, and 28.1% for White. According to the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control, the percent of children ages 2-17 who were considered overweight with a BMI 85th-95th percentile was 17.6% in Florence compared to 14.9% in SC. This same age group also had an obesity rate with a BMI greater than 95th percentile of 20.3% in Florence compared to 16.7% in SC. When the **total percentage of children ages 2-17 that are overweight or obese are added together, it results in 37.9% of the children in Florence**. The residents in Florence, SC have a higher obesity rate than the SC state average beginning with our 2-year-old children. According to the CDC and Prevention, childhood obesity has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents in the past 30 years. Childhood obesity has both immediate and long- term effects on health and well-being (Appendix H). The CDC notes that "schools play a particularly critical role by establishing a safe and supportive

environment with policies and practices that support healthy behaviors. Schools also provide opportunities for students to learn about and practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors." With the research of **11.7% of** students diagnosed with ADHD added to the 37.9% students that are overweight or obese, **this results in a startling 49.6% or 50% of our students in the Florence area** facing a disadvantage before walking into the doors of school. Focusing on the whole child as we created the VA school model and understanding the implications for students and their families, the Planning Committee reached out to McLeod Hospital, other health professionals and the YMCA to partner with VA in educating the staff, parents and students in wellness issues, and also providing classes for fitness, nutrition, healthy cooking, and creating a community garden with fresh fruits and vegetables. Programs with a character development component such as "Girls on the Run" and "Stride" will be offered starting in 3rd grade after school or during the Friday Academic, Cultural and Arts enrichment period. We recruited a nurse to join our planning committee and provide expertise. The Planning Committee investigated other strategies within the school day to help reverse and prevent this obesity epidemic that is so relevant for all families in SC. We selected The 7 Habits of Happy Kids, as our character education foundation and the Responsive Classroom for our behavior model to help facilitate a culture and environment that will be conducive to the VA Personalized Learning Model with PBL and incorporating the health and wellness factors that are important for the whole child.

Researchers at Cornell University analyzed 22,939 data points and concluded that with appropriately scheduled recess and active movement, children ate 54% more fruits and vegetables. There was also a 45% increase in those eating at least one serving of fruits and vegetables. During the same time period consumption of fruits and vegetables actually decreased in the schools that didn't provide adequate exercise (http://foodpsychology.cornell.edu/OP/Recess). By contrast, In *Health and Academic Achievement* by the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion found that the lack of adequate consumption of specific foods, such as fruits, vegetables, or dairy products, is associated with lower grades. Researchers also found students who

are physically active, tend to have better grades, school attendance, cognitive performance and classroom behavior. Montana schools have created "A Recess Before Lunch Program Implementation Guide," to help schools. They have found benefits in implementing appropriately scheduled recess, movement and lunch, including: fewer classroom discipline problems because children are more settled when they return to class; better classroom performance because children pay more attention to the lessons when they are not hungry; better cafeteria behavior because children are ready to eat and not eager to leave lunch to go out and play; greater nutrient consumption because children are ready to eat, and they eat more of the foods; and improved cafeteria atmosphere because students spend time eating and visiting, not rushing to get outside [(http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/schoolfood/R](http://opi.mt.gov/pdf/schoolfood/R)BL/RBLGuide2008.pdf) (Appendix H) Students at VA will have regularly scheduled and appropriate time for recess and movement daily. The guidance counselor will help to facilitate students using the Habits Of Happy Kids while outside at recess, especially Habit 4: Think Win-Win, Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood, and Habit 6: Synergize.

According to research from the University of Michigan, "Kids are more sedentary than ever before, and homework is a contributing factor. Since 1981, the amount of time that kids spend playing sports has decreased by 58 percent for six- to eight-year-olds, 19 percent for nine- to eleven-year olds, 43 percent for twelve- to fourteen-year-olds, and 28 percent for fifteen to seventeen-year-olds [Changing Times of American Youth: 1981–2003, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, 2004]. The University of Michigan also found that family meals are the single strongest predictor of better achievement scores and fewer behavioral problems for children ages three to twelve [Journal of Marriage and the Family, May 2001]. According to a 2001 review of more than 120 studies of homework and its effects by Professor Harris Cooper of Duke University, the country's leading homework researcher, and his updated 2006 review of an additional sixty studies, there is very little correlation between the amount of

homework and achievement in elementary schools and only a moderate correlation in middle schools. Even in high schools, "too much homework may diminish its effectiveness or even become counterproductive," writes Cooper in his research review [Harris Cooper, The Battle Over Homework, second edition, page 26, and Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of the Research 1987–2003, the Review of Educational Research (Spring 2006)]. Many countries with the highest scoring students on achievement tests, such as Japan, Denmark, and the Czech Republic, have teachers who assign little homework. Meanwhile, countries such as Greece, Thailand, and Iran, where students have some of the worst average scores, have teachers who assign a lot of homework. American students do as much homework as their peers in other countries, or more, but still only score around the international average. [National Differences, Global Similarities: World Culture and the Future of Schooling by David P. Baker and Gerald K. LeTendre, Stanford University Press, 2005] At VA homework will be assigned following developmentally appropriate guidelines reviewed annually with faculty and parents. Students with learning and behavioral challenges will be provided differentiated assignments and additional support for homework completion through RTI and content workstations. In a research study that was published in *Obesity* on March 26, 2015, "Excessive HomeworkMay Influence Higher Obesity Rates in Children." Researchers found that excessive homework combined with the presence of school-related stress can negatively affect children's weight. (Michaud I, et al. *Obesity*. 2015; doi:10.1002/oby.21026.) Other researchers conducted a study on *Homework and Family Stress: With Consideration of Parents' Self Confidence, Educational Level, and Cultural Background* that was published in 2015 in "The American Journal of Family Therapy." Homework load was measured utilizing the National Education Association (NEA) 10 Minute Rule guidelines of no more than 10 minutes for each grade starting in first grade, resulting in first graders receiving 10 minutes or less, second graders receiving 20 minutes or less, and so on. The findings discovered that family stress increased as homework load increased and as parent's

perception of their capacity to assist decreased. Contrary to the 10 Minute Rule, primary school children received about three times the recommended load of homework. The study suggested that conflicts over homework assignments were 200% more likely to occur in families with parents who didn't have, at the very least, a college degree. "All of our results indicate that homework as it is now being assigned discriminates against children whose parents don't have a college degree, against parents who have English as a second language, against, essentially parents who are poor," researcher Donaldson-Pressman concludes. The 2014 US Census for Florence, SC, 3.7% of families have a language other than English spoken at home, and only 21.3% of Florence residents 25 years and older have a Bachelor's degree or higher. This results in 78.7% of adults 25 years and older not

having a college degree in Florence. Besides the NEA 10 Minute Rule Guideline, the ASCD created the *Five Hallmarks of Good Homework*. The best homework tasks exhibit five characteristics. First, the task has a clear academic purpose, such as practice, checking for understanding, or applying knowledge or skills. Second, the task efficiently demonstrates student learning. Third, the task promotes ownership by offering choices and being personally relevant. Fourth, the task instills a sense of competence—the student can successfully complete it without help. Last, the task is aesthetically pleasing—it appears enjoyable and interesting (Vatterott, 2009). Understanding the research and needs of the students, VA will be serving, minimal homework will be assigned following best practices. The homework that will be assigned, will meet the 10 Minute Rule created by the NEA, the five characteristics of good homework as described by the ASCD, and will be designed to offer academic choice for the students and families, which will prevent homework from being a stressful activity. Example: Create your own method to practice spelling words or choose one of the following: Write or type the words three times, spell them out loud, use Scrabble tiles or magnetic letters to spell them, trace them with your finger, use shaving cream to spell the words, create a word search using the words, use your body to spell the words as you say

each letter, or play catch with a friend or parent with each person saying the next letter of the spelling word each time they catch the ball. VA will serve the anticipated student population of the proposed charter school by (1) narrowing the achievement gaps between students from higher and lower socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, (2) assuring all children will read on grade level by the end of third grade, and (3) cultivating in its students the abilities of team work, critical thinking, abstract reasoning and social interactions.

Narrowing the Achievement Gap: PASS test scores from 2014 in the Florence and Darlington County School Districts reveal a significant achievement gap between students who receive free and reduced meals and those who are classified as "full pay" (SCDE 2014 / Appendix H). Children from lower SES households (qualifying for free or reduced lunch) scored "met' or "exemplary" on each of the PASS subjects at a rate significantly lower than the students from higher SES households. In all subjects (writing, English Language Arts, math, science, and social studies) and grade levels the disparity in scoring between lower and higher SES students continued.

Table 1: SC and Florence 1 Discrepancy Between Percentage of Lower and Higher SES Students Scoring "Met" or "Exemplary" on PASS in 2014 by Subject and Grade Level

	Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5	
	Lower	**Higher**	**Lower**	**Higher**	**Lower**	**Higher**
Writing	76.5	90.1	67.5	92.0	76.7	91.4
ELA	74.1	89.8	69.3	93.4	75.7	89.9
Math	60.7	87.7	61.7	89.3	66.3	86.2
Science	52.8	83.6	60.9	93.0	63.6	83.5
Social Studies	71.2	91.3	76.4	94.3	64.2	88.7

	Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8	
	Lower	**Higher**	**Lower**	**Higher**	**Lower**	**Higher**
Writing	72.7	89.8	68.3	86.6	63.6	83.7
ELA	62.3	87.8	58.0	84.6	53.3	79.7
Math	54.8	81.6	54.8	81.6	62.0	81.9
Science	55.6	86.3	71.3	88.7	58.7	84.2

Social Studies	60.7	91.6	57.8	84.6	60.5	85.3
*Lower SES is categorized as Subsidized Meals (Appendix H)						
**High SES is categorized as Full-Pay Meals (Appendix H)						

By the third grade, children in lower SES are significantly trailing their peers in all subjects and objective test scores. When you consider Florence 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and Darlington 1, there is a total 25.99% variance of children from lower and higher SES backgrounds who scored "met" or "exemplary" by each subject and by each grade for the year 2014 (Appendix H). The lower SES group does not materially close the disparity in the scores. Of the 23,453 students enrolled in public schools in Florence County according to the SC Department of Education 2015 135th Day Enrollment Report, 55% are African American. According to the SC Education Oversight Committee academic performance and achievement gaps for all SC students grades 3 and above show that "achievement gaps between white and African American students remain consistently larger than gaps between white and Hispanic students and between pay and free or reduced price lunch students" (EOC, 2008). Achievement gaps range in ELA and math from 20% to 29% between white and African American students. African American male students and African American free or reduced price lunch students were the lowest-performing groups in both subjects and across absolute rating categories. These statistics inform the planning committee that a culturally relevant curriculum with structures of academic support for school success is important for our diverse student body to meet the high standards of excellence for the Academy.

We recognize that PASS (SC READY) scores are an objective assessment of students' academic success as well as formative assessments measuring year over year academic growth, which in turn links to professional and personal success in adulthood. VA will enter into a contractual agreement with The Charter Institute of Erskine College that student performance is the most important factor in determining the success and viability of the school. VA will implement research-based programs, instructional strategies and interventions that will specifically focus on narrowing the achievement gap. Teachers will use research based assessments such as Measures of

Academic Progress for students in grades kindergarten through eighth in math, reading, language usage and science at the beginning, middle, and end of each year along growth objectives in all content areas to provide a personalized assessment experience by adapting to each student's learning level—precisely measuring student progress and growth for each individual. Students will be assigned to flexible groups in reading and math based on their current instructional levels. The goal is to move intensive to strategic, strategic to benchmark (passing), and benchmark to above standards. Academic acceleration will occur with word study, use of technology, PBL units integrating content areas, and tiered literacy and math workstations. Teachers will progress monitor students with quick, non-intrusive, assessments such as DIBELS and easyCBM Math and report data and evaluation of interventions during RTI Grade Level Team meetings. RTI, Leadership and CARE meetings will be conducted regularly to monitor students' progress and allow for quick interventions to accelerate learning.

Personalization through Informative Data: Based on data from local school districts, we anticipate that approximately 70% of students will qualify for the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch Program (FRLP). State assessment data shows that FRLP students need improvement in written, oral and technological proficiency, content literacy, critical thinking, collaborative skills, career preparation, and numeracy skills. We expect to closely reflect the enrollment of the districts in Florence County so we anticipate approximately half of the student population will be African American. As reported in the data above, achievement gaps have been consistently troublesome between white and African American students. The Pew Research Group reported that in 2015 the racial group with the highest median income gap in SC by 47% is African American. The highest poverty group by race in SC is Hispanic. However, given that the Hispanic population in Florence County schools totaled less than 3% in 2015 on the SC Department of Education 135th Day Enrollment Report and the African American student population totaled 55%, it can be reasonably concluded that there is high alignment between the

percent of students who are African American and the percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. However, it is also important to note that students, regardless of race, who experience low SES have educational needs to be met, and that African American students, even when residing in more affluent households benefit from curriculum and experiences with cultural relevance. By providing personalized learning with individual learner profiles and learner plans, access to applied technology, engaging, culturally relevant and localized PBL, and targeted academic support through RtI and special education services, students will excel.

VA will offer a personalized educational experience that focuses on the whole child and meets students where they are academically, challenges and engages them, and is responsive to background and culture. Through adherence to the key components of a personalized learning model, students will have the foundation to compete for placement in the best universities and careers post-graduation. 21st Century Learning Skills will be mastered preparing students to adapt to the changing world and preparing them to meet and exceed state and federal academic standards. **Why personalized learning?** One of ASCD's Whole Child Tenets is "Each student has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults." The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is committed to ensuring that students graduate high school ready to succeed in college

and careers. As part of this commitment, the foundation has partnered with leading schools, educators, and other funders in the emerging field of personalized learning. They believe these new instructional approaches and school models hold promise as a way to maximize the impact of teachers and schools on their students' success. According to early findings of a study of students attending the personalized learning schools that are in partnerships with the Gates foundation, "the students attending the schools in the study made gains in mathematics and reading over the last two years that are significantly greater than a virtually matched comparison group made up of similar students selected from comparable schools" (http://collegeready.gatesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Early-Progress-on-Personalized-Learning-Full-Report.pdf).

Personalized learning is characterized by individual learner profiles, customized pathways or personalized learning plans, competency-based progression and flexible learning environments. "Developing Learner Profiles" in chapter 3 of Making a Difference: Meeting Diverse Learning Needs with Differentiated Instruction, defines a learner profile as "the ways in which a student learns best. A comprehensive learner profile includes information on a student's interests, learning preferences and styles, differences related to gender, culture and personality, information on student learning strengths, and needs and types of supports that have been successful in the past. A learner profile needs to be dynamic, as individual learners are constantly growing and changing" (https://archive.education.alberta.ca/teachers/resources/cross/making-a-difference/). "Students possess different kinds of minds and therefore learn, remember, perform, and understand in different ways," (Gardner, 1991). Eight abilities (intelligences) have been identified in Gardner's research, yet many traditional schools focus instruction on verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical and leave out intelligences related to the arts, such as musical-rhythmic, visual-spatial and bodily- kinesthetic. VA understands the importance of incorporating the art intelligences into all aspects of learning including PBL, tiered instruction, and during Friday afternoon "Academic, Cultural, and Arts Enrichment." Richard Culatta, Deputy Director of the Office of

Educational Technology with the US Department of Education states, "We must take classroom learning beyond a one-size-fits-all mentality and bring it fully into the 21st century." He defines personal learning as, "adjusting the pace (individualized), adjusting the learning approach (differentiated), and leveraging student interests and experiences" (http://tech.ed.gov/richard-culatta/). SC Education Superintendent Spearman's administration is focusing on producing graduates who are equipped for success with "rigorous standards" for academics, multiple languages, integrity, a strong work ethic, communication skills and critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Becknell, J. The Herald, June 11, 2015). VA joins Superintendent Spearman in these efforts by offering an educational experience built around PBL, Personalized Learning Profiles and Plans, applied technology, and standards based instruction.

In development of the education model, the planning committee conducted research, consulted with education experts, and visited schools while focusing on the challenge that Superintendent Spearman has articulated clearly for SC schools: "We've got to have graduates who know how to show up to work on time; we've got to have graduates who persevere, and don't give up because it's hard," she said. "We are focusing now on this whole person, and it's not as easy as it sounds. How do we teach this?" (Becknell, J, 2015).

Personalized Learning and Project Based Curriculum: During this planning process, committee members visited multiple schools from SC to California comprising four different educational models from traditional education to personalized learning models focusing on PBL. After the committee agreed that a personalized learning model focusing on PBL was the model for VA, the committee's intent was to have fully integrated PBL for all grades and for all students, including ESOL and special needs. We knew it would be a challenge because PBL is most often incorporated in middle and high school. We also knew we needed more research to make an informed decision. The International Center for Leadership in Education (Daggett, W., 2014) finds that rigor and relevance is directly related to opportunities to increase engagement, develop personal skills, master

core academics and stretch learning through application to real world problems.

According to the Buck Institute for Education (BIE) in their *PBL in the Elementary Grades Toolkit Series*, "PBL is a flexible teaching methodology that can be part of a school program with any literacy model, but to varying extent." BIE identifies three different methods for PBL. Fully integrated PBL: Projects are used throughout the school day and program, and may incorporate all content areas, including literacy and math. Partially integrated PBL: Projects occur mainly during the time of day used for science and/or social studies and the arts, but include some literacy and math when appropriate. Separate PBL: Projects occur only during separate times of the day/week and do not connect to the literacy or math programs. **BIE uses the Partially Integrated PBL method in their *PBL in the Elementary Grades Toolkit Series*.**

Nell K. Duke, a professor of literacy, language, and culture, and an affiliate of the Combined Program in Education and Psychology at the University of Michigan, wrote the book Inside Information: Developing Powerful Readers and Writers of Informational Text Through Project-Based Instruction. She published a report, *How Project-Based Approaches in Literacy Could Go Terribly Wrong (Or Powerfully Right)*. She listed three ways project-based instruction could go wrong: lack of clear conceptualization, limited alignment to standards, and lack of explicit, systematic instruction (*Reading Today* November/ December 2014) (Appendix B). The National Reading Panel identified best practices in reading instruction to include: explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, systematic phonics instruction, methods to improve fluency, and ways to enhance comprehension (National Reading Panel Report, USDOE, April 13, 2000). A combination of techniques is effective for teaching children to read: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, guided oral reading, teaching vocabulary words, and reading comprehension strategies. (http://www.nichd.nih.gov/research/supported/Pages/nrp.aspx). When we combined what we learned from research and analyzed data of the students VA will serve, we concluded a fully integrated model would not provide us the opportunity for personalized learning with tiered

instruction to target deficit skills or provide enrichment for our elementary students. We especially wanted to ensure all students were reading on grade level by the end of third grade, since students are transitioning from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" at this time. The Committee then concluded that a personalized educational model through a Partially Integrated PBL curriculum would best serve the students in all grades in our area. Students in 7th-12th grade will have highly qualified teachers in teams for each of the content areas (Math, ELA, Science, SS). Each team of teachers will plan PBL units together, but math will remain a class taught in sequence and integrating into PBL units when applicable. Students will gain mastery of SC Science and SS standards through projects that are created to be academically and culturally relevant to appeal to students' personal interests, and to provide them "the why" to what they are learning. Math standards for grades K-12 PBL units and Language Arts standards for grades K-6th will be application and not introduction of skills because research supports that math and reading skills need to be taught in a systematic and sequential order, especially for students in kindergarten through third grade. Students will be reading or listening to information related to their PBL units, but also differentiated instruction with other sources not related to the PBL unit to provide tiered support and enrichment based on each student's personalized learning needs as identified on the Individual Learning Profile and Individual Learning Plan.

In addition to school visits, the committee reviewed and adopted the education outcomes as defined by The Profile of the SC Graduate. The profile was created by TransformSC, an initiative of the SC Council on Competitiveness. The profile has been reviewed and adopted by many respected education entities including the SC Department of Education, the SC Chamber of Commerce, the SC Association of School Administrators (SCASA) – Superintendents Division, the SC Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (SCASCD) and the SC Education Oversight

Committee (SC EOC). TransformSC is a collaboration of business leaders, educators, students, parents and policy makers with the goal of transforming the public education system so that every student graduates prepared for careers, college and citizenship. The VA education model focuses on: taking students from where they are, developing personalized learning profiles and plans, providing curriculum that is rigorous and relevant, including study of foreign language from K-12, creating curriculum units that are inclusive of students' cultural and racial heritage, using authentic, standards based assessments and reporting, applying technology to support communication and achievement, promoting team work and communication skills, fostering creativity through an arts enriched curriculum, and developing good character and leadership abilities. A review of the Profile of the SC Graduate shows great alignment with outcomes intentionally pursued at VA (Appendix H).

As stated previously, we will use "The 7 Habits of Happy Kids" and "Responsive Classroom", which are research and evidence-based approaches to education that are associated with greater teacher effectiveness, higher student achievement, and improved school climate. The first few weeks of school are when expectations and routines are established, rules generated, and goals articulated. The foundation is laid for a productive and cooperative year of learning. Students are introduced to the people of the classroom and school community. Students are also introduced to expectations for learning and school culture. The structure of the first weeks is done so that students will participate actively in all of these introductions. One of ASCD's Whole Child Tenets is, "Each student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults." The goal is to create a climate and tone of warmth and safety which aligns to this tenet. This is done by: focusing on group-building activities to help create the trust and safety essential for active, collaborative thinking (RC in Appendix H). In Sept. 2010, the Buck Institute for Education (BIE) published an article entitled *7 Essentials for Project-Based Learning* in ASCD's Educational Leadership magazine. Soon thereafter they added an eighth element, Significant Content, to

"counter stereotypes that PBL was not an effective method for teaching standards-based knowledge, understanding, and skills and to remind teachers to design projects with a clear focus on content standards." In *Why We Changed Our Model of the "8 Essential Elements of PBL,"* written by John Larmer and John Mergendoller (Buck Institute for Education, May 2015), BIE created a "Gold Standard PBL because, "If done well, PBL yields great results. But if PBL is not done well, two problems are likely to arise. First, we will see a lot of assignments and activities that are labeled as "projects" but which are not rigorous PBL, and student learning will suffer. Or, we will see projects backfire on unprepared teachers and result in wasted time, frustration, and failure to understand the possibilities of PBL. Then PBL runs the risk of becoming another one of yesterday's educational fads-vaguely remembered and rarely practiced. To help teachers do PBL well, we created a comprehensive, research-based model for PBL- a "Gold Standard" to help teachers, schools, and organizations to measure, calibrate, and improve their practice." **BIE's Gold Standard PBL has three parts**: Student Learning Goals , Essential Project Design Elements, Project Based Teaching Practices. The following information about Gold Standard PBL is taken directly from several papers published from BIE in 2015 (Appendix H). In Gold Standard PBL, there are two separate but related components of the model: Essential Project Design Elements, and Project Based Teaching Practices. They are called the Essential Project Design Elements because "that's precisely what they are—not the 'elements of PBL' the instructional methodology, which is a much broader topic than the design of a project itself. The Project Based Teaching Practices expand on what it means to implement PBL well, beyond designing the project." Some of the familiar "8 Essential Elements" remain, others are gone. The following changes were made and the reasoning to support those changes

Essential Project Design Element 1a: From Significant Content to **Key Knowledge and**

Understanding. To describe the student learning goals that are the central focus of a project, the word "key" still captures the idea that what students learn should be significant, in terms of state or

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local standards and what's important to students, teachers, schools and sponsors. The term "knowledge and understanding" means the same thing as "content" but in more everyday language.

Essential Project Design Element 1b: <u>From 21st Century Competencies to **Key Success Skills.**</u>

The older model separated this element from content. BIE combined the two into one set of student learning goals. Recent standards now explicitly include such competencies as critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and making presentations; these are to be taught together with content, since students need to think critically about something, such as history, science, math, literature and other texts.

Essential Project Design Element 2: <u>From Driving Question to **Challenging Problem or Question**</u>. The new model defines the fundamental element of a project, what it is "about," more broadly as a "challenging problem or question." This may be a "problem statement" in classrooms and schools where problem based learning is the preferred style of PBL or an "essential question" or "design challenge." BIE continues to suggest that teachers operationalize the challenging problem or question by putting it in the form of a student-friendly, open-ended "driving question" to focus the project.

Essential Project Design Element 3: <u>From In-Depth Inquiry to **Sustained Inquiry**</u>. Inquiry is not a superficial process. So instead of depth, BIE decided to emphasize the point that in PBL, inquiry should take place over an extended period of time. Students could, in a sub-standard project, investigate a topic in depth but only on one occasion. But by extending inquiry over several occasions, students have enough time to engage in an iterative process that involves questioning, finding and evaluating sources of information, posing new questions, and applying what has been learned to the solution of a problem or creation of a product.

Essential Project Design Element 4: <u>Hello **Authenticity** (New Element)</u>. Authenticity has to do with how real-world the project is. When people say something is authentic, they generally mean it is real or genuine, not fake. In education, the concept has to do with how "real-world" the learning

or the task is. Authenticity increases student motivation and learning. A project can be authentic in context, such as when students solve problems like those faced by people in the world outside of school (entrepreneurs developing a business plan, engineers designing a bridge, or advisors to the President recommending policy). It can involve the use of real-world processes, tasks and tools, and quality standards, such as when students plan an experimental investigation or use digital editing software to produce videos approaching professional quality. It can have a real impact on others, such as when students address a need in their school or community (designing and building a school garden, improving a community park, helping local immigrants) or create something that will be used or experienced by others. Finally, a project can have personal authenticity when it speaks to students' own concerns, interests, cultures, identities, and issues in their lives.

Essential Project Design Element 5: <u>Student Voice and Choice</u> (Stays the Same). Having a say in a project creates a sense of ownership in students; they care more about the project and work harder. If students aren't able to use their judgment when solving a problem and answering a driving question, the project just feels like doing an exercise or following a set of directions. Students can have input and (some) control over many aspects of a project, from the questions they generate, the resources they will use to find answers to their questions, the tasks and roles they will take on as team members, and the products they will create. Advanced students can select the topic and nature of the project itself; they can write their own driving question and decide how they want to investigate it, demonstrate what they have learned, and make their work public.

Essential Project Design Element 6: <u>Hello **Reflection** (New Element)</u>. "Reflection," which was paired with "revision," is now alone; students should reflect on what they're learning, how they're learning, and what they have accomplished in a project." John Dewey wrote, "We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience." Throughout a project, students and the teacher should reflect on what they're learning, how they're learning, and why they're learning. Reflection can occur informally, as part of classroom culture and dialogue, but should also be an explicit part

of project journals, scheduled formative assessment, discussions at project checkpoints, and public presentations of student work. Reflection on the content knowledge and understanding gained helps students solidify what they have learned and think about how it might apply elsewhere, beyond the project. Reflection on success skill development helps students internalize what the skills mean and set goals for further growth. Reflection on the project itself, how it was designed and implemented, helps students decide how they might approach their next project, and helps teachers improve the quality of their PBL practice.

Essential Project Design Element 7: <u>**Critique and Revision**</u> (Stays the Same)**.** High quality student work is a hallmark of Gold Standard PBL, and such quality is attained through thoughtful critique and revision. Students should be taught how to give and receive constructive peer feedback that will improve project processes and products, guided by rubrics, models, and formal feedback/critique protocols. In addition to peers and teachers, outside adults and experts can also contribute to the critique process, bringing an authentic, real-world point of view. This commonsense acknowledgement of the importance of making student work and student products better is supported by research on the importance of "formative evaluation," which not only means teachers giving feedback to students, but students evaluating the results of their learning.

Essential Project Design Element 8: <u>From Public Audience to **Public Product.**</u> "It's hugely important—both for motivational reasons and to make learning visible and discussible—that students make their work public in a project. It adds to a project's authenticity." BIE suggests that students don't always have to make a formal presentation to an audience. There are others ways to make work public; students can put it online, display it on a wall, or provide a product or service that is actually used by people in the real world. There are three major reasons for creating a public product in Gold Standard PBL, which a "product" can be a tangible thing, or it can be a presentation of a solution to a problem or answer to a driving question. First, a public product adds greatly to PBL's motivating power and encourages high-quality work. When

students have to present or display their work to an audience beyond the classroom, the performance bar raises, since no one wants to look bad in public. "A certain degree of anxiety can be a healthy motivator. But too much anxiety can of course detract from performance; the trick is to find the sweet spot, not the sweat spot, so it's important that students are well prepared to make their work public." Second, by creating a product, students make what they have learned tangible and when shared publicly, provocative of discussion. Instead of only being a private exchange between an individual student and teacher, the social dimension of learning becomes more important. This has an impact on classroom and school culture, helping create a "learning community," where students and teachers discuss what is being learned, how it is learned, acceptable standards of performance, and how student performance can be made better. Finally, making student work public is an effective way to communicate with parents, community members, and the wider world about what PBL is and what it does for students. When the public sees what high-quality products students can create, they're often surprised, and eager to see more.

Goodbye Need to Know. The fact that an engaging project creates a genuine "need to know" in a learner is one of the most powerful arguments for PBL. As opposed to learning for the sake of a test, grade, or approval from teachers and parents, students in PBL are motivated to learn because they want to successfully complete the project. "However, we think this term belongs in a "Why PBL?" argument, not as a thing teachers design in a project the way they would an authentic product or opportunities for student voice and choice. This concept also was easily confused with the "need to know list" used as a tool in a project. Instead, Gold Standard PBL model places a list of student-generated questions (which is initiated by an entry event that launches a project) as part of the "sustained inquiry" process. The list of student questions could still be given the heading "What do we need to know?" or a KWL (Know, Want to Learn, Learned) chart." When transitioning to PBL, one of the biggest hurdles for teachers is the need to give up some degree

of control over the classroom, and trust in their students. Even though they are more often the "guide on the side" than the "sage on the stage," does not mean teachers don't 'teach' in a PBL classroom. Many traditional practices remain, but are reframed in the context of a project.

Gold Standard PBL: Project Based Teaching Practices

- **Design and Plan:** Teachers create or adapt a project for their context and students, and plan its implementation from launch to culmination while allowing for some degree of student voice and choice.

- **Align to Standards:** Teachers use standards to plan the project and make sure it addresses key knowledge and understanding from subject areas to be included.

- **Build the Culture:** Teachers explicitly and implicitly promote student independence and growth, open-ended inquiry, team spirit, and attention to quality.

- **Manage Activities:** Teachers work with students to organize tasks and schedules, set checkpoints and deadlines, find and use resources, create products and make them public.

- **Scaffold Student Learning:** Teachers employ a variety of lessons, tools, and instructional strategies to support all students in reaching project goals.

- **Assess Student Learning:** Teachers use formative and summative assessments of knowledge, understanding, and success skills, and include self and peer assessment of team and individual work.

- **Engage and Coach:** Teachers engage in learning and creating alongside students, and
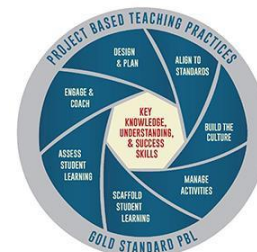
identify when they need skill-building, redirection, encouragement, and celebration.

Planning and PD: In August 2018, teachers will have a full week of Professional Development (PD) prior to students first day of the school term, and PD every Friday thereafter during the school term from 1:00-3:30 pm. The PD will provide teachers the tools and support needed to implement the innovative personalized learning model incorporating Gold Standard Partially Integrated PBL, applied technology, and leadership development. It will be strategically planned using research on professional learning that shows that PD can change the way teachers facilitate and accelerate student learning in order to close the achievement gap and for all students to achieve high expectations, especially minority, low SES, ESOL, and special needs students (PD Calendar in Appendix F). Researchers found that while 90 percent of teachers reported participating in PD, most of those teachers also reported that it was totally useless (Darling-Hammond et al, 2009). The Center for American Progress analyzed available research about teacher PD and student learning and published their findings in July 2013 in *High-Quality PD for Teachers: Supporting Teacher Training to Improve Student Learning*. "The complaints about PD have been well documented and most often cite the following shortcomings: usually disconnected from the everyday practice of teaching; too generic and unrelated to the curriculum or to the specific instructional problems teachers face; or infrequent and implemented as a one-shot event or led by an outside consultant who drops in to conduct a workshop and never returns to the school or district." The real issue isn't that teachers aren't provided PD, but that the typical offerings are ineffective at changing teachers' practice or student learning. "In this high-stakes era of higher standards and teacher evaluations based in part on student achievement, PD has to have a laser-light focus on one thing— student learning. However, at present, most PD misses the mark. One-time workshops are the most prevalent model for delivering PD. Yet, workshops have an abysmal track record for changing teacher practice and student achievement" (Yoon et al, 2007). In the National School Board Association Center for Public Education 2013 report Effective-Professional-Development-in-an-Era-of-High-Stakes-Accountability/Teaching-the-Teachers-Full-Report.pdf)."Teaching the

Teachers: Effective PD in an Era of High Stakes Accountability," their key finding is that PD needs to emphasize practices that will turn students into critical thinkers and problem solvers. The Profile of the SC Graduate lists critical thinking and problem solving as World Class Skills. 2) Most PD today is ineffective. It neither changes teacher practice nor improves student learning. Research suggests that effective PD abides by the following principles: The duration of PD must be significant and ongoing to allow time for teachers to learn a new strategy and grapple with the implementation problem. There must be support for a teacher during the implementation stage that addresses the specific challenges of changing classroom practice. Teachers' initial exposure to a concept should not be passive, but engage teachers through varied approaches so they can participate actively in making sense of a new practice. 3) Modeling has been found to be a highly effective way to introduce a new concept and help teachers understand a new practice. The content presented to teachers shouldn't be generic, but instead grounded in the teacher's discipline (middle and high school teachers) or grade-level (elementary teachers). VA has created a unique schedule implementing these key findings by providing designated times for collaboration between teachers, instructional assistants and special area teachers with the leadership team, providing weekly PD, teacher modeling, classroom support, coaching and personalized PD (Sample Calendar and Schedules in Appendix F). 3) Research estimates that pre-recession spending on PD occupied between two to five percent of a typical district's budget. However, many districts do not track their PD spending at all, leaving them in the dark about their costs. The Planning Committee understands the value and cost of effective PD, especially when first opening a school and ensuring fidelity to Virtus Academy's innovative personalized learning model incorporating Gold Standard Partially Integrated PBL, applied technology, and leadership development while maintaining fiscal responsibility. We know a "one size fits all" approach is not effective for students, nor should we expect that this approach is effective for teachers. We are providing a framework for PD to be personalized for each educator to support teachers in Friday afternoon PD, and RTI Grade Level Team meetings that will identify opportunities for growth and allow time during the instructional

day to plan and interact with teachers, support staff, and experts. 4) In switching to effective PD, the most significant cost item for districts will be purchasing time for teachers to spend in professional learning communities and with coaches. 5) Support during implementation must address the dual roles of teachers as both technicians in researched-based practices, as well as intellectuals developing teaching innovations. In a research survey for teachers to identify reasons why teachers were staying or leaving the teaching profession, "The survey found that many teachers quit because there was too little planning time, too much paperwork, unreliable assistance from the school district, and a general lack of support" (http://www.sfgate.com/education/article/THE-FUTURE-OF-EDUCATION-Surveys-show-2599799.php. The VA Sample Schedule and Calendar were created to address these teacher concerns by providing daily planning. Grade level teams will have planning time each day while their classes are at a special area, such as music, art, computers, physical education, and Spanish. RTI Grade Level teams will meet regularly during teachers' plan time with RTI Leadership. PD meetings are every Friday afternoon from 1:00-3:30 pm while students are participating in "Academic, Cultural and Arts Enrichment." The teachers will receive leadership support and PD, while using meaningful paper and computer data to inform instruction to accelerate learning for all students. This will also create a partnership within the school, with parents and the community in educating every student. One of ASCD's Whole Child Tenets is that each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.

Habit 7 Sharpen The Saw

(Balance Feels Best): "I take care of my body by eating right, exercising and getting sleep. I spend time with family and friends. I learn in lots of ways and lots of places, not just at school. I find meaningful ways to help others." We want this tenet and habit for every person that enters the doors of VA. Obesity in Florence, SC is an epidemic with immediate and long-term health effects that does not discriminate with just our students and their families. By making planning times throughout the day a priority, we are finding balance for our teachers and their families to be able to have family dinners and be active with their children, in the same way we want this for students at

VA and their families.

The Center for American Progress analyzed available research about teacher PD and student learning and published their findings in July 2013 in <u>High-Quality PD for Teachers: Supporting Teacher Training to Improve Student Learning.</u> Researchers noted that "when the traditional programs of PD—usually single-event, so-called "drive-by" interventions— are replaced by longer-term designs, there is a greater chance that teachers will improve instruction. For example, in the survey of 1,300 studies of professional learning, the one study with the most power effect on raising student achievement had teachers participating in the activity for about 60 hours over six months." According to the research, high-quality professional-learning opportunities for teachers contain the following five characteristics: aligns with school goals, state and district standards and assessments, and other professional-learning activities; focuses on core content and modeling of teaching strategies for the content; includes opportunities for active learning of new teaching strategies; provides the chance for teachers to collaborate; and includes follow-up and continuous feedback. According to the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality, PD is **job embedded** when it is: grounded in <u>day-to-day teaching practice</u>, and is designed to <u>enhance teachers' instructional practices around content; integrated into the workday</u>, and part of a continuous improvement cycle intended to <u>improve student learning; and directly connected to learning and application in daily</u> practice. <u>Some examples of job embedded PD at VA may be:</u>

• Special Area Teacher Training with the Curr. Coord. to learn how to implement interventions and instructional strategies during tiered instruction.

• The educational resources consultant conducting a model lesson for a group of teachers working on tiered interventions or facilitating writing a Gold Standard Partially Integrated PBL unit.

• A higher education partner providing on-going monthly support during teachers' plan times to create Gold Standard Partially Integrated PBL units.

• A 1st Grade Teacher observing in a 2nd Grade Classroom during planning time to learn about enrichment opportunities for her high performing 1st grade students.

•Practicing PBL Learning Walks and Critical Friends or Lesson Tuning Practices during Friday afternoon PD sessions.

These are job-embedded activities because they are authentically related to the work of the teachers involved and are informed by what the teachers are doing and need to do.

One of many challenges facing teachers is the lack of opportunity to learn from colleagues in a setting where there is a structure and protocol for revealing excellent teaching practices and having a group of professionals discuss and learn from them. Many of the professional-learning designs that show improvements in teaching and learning include some kind of regular collaboration among teachers in a school or across grade levels, sometimes with an instructional leader, to work on better strategies and practices for teaching. Coaching is often part of PD programs and research works in conjunction with other aspects of PD. If coaching is longer in duration, if teachers collaborate around what they learn from coaching, if they get to observe instruction and then talk about the observation with a coach, then it is more likely to be effective. The innovative schedule at VA will allow teachers the opportunity to spend time collaborating, reflecting and receiving instructional support and coaching without having to spend any money from the budget or lose instructional time away from students while attending PD training. Costs for any specialized on-site trainings and coaching as identified by the Leadership Team with our PD partners have been allocated in our budget and will include substitute teachers if needed.

VA will implement and follow the guidelines for the SC Read to Succeed Act and the SC Reading Plan. The goal of the Read to Succeed Act is to "ensure that every educator at every grade level in every school and subject area is committed and able to support reading development of the SC students they serve." Educators are expected to earn one or more of the Read to Succeed endorsements as part of their regular license renewal cycles. The Committee will investigate the opportunity for VA staff to earn their Read to Succeed endorsement by participating in a VA cohort through eLearningSC from the SC State Dept. of Ed. Office of Virtual Ed or through our higher education partners such as Francis Marion University or Erskine College. "The concept of

RTI builds on recommendations made by the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education in 2002 that children with disabilities should first be considered general education students, embracing a model of prevention as opposed to a model of failure. A prevention model is intended to rectify a number of long-standing problems including the disproportionate number of minorities and English learners identified as learning disabled and the need to wait for documented failure before providing services." (https://ed.sc.gov/scdoe/assets/file/programs-services/173/documents/IRA_GuidingPrinciples.pdf. VA will implement the SC Read to Succeed and use this a similar model for support in math. The Read to Succeed Administrative Roles for Supporting RTI will be modified for VA because it is a single charter school with only School-Level, not District-Level Administrators that will be actively involved in the daily decisions of the school. The RTI School Leadership Team includes: Principal, Assistant Principal, Curr. Coord., Federal Programs Coordinator, and Guidance Counselor. The RTI Grade-Level Team will consist of teachers in the same grade level for grades K-6 and a team for grades 7-12. The CARE Team will be created to provide for students not responding to RTI. The CARE Team will assess students' needs and recommend additional assessments and interventions up to and including for IDEA services.Through RTI and the CARE Team targeted interventions and enrichment can be monitored closely and modifications made quickly based on progress monitoring data, to prevent over identification of students for special education, especially ESOL or minority students.

The Student Intervention Team is called the CARE Team at VA to intentionally reflect on the "C.A.R.E.: Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gap Guide" created by the National Education Association (NEA).

VA staff will focus on the cultures that students bring to school –their everyday experiences – and how to connect these experiences and cultures to what educators teach and how it advantages or disadvantages certain students. The NEA defines culture as, "the sum total of experiences, knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, and interests represented by the diversity of students and adults in our schools. While culture is often defined and perceived by schools as the

celebration of important people, religions, traditions, and holidays, as well as an appreciation of the customs of different groups, it is also more than that. Culture is as much, or as little, as the everyday experiences, people, events, smells, sounds, and habits of behavior that characterize students' and educators' lives. Culture shapes a person's sense of who they are and where they fit in their family, community, and society." Incidental (non-directed) learning mentioned in ADHD research is important in learning about a culture. We understand that even students who may not perform well on standardized tests have abilities (learned in their homes and communities) on which we can build academic success. These abilities can also be referred to as learning styles or intelligences.   We see resilience in students who persevere in schooling despite repeated failure or discouragement from their environment, and we will create a classroom and school environment that makes them feel safe inside the school to focus on their potential. This will be done by implementing *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids* and Responsive Classroom. Students will apply great effort if they are motivated to learn the information. For students whom we find difficult to motivate, we must find out how they are motivated outside of school and bring those interests inside the school walls where we can direct them toward academic pursuits. If our students can't learn the way we teach, then we must teach the way they learn. All the C.A.R.E. strategies and reflections are critically important in the schools NEA identifies as priorities: those schools that have persistently under-performed in producing strong readers, adept math users, cogent writers, critical thinkers, and high school graduates. Creating success in these priority schools is the NEA's major offense in the fight to advance public education and preserve it as an accessible social institution for all students and communities. We know that closing student achievement gaps helps students, empowers educators, and encourages communities. (http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/CAREguide2011.pdf)

The PD the week before school begins and the weekly PD on Friday afternoons will focus on areas that all staff need, such as the 7 Habits, RC, PowerSchool, PBL training, Technology, Tier 1 Curriculum, formative assessments, and more. Extensive research was conducted to analyze PD that would be needed to implement the VA personalized learning model that included PBL, applied

technology, and leadership development with the primary focus of closing the achievement gap. It was important to review a variety of resources and the effectiveness of each resource in relation to understanding the needs of the students VA will be serving, students' test scores and closing the achievement gap. The Curr. Coord., Principal, Media Specialist and PowerSchool Clerk will all be resources for providing free PD based on their areas of expertise. We also understand that PD needs to be personalized and could be for the entire staff, particular group of teachers, such as K-2 for phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, or for the RTI Leadership Team to then turn-key the information during meetings with RTI Grade Level Teams. The Committee also identified the need to acquire the services for paid PD when more expertise and resources other than what is available at the school are needed. The funds needed for these resources are allocated in the PD section of the budget.

As a result, we have partnerships with Francis Marion and plan to establish partnerships with Erskine College to provide PD the week before school begins, during some of the Friday afternoon PD meetings, and also several days each month throughout the school year. (See Sample plans in Appendix B and PD Leadership Calendar in F). Higher education partners, education resource consultants, the Curr. Coord., and other school leaders will facilitate personalized PD for all teachers and staff as identified based on the collaboration meetings. As stated previously, VA will utilize the expertise of staff members first, before contracting for services that need additional or unique support. Services provided by higher education partners and other education consultants will be contracted for multiple years based on priority of need from recommendations from the School Leadership Team. All specified PD dates with consultants will be finalized upon approval of the charter application and hiring of Administration and the Curr. Coord. VA is about learning in a supportive environment in a way that is responsive to the individual student's learning styles when learning and presenting information. The group will learn about RC, especially the manner in which students are treated and spoken to and the collaborative creation of logical consequences and rewards. The staff will engage in some team building activities to learn about each other to help

facilitate a positive school culture. They will learn about the schoolwide Gold Standard PBL unit, "Cool with School Rules" that will be introduced during School Community Meetings. All employees will learn about their roles in hosting School Community Meetings, either as a participant or supervising classes where teachers are participating (see Sample School Community Meeting script in Appendix H). It's important that every employee have the same understanding and common language when implementing the behavior and character education plan.

One Gold Standard PBL: Project Based Teaching Practice is **Build the Culture**: Teachers explicitly and implicitly promote student independence and growth, open-ended inquiry, team spirit, and attention to quality. It is up to the Leadership Team to build a culture of support with every member of the school community. One of ASCD's Whole Child Tenets is, "Each student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and **adults**."

This also applies to teachers learning in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe. This is done by focusing on group-building activities with staff throughout the year to help create the trust and safety essential for active, collaborative thinking. One of RC's Key Domains is a **Positive Community** where teachers nurture a sense of belonging, significance, and emotional safety so that students feel comfortable taking risks and working with a variety of peers. Being part of a charter school is asking every employee to believe and implement every aspect of the school model by taking risks in participating in a school that will be innovative, unique and life changing for the families and communities surrounding the Florence, SC area. We need to ensure that every person employed at VA shares our same philosophy and model of learning. PBL is about the process of learning more than just the product. If we can get our school community, including staff and students, to approach every task or challenge they encounter in life with the same mentality as a PBL unit, it would increase resilience in staff and there would be no fear of failure because "if at first you don't succeed, try, try again." Experienced teachers and students in PBL understand that it's acceptable to not know all the information about a topic, but they keep learning to become more knowledgeable about the topic by using many resources, conducting research, having discussions

with peers and interviewing experts on the topic area. If a person believes that someone is a failure because they have tried to reach a goal several times, and failed, and should just give up on the goal- then that person has no place at VA. We want to provide a caring environment that does not penalize teachers or students for making mistakes, but encourages them to be resilient and to learn and grow from challenges. We want to instill a love of learning for staff, students and families of VA with everyone understanding that "Failure is not in the falling down, it's in the staying down and refusing to get back up." We sometimes learn and appreciate accomplishments more when it takes several times to achieve a goal, then if we were able to achieve it easily. When you do reach the goal, the person who was helping you along the way is sharing your success with you. We want the entire community to share in the success of students excelling at VA!

Meeting SC Standards: VA's academic program is designed to meet and exceed SC state academic standards, through relevant learning experiences that engage students' interests as they discover underlying concepts and develop deep understanding of the subject matter. The curriculum will strictly follow SC's academic standards. Teachers will maintain Individual Learning Profiles (ILPr) and Individual Learning Plans (ILPn) for each student. The Profiles include assessment data and the Plans include pathways to excellence with specific information to address strengths and weaknesses. Each project plan includes the SC standards. At interims and at the end of each quarter, students and parents will receive standards algined reports of progress. Parent Teacher conferences will be held at least twice per year and more often as needed to support students and families.at Parents will be given a letter with dates and choices of times that work best to schedule their conferences that includes morning, afternoon and evening hours. Conference time request forms will be sent out several weeks before the conference dates. As with all official school materials, translations in the families native language will be available (see Sample Conference Letters in Appendix F).

VA will develop a system of Standards Based Grading by the end of the first three years of operation. The Adams 12 Five Star Schools created an entire page on their website with several

links to explain standards-based grading. "In a standards-based system, teachers report what students know and are able to do in relation to the state and district standards. The system includes: improvement of student achievement of required learning outcomes in all content areas; mastery of defined learning outcomes instead of the accumulation of points; reporting of student achievement toward meeting learning outcomes at a given time by analyzing recent trend information based on various forms of evidence; record keeping systems that provides teachers with information that allows them to adjust learning practices to meet the needs of students; and a system that encourages student reflection and responsibility." *Standards-Based Grading Frequently asked Questions (FAQ) K-8* on their website states the reason they moved to standards-based grading is, "We want to improve student achievement for all students in every classroom every day; and research supports standards- based grading as a basis of communication that will help students learn more effectively through better feedback." They created an informative pamphlet in English and Spanish to explain standards-based grading (Appendix H). "If your grading system doesn't guide students toward excellence, it's time for something completely different," states author Patricia Scriffiny, in October 2008, *Seven Reasons for Standards-Based Grading* in ASCD's Educational Leadership magazine. The seven reasons she lists are: grades should have meaning; we need to challenge the status quo; we can control grading practices; standards-based grading reduces meaningless paperwork; helps teachers adjust instruction; teaches what quality looks like; and it's a Launchpad to other reforms. (http://www.adams12.org/student_learning/standards_based_grading) Sometimes parents and educators confuse standards-based grading with competency-based education. Competency Works.org published an article called What is the Difference between Standards-Based Grading (or Reporting) and Competency-Based Education?

Traditional Grading System	Standards-Based Grading System
1. Based on assessment methods (quizzes, tests, homework, projects, etc.). One grade/entry is given per assessment.	1. Based on learning goals and performance standards. One grade/entry is given per learning goal.

2. Assessments are based on a percentage system. Criteria for success may be unclear.	2. Standards are criterion or proficiency-based. Criteria and targets are made available to students ahead of time.
3. Use an uncertain mix of assessment, achievement, effort, and behavior to determine the final grade. May use late penalties and extra credit.	3. Measures achievement only OR separates achievement from effort/behavior. No penalties or extra credit given.
4. Everything goes in the grade book – regardless of purpose.	4. Selected assessments (tests, quizzes, projects, etc.) are used for grading purposes.
5. Include every score, regardless of when it was collected. Assessments record the average – not the best – work.	5. Emphasize the most recent evidence of learning when grading.

Adapted from O'Connor K (2002). *How to Grade for Learning: Linking grades to standards (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.*

Under a competency-based education, learners advance through content or earn credit based on demonstration of proficiency of competencies rather than seat time. Standards-based grading (SBG) and competency-based education (CBE) have some similarities. In both systems: students learn specific standards or competencies based on a pre-determined rubric; students take more ownership of their learning, because learning is communicated rather than assigned, such as Worksheet 3; and using assessments in formative ways is the norm rather than exception.

Standards-Based Grading and Competency-Based Education systems are also different. In a CBE system, students advance to a higher-level work and can earn credit at their own pace; in a SBG system, students are required to complete a designated amount of seat time hours to earn credit for the course. In a CBE system, learning expands beyond the classroom, which may or may not happen in a SBG system. A CBE system would allow students who learn a lot about a topic over the summer to earn credit when they return in the fall. Students are encouraged to learn outside the classroom, so that they can demonstrate competencies at their own, rapid rate. Teachers assess skills or concepts in multiple ways. This may or may not be the case in a standards-based education. The innovation of technology that provides personalized learning using computer adaptive assessments, online differentiated lessons, and ongoing assessment with adaptive content as the learner progresses, will allow all students at VA to accelerate their learning, close the achievement gap, and

excel to higher grade level content without the need to promote students to higher grades. As mentioned previously, we are looking at the whole child. While accelerated academic growth is important, the physical, social and emotional growth is also important. If a girl in 2nd grade is promoted to a 4th grade classroom, the hormonal changes happening in the 4th grade girls and the immaturity of the 2nd grade girl can result in a child that was once being challenged with lots of friends in the 2nd grade classroom, now feeling scared, alone and not making connections with any students in 4th grade. This is the reasoning why we will not have competency-based education in grades K-8. CBE will be considered once students are in high school, but the schoolLeadership Team and the School Board will have 3 years to conduct more research before determining the best course of action regarding CBE and to develop SBG at VA.

By the end of the first three years of operation or sooner, Standards-based grading will be used by teachers at VA from grades K-6 to report what students know and are able to do in relation to the SC State Standards. Grades 7-12 will have letter grades with GPAs based on the SC Uniform Grading Scale.

For example, with the Standards Based Grading System performance ques will be (4) Advanced Understanding of the Standard, (3) Meets the Standard, (2) Approaches the Standard, and (1) Does Not Meet the Standard. A (/) will mean Not Assessed. In high school, students will receive letter grades and calculated GPAs on report cards and transcripts. When looking at the numeric rating on the report card in SBG, it is important to understand that a 4 is not an A, a 3 is not a B, a 2 is not a C and a 1 is not a D, and a (/) is not failing. This understanding and system integration will take some time for teacher, student and parent education. The Adams 12 Five Star Schools website explains how to interpret the numerical value. "While it may feel as though standards-based grading performance scale scores are easy to translate to the traditional A, B, C, D, F, it is actually quite difficult, and should be avoided in Standards-Based Grading. Think of the two grading methods as totally different languages. For example, Mandarin Chinese has words and phrases that cannot be translated accurately into English because no English equivalent exists. It is like that with

Standards-Based Grading. In Standards-Based Grading, a 1 is a very narrow range which communicates that the student has made little or no progress toward the standard. A 2 tends to have a larger range because it includes student performance that ranges from just a little closer to the standard than a 1, to just a little short of meeting the standard of a 3. A 3 indicates that the student has met the standard, and is right where we expect the student to be. A 4 is quite narrow because it indicates that not only has the student met the standard, but has also taken the skills and concepts and transferred them with greater complexity and depth into other areas and disciplines. In traditional grading, letter grades report the number of points earned in a subject, and doesn't report very much about what the student has learned." It is also important to note that a student can receive a 3 or 4 rating on a standard at the beginning of the year if learning for that standard can be documented. Also, some students may not currently be performing at their current grade level standards and need to master standards from previous grades; or may have mastered standards from their current grade and need to be challenged and move onto the next grades' standards. This is the reasoning for the importance of having an ILPn for each student to guide tiered instructional groups during literacy and math workstations. This applies to all students, including ESOL and students with special needs. The ILPr and ILPn will not replace the IEP, but will work in conjunction with it. The full suite of PowerSchool and PowerTeacher data management tools will be used to maintain student attendance, schedules and records. Teachers will use PowerSchool to list formative and summative assessments into the gradebook. Formative assessments are: an opportunity to increase student's skill level and will not adversely affect student grades; benchmark reports of student learning building toward a summative assessment; and occuring during the learning process are not calculated and averaged into the final grade. Summative classroom assessments (not state or national testing) are opportunities for students to show mastery in a certain skill or content area, are a summary of the learning, final rating about what the student has learned, and are calculated into the final grade. See Sample Leadership Calendar for technology training in Appendix F.

The Committee has engaged in a review of research on meeting the needs of the culturally and racially

diverse student body that VA seeks to serve in an effective, personalized environment. As a result, VA will be on the cutting edge of utilizing technology in the classroom from K-12 to insure that students of all races, cultures and backgrounds have ready access to current, innovative technology. In the US there is a well-documented digital divide that mainly affects students of color and of poverty. Even when schools have the appropriate funding and equipment, researchers found that, "Schools don't allow students of color to use their mobile devices because they think those students will not use them in what they consider appropriate ways" (Barseghian, Tina, For Low- Income Kids, Access to Devices Could Be the Equalizer, KQED, March 13, 2013). At VA, we will embrace and encourage students to use their own technology for academic applications. In addition to students using their personal electronic devices at school, we will provide tablets for all classrooms, that when added with the personal devices, will result in a one-to-one ratio. Classrooms will be equipped with interactive white boards and/or interactive tables and Wi-Fi access. Extended hours will be provided on a regular schedule as determined by the principal for all parents and students to access computers at school. Technology will be integrated throughout students' educational experiences, including personalized learning and special education modifications.

During the beginning of the year PD, teachers will learn about all the parts, elements, and teaching practices of Gold Standard Partially Integrated PBL Units. One of ASCD's tenets is, "Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community." One of RC's four domains is, "Positive Community: Teachers nurture a sense of belonging, significance, and emotional safety so that students feel comfortable taking risks and working with a variety of peers." One of BIE's Gold Standard PBL Teaching Practices is, "Build the Culture: Teachers explicitly and implicitly promote student independence and growth, open-ended inquiry, team spirit, and attention to quality." The NEA's CARE Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gap, CARE is an acronym for Culture, Abilities, Resilience, and Effort. "Students from diverse backgrounds bring their varied cultural, racial, and socio-economic characteristics with them to school. Culturally competent teaching is increasingly necessary if educators are to connect with their students. And to connect, educators

need to acquire new teaching strategies that match students' ways of understanding and interacting

with the world. These approaches will help increase student performance as measured by grades and

tests, enhance student access to more rigorous curriculum, and advance student attainment to high

school completion and beyond. Culturally competent teaching, in other words, will play a major role in

closing the achievement gaps that exist among race, gender, language, and social class groups"

(http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/CAREguide2011.pdf).   The one common thread in all this research is

"Culture and Community." VA staff will focus on the cultures that students bring to school – their

everyday experiences – and how to connect these experiences and cultures to what educators teach and

how it advantages or disadvantages certain students as defined previously by the NEA. "As a group,

African Americans have been told systematically and consistently that they are inferior, that they are

incapable of high academic achievement" (Ladson- Billings, 2000). VA is committed to holding all

students to high expectations and having them attain high levels of achievement regardless of race,

culture, or socio-economic status. To meet these standards of excellence, conscious allocation of time,

talent and resources will be committed to provide a curriculum that empowers students for success.

Teachers and administration will have access to an abundance of resources and support through higher

education partners, education consultants, Buck Institute for Education (BIE) and the FMU Center for

College and Career Readiness offering support for development and review of PBL curriculum. BIE is

a nonprofit organization that gathers and shares high-quality PBL instructional practices and products.

BIE's book published *Setting the Standard for PBL: A Proven Approach to Rigorous*

Classroom Instruction will be used during PD and as an ongoing reference for teachers to

complete their first and future Gold Standard Partially Integrated PBL Units. Published by

ASCD and authored by BIE, this complete guide to K-12 PBL explains the why, what, and how

of Gold Standard PBL. It includes a vision of rigorous, high-quality PBL and compelling

arguments for its widespread use. The authors explain Essential Project Design Elements,

Project Based Teaching Practices, and review the research supporting PBL. Chapters for

teachers provide practical, step-by-step guidance on designing and managing projects, and a

chapter for school leaders describes how to implement PBL system-wide. Also discussed is the use of PBL in informal learning spaces and summer learning. The book contains sample projects in various grade levels and subject areas. All teachers, including Media Specialist, Art, Music, Physical Education, and Spanish teachers, and the Leadership Team will be given a copy of this book upon hiring and will be expected to be familiar with it during the PD.

Another book that will provided during PD is BIE's *PBL in the Elementary Grades Toolkit Series: Step-by-Step Guidance, Tools and Tips for Standards-Focused K-5 Projects Instruction.* It will be an additional resource during tPD and as ongoing references for teachers to use when completing their first and future Gold Standard Partially Integrated PBL Units. As stated previously, BIE uses the same Partially Integrated PBL method in their "Spotlight Projects" in their *PBL in the Elementary Grades Toolkit Series* as the teachers in VA will be creating and implementing in their classes. Although this book was published prior to BIE creating their Gold Standard PBL, everything in this book still aligns to their Gold Standard PBL, including their Spotlight Projects as explained in an article BIE published in October 2015, "How **PBL in the Elementary Grades** Aligns with BIE's New Model for Gold Standard PBL" (Appendix H).

Our school will open with grades K-6 the first year and add one grade level each subsequent year through 12th grade. Educational consultants and higher education partners will remain a valuable asset and provide the continuity and support for Gold Standard PBL from K-12th grade as our school grows yearly. Teachers will join the BIE Google community, follow the BIE Facebook page and use the BIE.org website to learn about all the support tools and PBL projects already created by other teachers. Education consultants and the leadership team will facilitate the learning process of creating a Gold Standard Partially Integrated PBL Unit ensuring that all the parts and design elements as described in the PBL section are included. Teachers will have access to graphic organizers and other tools in the two BIE books listed previously. They will be provided the "Project Design Rubric" and the "Project Based Teaching Rubric" that identifies a beginning PBL teacher, a developing PBL teacher, and a Gold Standard PBL Teacher. (Rubrics in Appendix H) These rubrics will help teachers engage in self-reflection as they are creating the

unit with the goal of creating a Gold Standard unit. The committee and leadership team understand that this is a growth process and not all units will reach Gold Standard the first year. By comparison, teachers being evaluated on the Danielson Framework can score a 1 for unsatisfactory, 2 for basic, 3 for proficient, and 4 for distinguished. The goal is for all teachers to score distinguished in every area, but the framework isn't set up that way to purposely identify areas for growth. Teachers scoring proficient are considered excellent teachers and not associated with a letter grade of B, in the same way as standards-based grading and report cards don't correlate to letter grades. Higher education partners, education consultants and the leadership team will ensure that all units that teachers create have all required parts, elements and teaching practices to achieve the Gold Standard rating. **BIE's Gold Standard PBL has three parts**: 1) Student Learning Goals: Key Knowledge and Understanding and Key Success Skills. BIE stresses the need to begin with the end in mind in creating PBL curriculum to consciously address the need for cultural relevance and student needs. Landson-Billings (1995) defined culturally relevant practices as teachers understanding how to make connection to students' home lives and cultures and using this understanding as a way to make meaningful learning experiences. "This goes beyond assimilating students into the traditional white middle class way of doing school" (Delpit 1988; Gay, 2002; Tate, 1995). The staff will be provided PD to understand the impact of cultural relevance on student learning and to learn about the cultures reflected in the student body. Home visits, formal and informal professional learning experiences, and book studies will assist the staff in connecting with all communities served. Teachers will use a Backwards Design to create a Gold Standard Partially Integrated PBL Unit grounded in SC Science or Social Studies Standards and focusing on the culture of the students that will be served by VA. Language Arts and Math standards will be integrated as appropriate. Teachers will also identify books and technology resources that support the PBL unit, which will start by the mid-term of the first quarter. 2) Essential Project Design Elements: Teachers will create their units ensuring it contains: Challenging Problem or Question, Sustained Inquiry, Authenticity, Student Voice & Choice, Reflection, Critique & Revision, and a Public Product. 3) Project Based Teaching Practices:

Teachers will ensure that they are following PBL teaching practices to create an authentic PBL learning experience that includes: Design & Plan, Align to Standards, **Build the Culture**, Manage Activities, Scaffold Student Learning, Assess Student Learning, and Engage & Coach. **Building the culture** is a PBL teaching practice that should not be approached superficially.

Disengagement is a problem for the African American population in traditional schools (Delpit, 2012; McMillian, 2003). The 21st Century College and Career Skills that are so important to properly educating students for success in the future includes the need for cross cultural understanding. The need to master and model this skill applies to all stakeholders of VA. The 21st Century Skills are known as the 7 C's: Critical Thinking and Problem Solving; Creativity and Innovation; Collaborative teamwork and leadership; Cross Cultural Understanding; Communication and Media Literacy; Computing and Technology; and Career Learning and Self-direction. Research has shown that the levels of mastery in many of these skills can be maximized when cultural sensitivity is evident in curriculum design. Hefflin's work (2002) with pre-service teachers found presentations and assignments incorporating cultural diversity gained more participation and understanding by African Americans students. High levels of engagement connected to two of the criteria for culturally relevant teaching; having high expectations, and promoting cultural competence (Ladson- Billings, 1995). Ensign (2003) describes the technique of tuning in to what students outside of school experience as a context for problem solving as "culturally connected" practice. Students must want to problem solve for the PBL model to work, and one means of enhancing this desire is through contextualizing or personalizing the project based experience. "Culturally responsive teaching is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching more effectively" (Gay, 2002, p 106). In a study of using culturally relevant content in math projects for teaching African American elementary students, engagement, persistence and understanding were significantly higher for these students than when having content projects that were not culturally relevant (Corp, 2014). Perhaps related to the increase in student engagement, teacher expectations were significantly higher as well (Corp, 2014). Noting the importance of "student voice" or

knowing your students culturally and experientially in order to develop personalized curriculum, Corp concludes that understanding how one population views a teaching strategy is only the beginning for understanding how to personalize learning for students of color. "As we learn more about how students respond to teaching approaches, we will craft better lessons and better approaches to inspire all students to succeed academically" (Corp, 2014). The strength in the curriculum design for VA is that it is organic, meaning that PBL units will be designed by the teachers who will have on-going professional learning support from experts. Teachers will be able to work collaboratively during their planning times, after school and during Friday PD meetings. Higher education partners and education consultants will be at the school regularly to work with teachers in creating their units and for coaching in the classroom. As the staff gets to know their students through formal training on culture, race and the communities served and through daily interactions with parents and students, the voice and concerns of the community will be infused in the Gold Standard Partially Integrated PBL units, which will be designed by the teachers to meet the needs of the student population and to reflect problems and challenges that students can connect to their personal experiences living in Florence, SC and surrounding areas. Because a significant portion of the student body is anticipated to be African American, transferability of curriculum and localized planning are key to the education plan. "Cool with School Rules," is a PBL unit found on the West Virginia Dept. of Education website. Their site is a great resource that allows teachers to search for PBL projects by grade or by subject, including the arts. It has PBL tools such as rubrics, learning logs, journals, presentation tools, self and peer assessments, task management and student contracts, template for PBL Design, and Project Design Rubric. It is also a Gold Standard Partially Integrated PBL Spotlight Project in BIE's *PBL in the Elementary Grades Toolkit Series*. (Cool with School Rules in Appendix H). Although this unit was created for first grade students, it will be adapted for kindergarten through sixth grade by the Curr. Coord. with SC State Standards included. This first PBL unit already created for teachers prior to school starting, will be introduced to the students during the first day "Community School Meeting." (Sample Community School Meeting

Script in Appendix H). "Cool with School Rules" unit will have the driving question "What rules and logical consequences should we have in our school?" Students in each class will first focus on creating classroom rules and logical consequences and rewards that align with RC and PBL and then on creating rules for different areas of the school with logical consequences and rewards. Each grade will share their Presentation of Learning for one area at a grade level or all school community meeting. It is important to note that this first "Cool with School Rules" unit is not representative of future PBL units that will be created by classroom teachers throughout the year with support from PBL experts. Examples of Gold Standard Partially Integrated PBL Projects from BIE's books used during the first week of PD to help teachers create their PBL units are found in Appendix H. During the first weeks of school, this unit is focused primarily on the character education component to create a positive community and culture, and allowing teachers to assess students for personalized instruction. It is also grounded in RC's "The First Six Weeks of School" which will be the primary focus to lay the foundation for a productive and cooperative year of learning.

Founded in 1981, Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc., (NEFC) is a nonprofit educational organization whose mission is to partner with elementary and K–8 school educators nationwide to transform schools into places of optimal learning. In response to administrators and teachers concerned with not starting core content instruction in the first PBL Unit while incorporating the RC approach, Roxann Kriete, the executive director of NEFC states, "Academics are important, but so are social skills. 'Either-or' choices are usually false choices. The question is not whether we should teach academics or teach social skills, but how to teach both. It's not a question of either time for recess or time on task. In fact, social skills and academic skills promote each other. And often recess *is* the learning task." In the classroom, teachers will also assess students individually during the first weeks of school using quick non-intrusive assessments such as DIBELS Fall Benchmark testing and the easy CBM Math Fall Benchmark. Students will also engage in formative adaptive assessments such as MAP during the fall in Language Arts and Math. Students in 3rd through 6th grades may also engage in formative adaptive assessments for Science.

Teachers will facilitate group-building activities to help create the trust and safety essential for active, collaborative thinking. They will use guided discoveries to extend students' ideas about the creative use of space and materials, developing guidelines about sharing particular resources, and teaching students how to care for them. The arts will be integrated into PBL units and classroom instruction. Students will complete a tool such as the "We Are All Different Glyph" that is a student inventory using art and math to assess learning styles and other preferences. Each grade can modify it based on the information the teachers want to gain from the glyph and the developmental level of the students for each grade (Appendix H). According to Mathwire.com, "Glyphs are a pictorial form of data collection. You might be reminded of the term "hieroglyphics" and think about early picture writing. Different forms of glyphs are used in many medical situations to quickly record data about a patient in pictorial form. For example, a dentist records cavities on a picture of teeth. A chiropractor might record injuries or muscle aches on a skeletal picture. In these cases, a "picture is worth a thousand words" and the glyph allows a doctor to more quickly record and analyze the data. Students in elementary school often create paper art projects for different seasons or holidays. It is easy to transform these traditional projects into mathematical glyphs that allow students to organize and analyze data over several visits." While students are working at tables to complete their glyphs and other activities, teachers will be able to perform the individual assessments for each student.

In Grades K-5, teachers will be using developmentally appropriate handwriting insruction such as *Handwriting Without Tears* (HWT). The curriculum provides multisensory tools and strategies for students. The program follows research that demonstrates children learn more effectively by actively doing, with materials that address all styles of learning, and supports our school model. "Research shows that handwriting is a foundational skill that can influence student's reading, writing, language use, and critical thinking. It has an important role in brain development, is necessary alongside technology in the classroom, and promotes success in other academic subjects" (https://www.hwtears.com/hwt/why-it-works/research). Students in all grades will Using developmentally appropriate programs such as *Keyboarding Without Tears* (KWT), the

only keyboarding program using child-friendly teaching strategies that has earned the

International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Seal of Alignment for Readiness. HWT

and KWT are examples of child friendly tools that when used together in the classroom create

writing success for all methods of written production and will prepare students for civic and

career success (HWT and KWT in Appendix for HWT.

Personalization through math instruction and applied technology: During the teachers'

initial training week prior to school opening, the Leadership Team will provide PD on state

adopted math and ancillary materials. Math will be used to ensure that students will receive

direct, sequenced instruction and interventions in math as needed to address achievement gaps.

Through math we will embrace both hands-on learning through manipulatives and use of

technology which has been a shortcoming in other math programs. Programs such as the enVision

Math system provides synchronized print and digital resources to guide students through

interactive and technology-based activities. Online video lessons are readily available to teachers,

students and parents. Videos, practice lessons, tutorials, students' assignments and progress can

be accessed at home via the internet permitting parents to engage in their students' learning

process. Hard copy materials are available for students who need them. Personalized math groups

will include RtI tiers, but also extension groups for students who need to be challenged with

higher grade level standards. Flexible groups during math workstations will be managed based on

data from adaptive formative assessments and progress monitoring probes.

Instruction during flexible groups will be explicit and systematic including models of proficient

problem solving, verbalization of thought processes, guided practice and corrective feedback. The

plethora of math manipulatives available will support emphasis in PBL and help students with

learning challenges who need more visual and concrete representations of mathematical ideas.

Personalized learning technology applications will be important in challenging students and

helping to accelerate learning (Appendix H). Programs such as DreamBox Learning are adaptive

learning math systems that are research-based demonstrating the probability of closing the

achievement gap in a short amount of time. The best closing the gap technology software tools available will be used to close achievement gaps and accelerate learning. Each student will have a personalized learning path to direct their progress through flexible groups and math workstations. Once students have mastered the skills with foundational programs like DreamBox, they will engage with AI programs such as ALEKS, which also uses adaptive questioning to quickly and accurately determine exactly what a student knows and doesn't know in math. ALEKS then instructs the student on the topics he or she is most ready to learn and periodically reassesses to ensure that topics learned are retained. The competency based progression allows students to complete challenging math through Calculus. Because the use of multiple choice questions is avoided in ALEKS, it complements the focus on authentic learning and assessments in PBL.

Personalization through Reading Instruction and Applied Technology: Teachers will use the state approved and school adopted reading series and ancillary materials and will design lessons to support students to create a culture of cooperative learning needed for PBL. The Curr. Coord., higher education partners and education consultants will provide additional PD in use of the reading series. Daily lessons will be provided to students who are learning to read in explicit phonemic awareness and systematic phonics instruction, methods to improve fluency, and ways to enhance comprehension. Using interactive writing, teachers will use the Morning Message in during Morning Meetings to teach vocabulary, phonics or a reading strategy that is embedded in the message. Each day, teachers will provide a Tier one mini-lesson using the text and support materials as resources, but may substitute a book or primary source relevant to the PBL unit to be modeled with the reading skills and strategies. Lessons should incorporate movement and technology when teaching and be directly standards aligned. During the PBL block, teachers will model writing skills that go with the PBL unit for authentic writing. Students will have 100 minutes of literacy instruction that will incorporate differentiated reading and writing activities including PBL topics and use of technology to personalize learning. "PBL provides every learner with a student-centered opportunity to engage in meaningful, authentic work. Books and resources related

to the PBL unit will be available at the stations. When differentiated reading groups are integrated within a PBL framework, student engagement in and deeper learning of academic content are likely to increase," according to Josh Patterson in <u>Navigating the Intricacies of Project-Based Learning Through Flexible Grouping.</u> (Appendix H). The reading series and PD will provide examples of workstation activities that facilitate different learning styles and help students with learning challenges to experience success for each reading unit. Students will be in homogeneous groups when with an adult for tiered support, and heterogeneous groups while working at stations or in small groups to allow all students to work together and build a positive classroom culture. Teachers in K-3 will have guided reading groups that focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency for every student based on assessment data and the student's reading instructional level of 90-95% accuracy as identified by Lexile levels. A Lexile score measures a book's difficulty level on a scale from low to high. A low Lexile score means a book will be easier to comprehend. State adopted reading series such as the Harcourt Reading series provides guided reading books and decodable books that have guided reading levels. Guided Reading Levels are more complex than Lexile Scores, especially for 1st grade students who are expected to show the most growth in one year in guided reading levels than any other grade. They measure length of book, layout, plot, repetition, illustrations, vocabulary, characters, setting, content and theme. If a student can read all the words with a 96% or higher accuracy, that book is an independent level. If the student reads with a 90-95% accuracy rate, that book is at the instructional level that should be used during guided reading. Any books below 90% accuracy are at the frustration level and should not be used at this time. "Just right" texts are where instructionally, the reader can read about 9 out of 10 words and comprehend the meaning of the passage with little difficulty (Clay, 1991a). All students will receive reading instruction using texts at their instructional reading levels (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Subscriptions to programs such as Raz-Kids and Reading A-Z will allow VA families to have access to more than 1,500 leveled multi-genre and multi-cultural printed or eBooks including fiction, nonfiction, song, nursey rhymes, poetry and more. Printed and eBooks will be

made available in Spanish to help ESOL students transition to English while enjoying the benefit of reading and listening to stories with their families in their primary language (Appendix H). Most families have web access on a cell phone or other device and can use the free Kids A-Z app. Students will be encouraged to share the books teachers assign to their personal bookrooms by independent reading level with younger siblings. As the books are being read, words or phrases are highlighted to make a connection between what the student is hearing and the actual words being read. Wells (1986) stated that of all the activities considered possibly helpful for the acquisition of literacy, only one, listening to stories, was significantly associated with test scores. The need for extensive early literacy experience was also documented in the research of Durkin (1966), and Teale and Sulzby (1986, 1992). We will encourage parents through parent education workshops to use school resources for all children in the family. Students will have access to thousands of eBooks through the use of eBook websites, such as Project Gutenberg (gutenberg.org). Students will watch streaming video of read alouds from people representing many cultures and races on sites such as storylineonline.net. Students will see the value of reading from culturally appropriate role models. Technology integration in every aspect of students' and teachers' daily work with rigorous, standards based projects and academic interventions will provide students both the challenge and support to excel.

Students will have personalized spelling words and will be assessed regularly during their guided reading group time. They will have academic choice that focuses on learning style when they practice their words at a literacy station. Each week, teachers will use assessments data such as DIBELS to progress monitor students. Data will be shared and strategies implemented during the RTI Grade Level Team meeting to determine which students need to be in Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 of the Response to Intervention (RtI) program for targeted instruction and interventions based on the data, which will be used as part of RtI implementation for progress monitoring of literacy. Students will use adaptive technology such as ABCMouse in Grades K-1 and Achieve3000 series beginning in 2nd grade at literacy workstations that will personalize and accelerate learning in reading.

Programs such as KidBiz (Grades 2-5) and TeenBiz (Grades 6-12) which are based on research of the National Reading panel and the National Writing Commission will be used. Programs such as Achieve3000 differentiated instruction solutions are researched based to accelerate results in language arts instruction in the form of Lexile gains and dramatically increase scores on end-of-the-year standardized reading tests (Appendix H). All of these tools and/or similar tools will be used by VA teachers to meet the individual needs of students and engage them in learning. According to the Center for Public Education in *Learning to Read, Reading to Learn: At a Glance* (http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/early literacy),"The research is clear: if children cannot read proficiently by the end of third grade, they face daunting hurdles to success in school and beyond." Third grade marks a pivot point in reading. In fourth grade, students begin encountering a wider variety of texts and have learned to extract and analyze new information expanding their vocabularies by reading. Struggling readers rarely catch up with their peers academically and are four times more likely to drop out of high school, lowering their earning power as adults (Hernandez, 2011). Also, struggling students are disproportionately poor students and students of color. An analysis of reading scores on the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) found that the score gap between children from higher and lower income families was 29 points. For children of color, the gap, while reduced by a single point since 2009, was still 25 points (Feister, 2013). SC through the landmark Read to Succeed initiative is working to improve reading through focused assessments, interventions, and possible retention of third-graders not reading on grade level (Workman, 2014). According to the SC State Reading Plan and Read to Succeed effective, exemplary literacy classrooms consistently feature the following characteristics: Significant time devoted to actual reading and writing; Numerous books matched to the students' reading levels; High-quality instruction in reading skills and strategies; Prevalence of small group and individualized instruction based on students' needs, and Increased instructional focus and intensity based on students' needs.

We understand the importance of reading and have demonstrated that VA will have exemplary

literacy classrooms that implement best research practices to meet the needs of all students by providing daily interventions monitored regularly along with academic support and enrichment. Teachers will continue to receive PD throughout the year to focus on literacy and progress monitoring to close the achievement gap.

Middle and High School 2021-2022 During our first year in 2018-2019, we will start with grades K-6 and then add one grade level each year until 12th grade. This results in our first 9th grade high school level class beginning in the school year 2021-2022. Throughout middle and high school, leadership skills will continue in PBL units and through the character education program of The 7 Habits of Happy Kids in elementary grades and The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens in middle and high school. Each day will begin with a Morning Meeting with RC components, but adapted for older students. Students will continue to use computer adaptive personalized learning in their classrooms to accelerate their learning. Programs such as KidBiz3000 and TeenBiz3000 are part of the Achieve3000 series. KidBiz3000 is used for grades 2-5 and TeenBiz 3000 is for grades 6-12. These are examples of the types of programs that will be used during the ELA block. Based on our research, Achieve3000 online solutions deliver engaging, nonfiction content that supports core curriculum, Response to Intervention, English language learning, special education, and other instructional models. Students will will continue using programs such as ALEKS - **A**ssessment and **LE**arning in **K**nowledge **S**paces after completing foundational programs such as Dreambox in earlier grades. Students will be using Gold Standard PBL during middle and high school. As mentioned previously, students will have highly qualified teachers for each of the four subject areas. The team will plan Gold Standard PBL Units Together that are standards- aligned for the separate content areas integrating content and projects where applicable. Students will rotate with their assigned class to each teacher. The math teacher will integrate math skills when appropriate during the PBL units, but will continue using a sequential order of math instruction. Using our current research, we are planning on using models similar to New Tech for high school that also uses PBL and technology. The New Tech Network uses BIE templates and training materials in support of

developing site-based, rigorous and relevant PBL curriculum. Mann HS, located in Greenville, SC, is using this model with great success. VA will apply for grants and other funding supports in order to access the tools of the New Tech Network or other similar resources. In 2014 Mann HS started with 9th grade, and added one grade each year through 12th grade. We will be using this same model. Committee members plan on visiting this school or another New Tech High School in closer proximity if available for more detailed information and to facilitate a partnership where their HS teachers can act as mentors to our teachers. This partnership would also benefit the leadership team. Through our Leadership Team and our RTI Grade Level/Department Teams, we will continue to progress monitor the needs of all the students we are serving, including our ESOL and special needs students as they matriculate through the grades in our school. We will continue to use summative and formative assessment data from our students and on-going research as the foundation for guiding the development of the high school curriculum. We want to ensure every student has the opportunity to use PBL in high school and will provide a modified New Tech model, if necessary, to meet the needs of every high school student that walks in our door regardless of ability.

SC High School Diploma Requirements: In order for a student to graduate from high school, the student must earn 24 credits in state-approved courses. Those credits must be distributed in a specific manner among core high school subjects. Students will have the advantage of AP courses, early college credits with our higher education partnerships (11th and 12th graders may earn up to 24 semester units of college credit by graduation) and mastery of 21st Century Career Skills; they will be prepared to enter college. Economic indicators and forecasts for Florence show that future job growth in the next ten years is predicted to be slightly below that of the nation at 34.7% compared to 36.10%. Future entrepreneurs will be needed to drive the job market to higher levels and most job growth in America is driven by small business. Growth in the fields of technology, health, and health support services will be 13.75% compared to only 7.96% nationally. These figures inform the planning committee that preparation for medical, technical and entrepreneurial careers will serve VA students and the area economy well for the future. Medical terms and

scientific species names are Latin and Greek based, and Latin appears in law. Students will have the option of learning Latin in high school. While development of 21st Century skills are vital for all career areas, personalized learning with a PBL model and collaboration with a New Tech Network High School for development of the high school curriculum will be an asset for the Florence economy and the Academy's students. Electives will be provided that challenge students in language development such as Latin and advanced Spanish, teach entrepreneurship, serve as an incubator for business ideas, provide creative expression through the performing and visual arts, and provide opportunities for job shadowing, internships and apprenticeships. Students will develop entrepreneurial and financial skills as they participate in projects that benefit the community. They will also develop self-determination and community leadership through real world application of academic content, explicit instruction on community leadership and concrete opportunities (community service and entrepreneurial projects) to practice community change-making. Service learning is a requirement. Our students will participate in Junior Leadership Florence with the Florence Chamber of Commerce and YesCarolina: Youth Entrepreneurship SC, the SC Youth Leadership Forum for students with disabilities, and Clemson University's Youth Leadership Institutes. Through these local and state leadership experiences and relevant PBL, students will integrate technological solutions, creative problem- solving, and scientific and mathematical reasoning towards developing their communities.

6. Goals, Objectives, and Evaluations VA believes in the importance of measuring student achievement and progress in advancing the mission of the school and has developed 7 measurable goals in alignment with the mission. Virtus Academy advances student achievement by preparing students for civic and career success through rigorous academic, leadership development and project based learning with arts enrichment.

Goal 1: Students in grades 3-8 will show significant evidence that students made more progress than the growth standard of at least one year on the state assessment (currently SC Ready) in ELA.

Goal 2: **Students in grades 3-8 will show significant evidence that students made more progress than the growth standard of at least one year on the state assessment (currently SC Ready) in Math.**

Rationale for Goals 1 and 2 Closing the Achievement Gap

Students from low socio-economic families historically achieve lower in all subjects. In Florence County there exists high correlation between Low SES and African American population. Thus factors seen in the low SES and African American performance subgroups are similar affecting grade level achievement, high school graduation, college and careers. Students who significantly exceed the growth standard are closing the achievement gap.

Baseline Data Area Districts				
2015 NCE	Flo. 1 ELA	Val. Added	Flo. 1 Math	Val. Added
Grade 3	50.4	NA	50.5	NA
Grade 4	48.8	Sig.+	46.7	= Standard
Grade 5	48.5	Mod. less	47.2	Sig. +
Grade 6	50.2	Sig. +	47.1	Sig. +
Grade 7	48.3	Mod. Less	46.3	Sig. less
Grade 8	47.4	= Standard	44.7	Sig. less

Strategies for Closing the Achievement Gap

Engagement and rigor through PBL (PBL); Effective questioning - "guided reading/math" Personalized learning; Learner Profile & Plan; human and tech academic supports via RTI, standards dashboards to monitor for steady progress; PLO for staff. Research suggests that slow but sustained growth over time of more than one-year instructional gain per year is the most effective approach to closing the achievement gap for both minority and low SES students (NWEA, grade levels in Math and Reading. Jensen 2015; Monrad, 2007)

Goal 3. VA will annually receive an accountability rating from the state that is above the state average (Equivalent to Above Average, Good or Excellent as determined by the scale descriptors)..

State Report Card Ratings			
Area District	2014 Absolute	2014 Growth	ESEA Rating
Florence 1	Excellent	Good	B
Florence 2	Average	At Risk	C
Florence 3	Average	Below Average	D
Florence 4	Below Average	At Risk	F
Florence 5	Excellent	Average	C
Darlington	Excellent	Good	C

Goal 4: Beginning with the first graduating class of 2025, VA High School students will annually exceed the average ACT Composite Score for the sponsor schools' average and surrounding districts.

Rationale

VA High School will continue with partial integration in high school and add dual credit, internships and rigorous course work reflecting college prep standards.

Desired Results

Students at VA High School will exceed the average ACT Composite Score for area districts and the sponsor score.

Baseline Data ACT Composite Scores 2014

State = 20.2 Nation = 21 Attendance Area Districts' Avg. = 18.2

Metric

The ACT is a curriculum and standards-based educational and career planning tool that assesses students' academic readiness for college. The ACT is the capstone of the College and Career Readiness System. The ACT consists of four multiple-choice tests: English, mathematics, reading, and science. The ACT with writing includes the four multiple choice tests and a writing test.

Goal 5: Beginning with the first graduating class of 2024, VA High School students will annually exceed the average four-year graduation rate for area districts and the sponsor schools' average.

Rationale

VA High School will create exceptional teaching and learning experiences that provide paths for students to gain deep knowledge in core curriculum areas, aligned with state standards, and to develop skills and competencies essential to succeed in college and career. According to current statistics, students in model PBL and technology integration high schools:

- Graduate from high school at a rate 14% higher than the national average
- Enroll in college at a rate 9% higher than the national average.
- Persist in college at a rate of 83%.

Strategies

Unlike students in traditional schools, where most teachers lecture and use textbooks as a teaching approach, teachers at VA will design rigorous, real-world projects tied to state and district standards and customize them to their location and the interests of students. The result: students who are deeply engaged in learning and develop important skills such as critical thinking and collaboration. Students and parents can access grades in all courses at any time online. Besides the typical graduation requirements of the districts of the students we service, students will complete additional requirements in order to receive the VA High School Diploma with Honors to include:

• A 20-hour community service project

• A career internship completed before graduation

• A web-based professional digital portfolio

• Dual Credit or Advanced Placement Courses

• Participation in one Leadership Office, Class or Program

(Note: Basic state diplomas will be issued to students who complete only state requirements for graduation)

Baseline Data

4 Year Graduation Rate 2014 and Districts Avg. = 84.9%
Florence 1   90.5%
Florence 2   71%
Florence 3   15.8%
Florence 4   71.4%
Florence 5   83.3%
Darlington 1   92.4%

6. Charter Specific Goal: Each year 80% or more of students in grades K-8 will score at Proficiency or Above Proficiency on Student Learning Objectives (SLO's) for Project Based Learning Proficiencies in Social Studies.

Rationale

Students will acquire a strong foundation in Social Studies as a means of understanding our world, history, economic and government systems and an appreciation for diverse cultures. Social Studies is well suited for using authentic assessment and integrated projects to measure growth. Students who are able to achieve proficiency in social studies in a PBL classroom are better prepared to think deeply about and approach complex problems applying multiple strategies and ideas, to explain their thinking and articulate a position on a topic, be aware of current events in the world at large

and to work collaboratively. These skills are necessary in the 21st century world into which our students will be entering as leaders and innovators.

Desired Results

Students will exhibit individual growth to the proficient or above proficient level demonstrated through standards based, authentic assessments

Baseline Data

% Not Met in Social Studies District Avg. for 2015 = 35%
Florence 1   22.7%
Florence 2   35.3%
Florence 3   38.8%
Florence 4   60.6%
Florence 5   28.8%
Darlington 1 23.8%

Metric

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) are used as a student growth measure. A Student Learning Objectives (SLO) is a student academic growth goal that an educator sets for his or her students. SLOs are monitored over the duration of time the students are with the teacher for instruction. SLOs with pre- tests and post-tests along with PBL authentic assessments will be used to measure individual growth for skills in social studies.

Strategies

Each project of PBL begins with six steps to a successful project. The first is "Start with state standards." VA's strategy for ensuring that students reach their individual growth projections will be the effective marriage of the SC standards with innovative methodology of PBL. PBL units will be created by teachers with the support of higher education partners and education consultants. The units will involve students in not only learning the standards but in living the standards as they conduct research, have field experiences, write, debate, apply technology and develop solutions to problems of concern to local communities in the past, present, and/or future. Portfolios, multi-media presentations, simulations and models will be

some of the authentic outcomes teachers will use in development and individual progress monitoring for student learning objectives.

Goal 7: Charter Specific Each year 80% or more of students in grades K-8 will score At Proficiency or Above Proficiency on Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for Visual and Performing Arts.

Rationale

The professional world is increasingly looking for skills cultivated through a study of the Arts and Design. Traditional schools are increasingly eliminating these components from their curriculum. Studying the Arts increases students' skills in entrepreneurial areas such as creativity, collaboration, complex problem solving, and self-discipline. Additionally, the Arts are a foundation to the fields of Design and Technology, as they encourage out-of-the-box thinking, 3-dimensional reasoning, and innovation. A sequenced, integrated study of the Arts will ensure VA students are achieving their full potential in areas of leadership and innovation.

Baseline Data

2015 Opportunities in the Arts, as assessed on district report cards*:

Darlington	Good
Florence 01	Excellent
Florence 02	Fair
Florence 03	Excellent
Florence 04	Good
Florence 05	Excellent

Desired Outcome: At least 80% of VA students will be proficient in at least one area of the Arts in annual evaluations.

Strategies

At VA, PBL is a foundational teaching- and-learning strategy, and the Arts are an integral component of classroom and community projects. Instructors will have access to and be

encouraged to attend professional development in Arts instruction and Arts integration. Our partnership with the Southern Institute of Manufacturing and Technology (SIMT) will ensure that students have ample opportunities to learn and practice the Arts and Design within real-life.

The following assessments will be used in evaluating pupil performance (See Appendix H.1):

Grades K-8: Measures of Academic Progress, or MAP (Depending on future state summative assessments, VA may implement a formative assessment more closely aligned with the state test).

Grade 2: ITBS/CogAT.

Grades 3-8: SC Ready and/or current State Assessment.

Grade 11: ACT (Pre-SAT or SAT depending on state

requirements) and WorkKeys

Grades K-6 Benchmark and Weekly Progress Monitoring: **DIBELS, easyCBM**

Personalized Assessments through Adaptive Technology such as:

Reading: **Grades K-1 ABCmouse, Grades 2-5 KidBiz3000, Grades 6-12 TeenBiz3000**

Math: **Grades K-6 DreamBox Learning, Grades 6-12 ALEKS**

End of Course Exams (May be taken when the student has completed the required course 7th grade to 12th grade)

Rationale: The preceding assessments will provide sufficient data to school leaders and teachers in service of our academic goals. Teachers and the Leadership Team will use assessment data to create tiered instructional groups for literacy and math. State adopted texts and ancillary materials will be used for reading and math to ensure systematic, sequential instruction is provided for all standards, skills and strategies. Frequent progress monitoring along with formative assessments, will inform instruction and needed interventions and enrichment. Adaptive Technology data will also be used to monitor progress and create instructional groups. The PBL model uses an inquiry approach to collect, analyze, and manage information, activities and outcomes.

Formative assessments throughout the PBL units along with rubrics for summative presentation of

learning will provide measurable data to support achievement of science and social studies goals and objectives. Data from all assessments will be shared collaboratively between the teachers and the Leadership Team. Standards-based report cards (by the end of the first three years of operation) and formative assessments in PowerSchool Gradebook will be used to share data with parents. All stakeholders will analyze the data and learning style inventories, and take ownership in developing the Individual Learner Profile and Individual Learning Plan for the student. Quantitative data collection to measure achievement of state and federal accountability standards will include the current adopted state assessment scores, MAP benchmark assessments (or a comparable assessment system) and other formative assessments generated by the teacher throughout the school year including Student Learning Objectives (SLO's) as well as any additional requirements for teacher evaluation as part of the state's Expanded ADEPT evaluation system which will be used to evaluate teachers at VA. The principal and/or his or her designee will conduct formative and summative teacher observations to ensure best instructional practices in the classroom and that all lesson plans are in alignment with state and federal accountability standards. A summary of these observations will be used to coach instructors to improve instruction and outcomes. Quantitative information will be aggregated into longitudinal data tables managed to support monitoring of trends in student performance. Information will be aggregated by class, grade and school and disaggregated by gender, race, SES and special needs to identify relevant data trends that will be triangulated with the quantitative student achievement scores as may be required by the state and federal accountability system. The analysis of the data will specifically reveal students who are falling below their desired achievement goals and support the development of intervention strategies through RtI to close achievement gaps.

Reporting: VA will complete an annual report that will be filed with the The Charter Institute at Erskine Collage and SCDE per requirements provided. The report may include as may be required state assessment results, financial information, enrollment, teacher credentials, and information

about the Board of Directors as well as any additional information that may be required on the annual report. VA will receive a state report card rating each year that will be shared with the public.

Strategies for Success: Students will have character education, literacy, math, and science/SS PBL instruction each day. During literacy and math instruction, we will employ a 3-Tier Model Response-to- Intervention (RtI) process. RTI Grade Level meetings and RTI Leadership Team meetings will monitor data and interventions/enrichment for all students. Instructional Assistants a will provide Tier 2 instruction. They will be trained by the Curr. Coord and through higher education partnerships. . Special Education and Special Areas teachers will have insights into students in different environments/learning styles and will be contributing members of the teams. Parents and community volunteers will also be trained by the Curr. Coord. for Tier 2 support. The Curr. Coord. and educational consultants will provide teacher modeling and support for interventions and enrichment. Students not responding to interventions as identified by the RTI Leadership Team, will be referred to the CARE Team for additional monitoring, assessment or placement. Tier 3 support will be provided by the special education teacher or other specially traininged intervention personnel. This multi-tiered framework promotes school improvement through engaging high quality instruction. It employs a team approach to guide educational practices addressing student needs and maximizing growth for all students. A summary of the 3-Tier Process:

Tier 1: All students will be considered Tier 1 and receive instruction based on their formative data and driven by their ILP's. Curriculum imparted by highly qualified teaching professionals coupled

with school-wide progress monitoring characterizes Tier 1. Teachers address problem areas in whole group and small group instruction to aid student acquisition of appropriate skills.

Tier 2: Tier 2 consists of a team-based approach to helping students succeed. When a student falls below grade level expectations or is not showing growth, or fails to meet benchmark goals on the ILP, a short term, research-based learning intervention is prescribed to remediate academic performance during the RTI Grade Level Team meeting. All stakeholders meet to review the data showing lack of student success to determine proper interventions needed. Interventions are administered for a term of 2-6 weeks and student performance is re-evaluated by the team. During this period, measurable data is gathered and analyzed frequently to determine academic progress and the movement of the student in the tier process. Parents meet with the RTI team and are informed of progress their child has made as a result of the remediation.

Tier 3: At tier 3, students have not responded adequately to previous efforts. The student is referred to the CARE Team. Student data is reviewed by all stakeholders. Information is charted and examined to determine whether a comprehensive evaluation is necessary. If a student shows desired progress towards goals, he/she may continue to receive the intense interventions prescribed in the Tier 3 plan. If a student still cannot meet his/her desired academic expectations, an Intelligent Quotient (IQ) testing, achievement testing, behavioral assessments, and other valid tests are suggested to reveal if the student has some type of disability. If a disability is determined, special education services will be offered. In order to implement a successful 3-Tier process, VA will provide teacher training and acquire additional professional services to assist at all levels as needed.

7. SERVING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS Commitment: Virtus Academy, as a public charter school, is committed to enrollment that is open to any student and to providing free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) by offering services as needed for students with disabilities. VA will comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Title III of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and any revisions thereof in their entirety. Furthermore, VA will demonstrate adherence to the following legal principles: a) Zero rejection of students with disabilities; b) Individuals education programs (IEP); c) Free appropriate public education; d) Least restrictive environment; e) Due process and parental involvement; f) Highly qualified teachers; and g) Nondiscriminatory evaluations.

Regular Education Program Accommodations and Modifications: All classes will use literacy and math workstations that provide flexible small groups with differentiated instruction and a variety of instructional strategies. Groups will be homogeneous for tiered support and heterogeneous for mixed ability working on the same skill, but with differentiated tasks. Students will provide support through workstations and flexible grouping to prevent "tracking" of students and to allow all students to work together at different stations. Classrooms will have tables instead of desks to allow movement and cooperative learning. Students will build on essential skills utilizing classroom strategies that are proven to have a strong effect on student achievement. As stated previously, there are a disproportionate number of minorities and English learners identified as learning disabled and the need to wait for documented failure before providing services. By using literacy and math workstations with the RTI Tiered Model for all classes, especially K-3, and incorporating movement, learning styles, and cooperative learning into all instruction and learning, will allow students to demonstrate their knowledge in multiple ways and to be able to stay focused better. This should prevent students from unnecessarily being placed into special education and allow students to exit special education easier if they were inappropriately identified. The Academy's curriculum aligns with the SC College and Career Readiness Standards. PBL, character education and workstations along with technology applications will enable teachers to accommodate different learning styles while building social competency and confidence for students learning to work together in teams. Modifications will be made to address the unique needs of children with disabilities and will be documented in the IEP or 504 Plan as appropriate. These

students may be able to participate in the same activity, but have a different reading level provided or different task assigned that correlates with the IEP. Services will be delivered in the regular classroom as appropriate and in resource or support classrooms when needed. Extensive on-going PD opportunities for general and special education teachers provided by RTI staff members, higher education partners, education consultants and BIE training materials will help teachers modify and adapt the curriculum. Teachers will have collaborative planning time each day. Every Friday afternoon teachers will be provided a time of collaboration and professional development to examine their teaching using student data. The Federal Programs Coordinator/Special Education highly qualified staff will assist teachers in adapting classroom practices and curriculum.

Provision of Services: All students identified as eligible for special education services and Section 504 services will receive those services and/or accommodations as described in their IEPs and 504 plans. The Federal Programs Coordinator will ensure we comply with all applicable laws and regulations, as well as the polices of the sponsor (LEA) that are applicable to charter schools as they relate to identifying students with special needs, developing IEPs, and providing related and transition services. The Academy will employ faculty or contract with service providers to carry out the above-stated responsibilities and commitments. In cases where the services of a school psychologist are required, certified qualified examiners will be engaged on a contracted basis to conduct assessments, to compile and interpret the results and when appropriate to participate as a member of the IEP team.

Individual Education Plan (IEP): An IEP will be developed in accordance with standard practices for children with disabilities by a team including: parents or guardians; the student, where appropriate; the special education teacher and/or the special education related service provider as appropriate; at least one of the student's general education teachers; a school psychologist if evaluation results are discussed or if a reevaluation plan is developed, and other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student, including related or specialized services

personnel as appropriate. In the creation of the IEP, current data will be reviewed and a statement expressing present levels of academic achievement and functional performance will be developed, with corresponding observable and measurable goals set for the student. Evaluation of current performance levels may include formative test results, grades, portfolio assessments, standardized tests, observations, and teacher recommendations. Possible variances in performance may also include social or emotional factors. A full continuum of programs and services will be considered with a placement decision to carry out the IEP in the least restrictive environment (LRE) that is appropriate for the student. Determination will be made for the need for the provision of itinerant special education services and any assistive technology needs provided through outside contracted services that comply with all state requirements for certification and reporting processes.

IEP Requirements: The student's IEP will reflect all the elements required by IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the ADA: Student's present levels of functioning and academic performance; Measurable annual goals and, where appropriate, short-term objectives; Special education, related services, and supplementary aids and services; A statement of program modifications and/or supports to be provided for the student; The extent (if any) to which the student will participate with students in the regular education class population and extracurricular activities; Any individual modification in the administration of state or other required assessments of student achievement needed for the student to participate in the assessments; Projected date for the beginning of services and modification and anticipated frequency, location, and duration of services and modifications; How progress toward annual goals will be measured; transition services for students ages 13 years and above; and documentation that the student has been informed of his/her rights that will be transferred to the student upon reaching the age of majority. In accordance with IDEA, the IEP team will determine transitional services for students with disabilities at the age of 13. A coordinated set of strategies will be designed by the IEP team that will promote the movement from school to post school activities.

Identification of Students: When the need arises based on parent, teacher and/or administrative input, evaluation procedures will be administered in accordance with federal regulations to determine whether a student is disabled and the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the student needs. Prior to conducting any school-initiated evaluation, parental/guardian permission will be requested through written notification. After obtaining parent/guardian permission for evaluation or following a decision through the official hearing (subject only to State Educational Agency appeal), the evaluation must be completed. Following the evaluation, VA will notify the parents/guardian that the evaluation has been completed, their parental rights and the results. During annual reviews of IEPs, student progress and modifications will be adapted to match current needs. It is our intent to eventually exit students from special education when appropriate.

Staffing and Contractual Services: VA teachers of exceptional children must meet the following minimum criteria: (1) minimum of a Bachelor's degree; (2) content knowledge demonstrated by achieving a passing score on state approved certification examinations, and (3) valid SC Teaching Certificate in the area of disability with no waivers of any requirements. Special education teachers needing additional certification to better assist students with special needs will be given one year to take coursework necessary to gain this certification. While they are becoming certified in necessary areas, VA will contract with other agencies in order to provide the full range of necessary services for any and all children with special needs. The proposed 5-year budget, attached in Appendix P, verifies that both personnel and program needs have been adequately planned for and funded. The Federal Programs Coordinator will ensure compliance for all special education programs.

Assistive Technology and ADA Compliance: VA through its IEP team and 504 ADA compliance

plans will make decisions that identify the types of services a child will need and will address staffing or contractual services, technology or other equipment or device needed for delivering those services. The need for assistive technology services will be determined during IEP meetings and listed on the IEP or as indicated in the 504 plan. Staff will coordinate with the appropriate resources such as the SC Assistive Technology Program (SCATP) in Columbia, SC to coordinate the obtainment of the assistive technology services or devices. Students qualifying under IDEA or ADA or both will be provided assistive technologies as needed for providing effective communication, as well as the acquisition or modification of equipment or devices to meet other needs. VA is committed to fully serving students not qualifying for IDEA but who qualify for services under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition to providing assistive technologies and services, accommodations for schedules, seating and instructional strategies or other accommodations as specified in the student's 504 plan, the buildings and playground areas will be in keeping with the ADA requirements. The floor plans will be considered for ultimate flexibility of programmatic use for all students. The Academy is committed for all students, regardless of disability or special needs, to have an equal opportunity to participate in school and school activities and that they receive aids and services designed to meet their individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met. The Academy will make reasonable modifications to programs and services to afford inclusive access to student activities, programs and services for students with disabilities. The principal will appoint an ADA compliance officer to insure that modifications and services are provided to insure students with disabilities have access to a least restrictive, appropriate school experience. An evaluation for a 504 Plan under ADA can be initiated by either the parent or the school. The Academy will conduct an evaluation to decide if the child's disability "substantially" limits his or her ability to learn and participate in the general education classroom. If the school initiates the evaluation, the ADA compliance officer will notify the parents and get the parents' consent to evaluate the student for a

504 plan. If the parent refuses and the school wants to move ahead without the parents' consent, the school will request a due process hearing to get permission.

When doing an evaluation for a 504 plan, the Academy will consider information from several sources, including: documentation of the child's disability (such as a doctor's diagnosis); evaluation results (if available); observations by the student's parents and teachers; academic record; independent evaluations (if available) Section 504 requires evaluation procedures that prevent students from being misclassified, incorrectly labeled as having a disability or incorrectly placed. The principal will insure that ongoing professional training is provided to all staff to equip them to best identify and meet the needs of students with disabilities and exceptionalities.

Data Management: The SCDE has implemented a special education data management system in an effort to reduce the time and cost associated with the process of collecting and reporting special education, RTI, 504, ELL and other support services data. The system, called Enrich/Excent, tracks data from individualized education program (IEP), 504 plans and student information systems (SIS). VA will collect and monitor student progress and achievement for special services populations by using the Enrich/Excent system for data management and to monitor longitudinal student achievement. Enrich/Excent provides actionable, real-time data for students, for improved control over program compliance and individual student results with data collection and analysis capabilities that allow for longitudinal views of data. Using Enrich/Excent, along with PowerSchool that houses academic performance, attendance and other demographic data, will enable teachers to identify each student's baseline of achievement and progress over the course of the academic year. These highly practical tools will help teachers and parents identify where a child's strengths are, as well as specific modifications or adaptations to address. Additionally, all public schools operating in SC are evaluated annually on the academic progress of all students eligible for special education services as part of the annual school report card process under "closing the gap" criteria. This data will be reviewed and evaluated as part of our school's internal evaluation procedure.

Title III English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL): Students who qualify for services under Title III English for Speakers of Other Languages will be identified by the parents, faculty, or administration and will be assessed using language proficiency screening as approved by the sponsor to determine the student's English proficiency level and needs. We will follow the sponsor's procedures to identify ELL students, develop individualized education programs, and provide related English Language Services. Teachers and families will have access to printed and eBooks in Spanish through programs such as Reading A-Z and RAZ-Kids. These books also come in the English version to help facilitate learning the English language. We will have a Spanish Teacher employed half time in year 1 and full time starting in year 2. The Spanish teacher will be available as a translator for all staff and Spanish speaking students and parents. The Spanish teacher will also be available to translate requested items from staff or make phone calls. The website will include translation capability. According to the US Census Bureau from 2009-2013, only 3.7% of children ages 5 and older in Florence County have a language other than English spoken at home. The percent of students needing ELL services by a teacher with the ESOL endorsement is even smaller. While hiring, we will be mindful of teachers that have the ESOL endorsement, especially the Spanish teacher position. At least one teacher with ESOL endorsement will be employed to meet the immediate or potential needs of students and parents requiring ESOL (ELL) services. If the Spanish teacher does have the endorsement, he/she may be hired full time in year one to teach Spanish half time and ELL resource program the other half. If the Spanish teacher does not have the ESOL certification, additional staff may be hired if the need arises during year one and for subsequent years. A ratio not exceeding 1 teacher to 15 students in a language resource program, if required by the ESOL services plan, will be followed.

Procedures for Identifying and Serving ESOL Students: Students requiring ESOL program services will be identified through the effective procedures used by the sponsor. The LEP/ELL definition includes students with a wide range of educational needs with respect to English for

Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Examples include the following types of students: Children of recent immigrants who speak no English and who have had little or no formal training in written language; Children of immigrants who have had formal training in English during formal schooling; and United States-born children whose primary language is not English and/or who have had limited formal education in English. Language Minority Student is one whose first language or home language is other than English and may be limited English proficient. VA will administer a Home Language Survey for all enrolling students who have not already completed one. A bilingual translator will be provided, if necessary. Any student whose registration or Home Language Survey indicates a student's first language is anything other than English is a Language Minority Student and the student will receive services. If any response on the Home Language Survey indicates the use of a language other than English by the student or an individual in the home, then further information will be obtained to determine the student's English-language proficiency. Based on identification of a potential ELL through the Home Language Survey, new students will be tested within thirty days of enrollment at the beginning of the school year, and within two weeks within the school year. The Federal Programs Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that, within ten school days of enrollment, a copy of the Home Language Survey is filed in the permanent record and one copy is distributed to the ESOL teacher. The ESOL teacher will review school records to see if the child has screening scores from his/her previous schools. If no screening scores can be located students will be assessed using the sponsor approved screening. Parent notification will be made via letter signed by the principal and provided to the parent, but parent permission is not required for screening. Based on the outcome of the screening, the ELL Committee, composed of the Federal Programs Coordinator, at least one content or grade level teacher, the guidance counselor, the ESOL teacher, parent, student if appropriate, and may include speech language therapists, school psychologists or special

education teacher, if appropriate, will convene. A student who qualifies as LEP or Language Minority will be placed in the age appropriate grade. The student will participate with age group peers in all school activities. Whenever possible, appropriate accommodations and assistance will be provided in the mainstream classroom. The goal will be to integrate the student into regular programs and classrooms to the greatest extent possible while providing an intense language acquisition program or support services. RC model that includes PBL, literacy and math workstations, learning styles and arts enrichment will provide a supportive cooperative learning environment for all students, including students with special needs and ELL. The RTI Leadership Team will recommend SIOP training for the entire staff at a Friday PD/end of year PD if several ELL students are enrolled. Empirically- validated research indicates that The SIOP Model works for teachers of all students-especially ELLs. When implemented to a high degree, SIOP is proven to: increase student achievement, improve academic content skills and language skills, deliver results aligned to state objectives, and prepare students to become college and career ready. Instructional reading and vocabulary strategies already being used by the teachers through the reading program and modeled by RC, will be similar, but improved using The SIOP Model. More information on SIOP at (http://siop.pearson.com/about- siop/index.html). In addition to one-on-one assistance from the ESOL teacher and differentiated instruction from the regular classroom teachers, software programs such as Imagine Learning will be used to support English language acquisition. Imagine Learning can be used on PC or Apple products, and is a highly effective award-winning language and literacy software program that features interactive activities, videos, and games. It is research-based, instructionally differentiated, and created for English Language Learners.

Parent Notification, Waiver and Exiting the Program: Parents will be notified, but parent permission is not required for language proficiency screening. Prior to the ELL committee placing

a student in an ESOL program or writing a programmatic or services plan, parents will be notified of their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for participation in ESOL program and services. Parent notifications will be communicated in the primary language used by the parent. Parents are not required to respond affirmatively to the notification in order for the student to participate in the program or to be provided services. However, upon receipt of written notice from the parent declining participation (waiver), the student will be withdrawn from the ESOL services recommended by the ELL committee, but informal support will continue to be provided by the classroom teachers and the student will be assessed annually for English proficiency. When a student scores proficient on language proficiency screening and based on parent and teacher input, exits the ESOL program, the student will continue to be monitored by the ESOL teacher for two years. Students who re-enter the program based on poor academic performance or a reading score on a state assessment that does not meet the standard are required to receive ELL services. Any students who have re-entered will not be classified as "Exited" until they have again met state requirements for English language proficiency.

Summary: VA will comply with all federal and state laws regarding accommodations for students with/without impairments and will not discriminate against individuals who are believed to be homeless, undocumented, handicapped or who were handicapped at one time. The school will adhere to the criteria for eligibility, reporting, and official records for accommodations. The Academy staff will receive PD on an on-going basis to assure that students who may qualify are identified in a timely manner and instructional delivery as well as other interactions is conducted appropriately and effectively. All students will have individualized learning plans (ILP) that will address the academic ability for each student. This will allow all students to focus on skills deficit in previous grades, but also allow students that need to be challenged to work on a higher grade level that is developmentally appropriate for each student.

8. STUDENT Conduct, Rights and Responsibilities VA school board will adopt a discipline

policy and approve a code of conduct using the PCSASC's recommended policy manual for charter schools as adapted for the school community and approved by the school's attorney. See Appendix K. Draft VA Code of Conduct.

Student and Parent Notification: The code of conduct and applicable Board policies will be provided to parents and students at the beginning of the school year. Students and parents will receive a Student Handbook at the beginning of the year either in print and/or online. Parents and students will sign a digital or hard copy form acknowledging receipt of the handbook and their understanding of and consent to the discipline code. Expectations, student rights and responsibilities, and the right to appeal will be discussed during student orientation. All rights, procedures will be posted online to provide information to all school stakeholders.

Safe and Drug Free Schools Compliance: Safety and security of students is the first priority of the Academy and no tolerance will be given to students who threaten verbally, written or otherwise the safety of anyone associated with the school. In the event of major offenses as outlined in the student conduct code including flagrant misbehavior, immorality, consistent chronic disobedience, commission of a crime, or jeopardizing the safety of students, faculty, or staff, the student may be expelled. If a student is in possession of a weapon (other than a firearm), drugs, or assaults a student or school employee, he/she will be immediately placed on suspension pending expulsion and the appropriate law enforcement agencies will be notified. VA provides assurance to comply with S.C. Code Annotated Section 59-63-235, which means immediate expulsion of any student who brings a firearm to school property or immediate vicinity with or without intent to harm.

Disciplinary Review Committee and Appeals Process: The Disciplinary Review Committee is appointed by the Board annually. The committee will consist of at least the Board vice chair, one appointed Director, and one elected Director. The Disciplinary Review Committee will be empowered by the approved Bylaws to examine all facts, hear appeals, and render a decision pertaining to suspension and expulsion brought on an appeal of an Administration decision. A

finding and recommendation of the Disciplinary Review Committee pertaining to any suspension and expulsion must be approved by a majority of the members of the Committee. The student or the school administration may request to appeal a suspension and expulsion finding and/or recommendation of the Disciplinary Review Committee to the Board of Directors with the Board's decision on the issues being final and without further review

Suspensions: Before a student is suspended for a period of ten days or less, an informal hearing or conference will be held with the student, the student's legal guardian, Principal or designee, and staff members as deemed appropriate. The Principal or designee will present the charges and evidence to the student and legal guardian. The student will be given an opportunity to present his/her case to the Principal or designee and admit to or deny the charges. If the student does not admit guilt to the charges and the Principal or designee has reason to believe the student is not being truthful, the Principal or designee will notify the student of the suspension and will notify the parent/legal guardian of such. A written notice of the reason for the suspension and duration, along with trespassing notice during the time of suspension, will be provided to the legal guardian and student. Appeals may be made to the Disciplinary Committee as follows: The appeal must be made in writing, state the reasons for the appeal, and be received by the Disciplinary Committee within two days after the administrations' decision to suspend the student. The Disciplinary Committee will review the record, hear witnesses if needed, and render a written decision within five days of receipt of the written appeal if feasible. If the appeal is found in favor of the student, any absences will be excused and assistance will be provided for any missed school work. In cases of suspension of ten days or less, the decision of the Disciplinary Committee is final.

Expulsion: If a student receives from the Principal or designee a notice of suspension and expulsion, the Principal or designee will convene the Discipline Committee. The Discipline Committee will review the student's situation that led to the Principal or designee's decision to expel the student. The Discipline Committee will request the presence of the parent/guardian and/or student and will

examine any evidence or hear witnesses as needed. If the Discipline Committee supports the decision for expulsion, the school Principal shall provide the student and parent/guardian with written notification of the charges of misconduct, the disciplinary action taken, trespassing notice, and their right to request an appeal in writing to the VA Board of Directors. The written request stating the reasons for the appeal must be submitted to the Chairman of the Board within five days of the first date of expulsion. If a request for appeal is submitted and granted, the school board will schedule a hearing in a timely manner and provide the student and parent/guardian the opportunity to present their appeal. The school board will review the entire disciplinary record, hear from administration and staff as appropriate, and notify the student and the parent/guardian in writing of the final decision within ten (10) days of the Board of Directors' hearing (See Appendix K). These procedures and timelines may be adjusted per legal advice from the School's attorney or other legal or legislative precedent or changes in the board bylaws that may be applicable.

FERPA Compliance and Notification: VA will comply with the requirements of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which provides families and students: a) the right to inspect and review the student's education records at the school; b) the right to challenge and require the school to amend a student's record if the information is inaccurate, misleading or in violation of the student's privacy rights; and c) the right to require the school to obtain written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable, subject to specific expectations. Annual notice will be provided to parents via the Student Handbook, the school website and school orientation sessions.

Discipline for Students with Special Needs: Students who have been identified as handicapped or disabled are not exempt from rules regarding behavior. All disciplinary action involving students with special needs will be addressed in accordance with state and federal law. The policy on suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities will adhere to the specific procedures for

disciplinary actions that involve students with disabilities as outlined in the IDEA. A Special Needs student may be suspended for up to ten days for violating the code of conduct - with suspension occurring either sequentially or in total during an academic year - without constituting a change in placement. A Special Needs student may be suspended even if the behavior is caused by his or her disability, but not for more than ten days in a row or an accumulation of ten days without following procedures for a change of placement. If a student is recommended for suspension for more than ten consecutive days or is recommended for expulsion, the Special Education Coordinator along with the Principal will conduct a Manifestation Determination to review the relationship between the student's disability and the behavior that is subject to the disciplinary action. A team will meet to determine if (a) the violation is a result of the student's disability and/or

(b) the violation is a result of failure to implement the IEP. The Manifestation Determination review will be conducted as soon as possible but no later than ten (10) days from the decision to suspend a student for a period greater than 10 days or to expel. VA will not expel a student with a disability if the behavior that caused the expulsion is caused by the disability, but a change of placement may be considered following all appropriate procedures for placement. The Special Education Coordinator will work closely with administration and teachers to provide assistance for special education students on matters of discipline to intervene whenever possible prior to serious occurrence of behavior problems (see Appendix K).

9. GOVERNANCE School board elections will be held annually with staggered terms and will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the SC Charter Schools Act of 1996 as amended. During the planning stage, the applicants convened a charter school committee, consisting of educators, parents, and community members with various background experiences from different constituent districts to govern the charter school through the application process, the implementation phase, and the election and appointments for the initial VA Board of Directors. The VA Committee will act as school board until such time as a duly elected governing board shall be

elected. The Planning Committee, as recognized by the sponsor, will be officially dissolved as an action of the first VA Board at their first regularly scheduled meeting on or before Feb. 14, 2019 after the first election to be held before Jan. 31, 2019. The VA School Board will consist of not more than ten (10) members (and not less than seven as specified by law) with 50% elected members and 50% appointed members as specified in the Bylaws The elected Board members will be elected at-large. All Board members must be residents of SC.

Transition from Planning Committee to System of Annual Board Elections

No later than November 2018, the VA Nominating Committee will convene. The Nominating Committee will be: appointed by the Governing Board, will reflect the demographic population of the school and will be comprised of two (2) community or parent members, one (1) Board member not offering for election or appointment and (2) employees for a total of (5) members. This Nominating Committee will carry out the responsibilities set forth herein and supervise each election. The first election will be held no later than January 31, 2019 and the exact date of each subsequent election will be established by the Board of Directors when the school calendar is established for each upcoming year and will be clearly denoted on the school calendar and other school publications to ensure all eligible voters are notified of it. Sixty days prior to the date of the election in each year, a request for written nominations on a form provided by the Nominating Committee for candidates to serve on the Academy Board will be published to all eligible voters and to the community at large. The request will specify the number of seats open for election or appointment. All employees of the Academy and all parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school are eligible and will be encouraged to vote in the election. The Nominating Committee will immediately begin accepting written nominations with a published deadline for nominations. The Nominating Committee will promptly notify each prospective candidate to determine his/her willingness to serve. Each prospective candidate must be a resident of SC and comply with SCCS Act requirements and Internal Revenue Service requirements of all 501(c) 3 tax- exempt

organizations, including prohibitions of any conflict of interest matters or any matter of inurnment.

A person who has been convicted of a felony must not be elected or appointed to the VA Board.

1. Names of nominated individuals who have indicated their willingness to serve on the school's governing board and met all other requirements as specified above will be presented to the Charter Governing Board no later than the first Monday in May of each year beginning 2020 at the Annual Meeting as specified in the bylaws (after the first election in January 2019). Names of individuals seeking election to the Board will be placed on an electronic ballot. No name will have any feature that distinguishes it. An official list of all qualifying candidates for election will be published to all eligible voters, along with the date, times and electronic voting instructions. Voting will take place with secure ballots and managed by the PCSASC or another entity approved by the Charter Governing Board. The names and relevant expertise of nominated individuals who have indicated their willingness to serve as an elected Board member will be published and provided to parents and staff. If the school intends to host public forums, debates, board orientations or other campaign events, the dates, times, and locations of the events will be posted on the school's website and distributed broadly. No candidate will campaign on the school campus, except at a school-sponsored forum, debate, or other event. Notification of the election process will be communicated in multiple ways to families via letters home, social media, and email. During the initial election, two members of the board will be elected to serve one year terms and three (3) members will be elected to two- year terms to allow for staggering terms as stated in the bylaws. The candidates' vote counts will determine the length of the term with the three candidates with the highest vote counts assigned two-year terms and the next two candidates in the rank order of vote counts assigned one year terms. Employees will be given one vote. Parents or guardians of an enrolled student shall have one vote for each student enrolled in the charter school (Section 59-40-50 of the SCCS Act).

2. The deadline for voting will clearly be stated on the ballot form and communicated with the

eligible voters. Ballots will be counted and those elected to the board will be notified immediately.

3. All reports of irregularities, fraud, or concerns regarding an election will be made in writing to the Nominating Committee within 48 hours of the close of the election, and any concerns not properly presented to the Committee will be waived. The Committee will not announce the results of an election until all appropriately presented concerns have been satisfied within the sound and sole discretion of the Committee. An announcement will be made, however, within 10 days of an election.

Transition to First Elected and Appointed Board: Following completion of the election of up to (5) board members to be installed by February 2019 and thereafter at the June board meeting, members of the Charter Governance Board per bylaws will appoint up to (5) five individuals who may be community members or parents to serve on the board. Appointments made by the Board will be based on the mission and goals of the school and any need for expertise that may make the Board more effective. Priority for consideration for appointments will be given to individuals with a background in accounting or finance, law, medical or technical fields or any other presenting need of the Board at the time of the appointments. All appointed board members must be in compliance with all requirements for service as Board members as set forth in the SCCS Act. Planning Committee members who wish to be considered for appointment must recuse themselves of all discussions and votes. Lacking a quorum to make appointments, the decision for appointments will be transferred to the newly elected Board at their first regular board meeting after July 1. During the first year of appointments the length of term will be determined by random drawing with two (2) appointees serving two years and three (3) appointees serving one year. After the first election, authority will be transferred to the newly elected Board with the administering of the Oath of Office *(S.C. Constitution, Art. III, Sect.26)* at the June Board meeting and will become effective July 1 each year. At the first regular board meeting after July 1 each year, the VA Board will elect its officers.

Subsequent Boards and Elections: All subsequent elected and appointed Board Members will serve two (2) year terms commencing on July 1 and ending on June 30. Seats for the first year of election and appointments: seats 1-5 shall carry a term of two (2) years. Seats 6-10 shall carry a term of one (1) year. Thereafter, the term of office of each director shall be two (2) years.

Seat 1 Elected Member, Seat 2 Appointed Member, Seat 3 Elected Member, Seat 4 Appointed Member, Seat 5 Elected Member, Seat 6 Appointed Member, Seat 7 Elected Member, Seat 8 Appointed Member, Seat 9 Elected Member, Seat 10 Appointed Member. The Elected Member receiving the most votes will be assigned seat number one (1). The Elected Member receiving the second most votes will be assigned seat number three (3). The Elected Member receiving the third most votes will be assigned seat number five (5). The Elected Member receiving the fourth most votes will be assigned seat number seven (7). The Elected Member receiving the fifth most votes will be assigned seat number nine (9). For the first appointments to the Board, one year terms for seats numbered 2 and 4 or two year terms for seats numbered 6, 8 or 10 will be assigned by random drawing to be conducted at the June Board meeting. Thereafter, the length of term of Board seats for appointed Board members will be two years. The staggering of terms will be accomplished in this manner:

Authority and Responsibility of Board of Directors: The VA Board is ultimately responsible and has the governing authority for the execution of all board responsibilities. The school board for VA will govern in accordance with the SCCS Act of 1996 and as amended. The board will hold at least ten public board meetings per year. The board's focus is student achievement, to ensure compliance and sound fiscal management. The school board assumes the following responsibilities summarized below and detailed in the bylaws: Employing the Principal; ensuring that teachers, whether certified or non---certified, undergo the background checks and other investigations required for certified teachers, as provided by law, before they may teach in the charter school; contracting for other services;

developing pay scales, performance criteria, and discharging policies for its employee s;

deciding all other matters related to the operation of the charter school, including

budgeting, and operating policies; and ensuring that the charter school; will adhere to the

same health, safety, civil rights, and disability rights requirements as are applied to all

public schools under the same sponsor; conduct annual board and school leader

evaluation; participate in state approved board training; fulfilling all other

responsibilities of the governing Board as specified in the SCCS Act of 1996 and as

amended. VA board members will receive annual board governance training and complete a

minimum of ten (10) hours of PD each year. VA will continue to connect with the community

and its leaders to recruit the most qualified board members to serve the children of the school.

Committee and Subcommittee members and their respective assignments are included in

Appendix A.

Relationship to Administration: The Planning Committee will advertise the position of Principal,

conduct screening and interviews and employ the Principal no later than July 1, 2018 and prior to

that date as may be possible. The Principal will be employed by the Planning Committee and

afterward, the VA Board as its only direct employee. The Charter Governing Board also named the

Board of Directors is the governing body for the nonprofit corporation and is legally responsible for

all matters pertaining to VA Academy. The Board will set policy, oversee long-range planning,

ensure fiscal solvency including development and monitoring of the annual budget and conduct an

annual evaluation on the performance of the principal. VA board is committed to implementing the

modified policy governance. The Board's focus is strategic. The Principal will oversee the day-to-

day operations of the school, including the employment and termination of all other school

employees. The Principal or one of the other school administrators will either be a certified School

Administrator or experienced in school administration in accordance with S.C. Code Ann § 59-40-

50(b)(5)**.** The Board will delegate to the Principal the authority for the management and execution

of day-to-day school activities, including management of personnel and instructional leadership. The Principal serves as the liaison between the Board and the school. The Principal will be responsible, within the guidelines established by Board policy, for the recruiting, screening and hiring staff, providing orientation and PD, setting up administrative functions of the school, and establishing direction and coordination of the school program in accordance with the educational goals adopted by the Board. The faculty of the school, under the leadership of the principal, shall be responsible for the development of the school's curriculum and teaching methods, concurrent with the mission of the school. The Board will rely on its chief executive officer, the Principal, to provide professional administrative leadership. The Principal is responsible for executing the professional staff responsibilities through the design of an administrative organization that will meet the needs of the school and use its resources efficiently and effectively. The function of administration is to plan for, control, coordinate, supervise, and direct the school in accordance with the purposes, policies, plans, procedures and programs authorized by the Board.

Relationship with Sponsor: The Charter Institute at Erskine College and VA will have a contractual relationship based on charter school sponsorship as described in the SCCS Act of 1996 as amended. The primary role of The Charter Institute at Erskine College as the sponsor will be to monitor the implementation of the approved charter application of VA to ensure on- going quality. Another role of sponsor is to support VA by providing limited programmatic and technical assistance. The charter contract between The Charter Institute at Erskine College and the Academy will be a fixed term, renewable contract that outlines the roles, powers, responsibilities, and performance expectations. The contract will reflect all provisions outlined in the application as well as the roles, powers, responsibilities, and performance expectations for the Academy and the sponsor. A material revision of the terms of the contract between the school and the sponsor may be made only with the approval of both parties.

The Academy will report at least annually to the sponsor and the SCDE on the required areas in the

law: the number of students enrolled in the charter school from year to year; the success of students in achieving the specific educational goals included in the charter; an analysis of achievement gaps among major groupings of students in both proficiency and growth; and the identity and certification status of the teaching staff; financial performance; and board performance and stewardship including compliance with applicable laws. The sponsor will notify the Academy of perceived problems if its performance or legal compliance appears to be unsatisfactory and provide reasonable opportunity for the school to remedy the problem or take appropriate corrective actions if problems are not satisfactorily addressed by the Academy within a reasonable timeframe.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA): The board intends to follow all components of the open meeting laws included in FOIA including the posting of agendas, amending action items on agendas, and executive session. Any subcommittee meetings scheduled will also give notice as may be required, and must make reasonable and timely efforts to give notice of their meetings.

FERPA Compliance VA will comply with the requirements of FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99)), which protects student and family information from being revealed or released to non-authorized parties. The Board of Directors will consult legal counsel in any instance in which a Freedom of Information Act requirement appears to conflict with a FERPA requirement.

10. OPERATIONS VA is committed to having effective, efficient, and compliant operational systems that will best support academic achievement. VA utilizes services of The Charter Institute at Erskine College, the PCSASC New School Incubator ("the Incubator"), and SCDE training. A detailed start-up plan will be a guiding document for launching a highly effective public charter school (see detailed start up plan - Appendix Q). Getting the already SCOSF inspection and SCDOT inspection of the facility for VA is a top priority. The board will engage an experienced SC charter school attorney as soon as planning funds are available. The school by-laws will be reviewed annually to align with S.C. law and approval will be sought following The Charter

Institute at Erskine College's process for charter amendments for any material changes as defined by the sponsor. Contact information for board members will be provided to the sponsor and updated as required. In addition, the annual board meeting schedule will be published. The board intends to follow all components of the open meeting laws included in SCFOIA including the posting of agendas, amending action items on agendas, and executive session. The planning committee has adopted the PCSASC policy manual, and will update as needed with legal advice. Policies, Code of Conduct, School calendar, and all other important documents will be available to the public by August 1, 2018. The Parent/Student and Staff Handbooks will be added to the school website and made available in the front office of the school. Furthermore, the charter committee will consider and approve a startup budget upon charter approval. The first year budget will have three readings and approval before June 30, 2018. The administration will obtain competitive quotes from vendors such as technology, furniture, office supplies, etc. Quotes will be brought by the principal as soon as may be practicable with an administrative recommendation to the board for final approval for any purchases from a single vendor greater than $5000. After the board has hired the Principal, the Principal will hire all other administration and teaching positions as listed in Appendix I and as may be supported by enrollment – see Sample List of Teaching Positions.

The administration will also order the following items after careful consideration and review of the budget: a) Curriculum materials, b) Classroom/ Office equipment, c) Electronic devices, d) Playground equipment, e) Consumables, f) Telephones, g) Tutorial program, etc. Our marketing strategies and continued marketing of our school through website and social media; Presentations of Learning; Parent/Teacher Conferences; Academic, Cultural and Arts Enrichment; volunteer opportunities and our community partnerships and support, we feel confident we will maintain required enrollment for the budget. Elements such as our refining our website and logo, direct mail, press releases, phone banking, printing, social media, open houses, radio, word of mouth marketing (i.e. door to door), and/or other forms of marketing will be used to promote the opening. All

residents of Florence and the surrounding areas will have equal opportunity to enroll at VA. The Principal and other representatives will attend community meetings such as the local Chamber, Florence First Steps, Rotary, businesses, Head Start and day care centers and other civic groups to promote the vision and enrollment of the school. Churches in Florence County will be contacted and informed about the opportunity for families attending their church to enroll their children into a tuition-free public school. As part of the planning committee outreach, many of these community groups have already been contacted, but follow-up contacts will be made upon charter approval to continue to engage a broad base of community involvement, and enable VA to actively seek a student body that is similar to the demographic of the areas served. We have and will continue to meet with our local, county, state and federal officers to inform and update. Having 396 students for grades K-6 already submitted on parent surveys, along with our primary marketing plan for enrollment that includes the marketing elements above and the simple three step plan listed previously, to enroll 345 students our first year. Step One: Direct Mail to target list of K-6th grade students; Step Two: Phone Bank calls will be made to households on the Direct Mail list with invitations to the scheduled and promoted Open Houses; and Step Three: Present organized and scheduled Open Houses to enroll students. VA will follow the enrollment plan as outlined in Section 4. In order to give equal opportunity to all students to enroll at VA, the board is committed to allocating up to 30% of its advertising budget to target low SES communities. In addition to the marketing outlined, public announcements and advertisements may be sent to radio and print media. When purchasing advertising on external media, outlets that report a significant African American audience will receive preference. Flyers will be placed in nail and hair salons, day cares, doctors' offices and provided to businesses on the list of minority owned businesses in Florence. Research on demographics of Florence County has shown a high alignment between the low SES population and the African American population. Parents, Educators and Community Members are all crucial contributors to the success of the governance and operations. Parents and Community

Members will be strongly encouraged to serve as volunteers on a day-to-day basis, serve on the school board, and/or serve on any Parent Association (e.g. PTO and/or School Improvement Council). Parental opportunities will allow parents to volunteer their service on committees, help with student PBL projects, student enrichment programs, field trips, and other activities. Volunteers will be required to complete a law enforcement and sex offender registry background check before volunteering on campus or working with students. Social networking such as text messaging, Tumblr, Instagram, website, Facebook, Twitter, and blogs will be used to interact with parents, students and the communities served to promote school activities and initiatives. Additionally, it has been reiterated that all employees of the charter school, community members, and all parents or guardians of students enrolled in the school are eligible to participate in the annual board election as specifically outlined in Section 8. The planning committee plans to recruit, interview and hire a principal by or before July 1, 2018. The principal will set up the administrative functions of the school, recruit, hire and provide training for staff, enroll students and prepare for a strong opening of the school. The Charter Institute at Erskine College will be the sponsor. The Principal will hire all school staff and employees. The governing board of the school will contract all service providers, consultants, and vendors. The Principal may be tasked to coordinate the contracts that directly affect day-to-day operations of the school at the discretion of the school board. The Principal will report to the school board on vendor contract matters. The Administration is responsible, within the guidelines established by board policy, for the direction and coordination of students and staff. The board is devoted to and legally charged with the responsibility for ensuring that an effective instructional program for the students is provided. The school will be organized to accomplish this purpose through governance of a board of elected and appointed members, administration by the Principal and implementation by the professional staff. The board will rely on the Principal, to provide professional administrative leadership. The Principal is responsible for executing the professional staff responsibilities through the design of an

administrative organization that will meet the needs of the school and most efficiently and effectively use its resources. The school will be subject to board policies that are implemented through the Principal. The function of administration is to plan for, control, coordinate, supervise and direct the school in accordance with the purposes, policies, plans, procedures and programs authorized by the board. The Planning Committee views the principal's position in the school in a triple capacity: (1) executive officer of the school; (2) instructional leader and accountability officer for all instructional personnel; and (3) liaison between those personnel and the Board. Because the Planning Committee believes responsibility for the administration of the school should rest with the Principal, the Board has the responsibility for developing a systematic means of evaluating the Principal's effectiveness. In consultation with the school's attorney, the Board will establish in the written contract with the Principal the timeline for his/her annual evaluation, length of contract, renewal or termination provisions and system of evaluation. The annual evaluation will be based on progress toward specific goals as established by the Board and in compliance with the goals of the charter and responsibilities as outlined in the Principal's job description. Each Board member will have the opportunity to provide written feedback on the performance of the Principal, commendations and areas for growth and improvement. This written feedback will be provided to the school's attorney to prepare a summative report for Board review and approval before presentation to the Principal. The Principal will be provided the opportunity to respond to the review. The Board will issue a summative statement in a designated Board meeting regarding the outcome of the annual evaluation. The Principal will be included in all General and Executive Session Meetings of the Board except in the case where the board is seeking legal advice on the principal's evaluation from the school's attorney. The Principal has the responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of all other school personnel. The Principal, in his/her discretion, may delegate to other school personnel the exercise of any powers and the discharge of any duties imposed upon the principal. The delegation of powers or duties, however, will not relieve the

Principal of responsibility for action taken under such delegation. The Principal, within the limits of the law and Board policy, is the administrative authority of the school. The Principal is responsible for a thorough knowledge of all laws, regulations and instructions governing the position. The Principal is accountable to a wide range of constituents, beginning with the Board, students and their families, and staff and extending to state government officials, legislators, and local, state and national audiences who may have special interests in VA. The Principal is responsible for having in-depth knowledge of the state and for serving in a leadership role in identifying and promoting the resolution of problems and issues related to the school and its students. Job descriptions for all administrative positions can be found in Appendix N. of this application.

Succession Plans: The VA planning committee understands the need to plan for succession occurring by choice of either party, due to changes as the organization grows and matures, or through emergency. The planning committee developed the following precepts to the succession plan which will be later incorporated in a Board approved policy: 1) Succession in leadership will occur; 2) Presentations on key components of school programs and leadership responsibilities will be presented on a regular basis at Board meetings and workshops; 3) The evaluation and renewal or dismissal processes for the Principal will be fully detailed in the negotiated employment contract; 4) In the event of an emergency transition in the Principal's position, the assistant principal or another appropriate lead staff member will be appointed by the Board to act as an interim until a proper search and selection process may be conducted; 5) When a replacement for the Principal must be initiated, the Board will engage a consultant or facilitator to assist with goals and responsibilities review, job description revisions, and recruitment and screening of principal applicants; 6) A spokesperson will be appointed and will be responsible for insuring accurate and timely communications are shared with stakeholders;7) The administration and lead teachers will be provided with professional growth opportunities in

school leadership to be prepared as possible candidates; 8) When a new Principal is selected, a coach or mentor will be assigned to assist with the transition.

Capacity for Effective Implementation: The Board will hire a Principal with administrative experience, preferably with experience in PBL, who possesses an advanced degree and certification in administration or applicable mid-management. The Principal's job description in summary will be to direct and manage the instructional program and supervise operations. The Principal will provide instructional leadership to ensure high standards of student learning and engagement. He/she will direct the implementation of school policies and instructional programs and manage the operation of all campus activities. The Principal's position is classified as a 240 day or 12 monthes position, and will report to the Board of Directors. Under regular supervision, the Teachers will assist students in learning academic, social, and developmental skills that will contribute to their development as mature, able and responsible men and women. The Teachers will report to the Principal and/or designee. The Teachers will have prior experience in PBL or commitment to the concept. This is a 190-day position or as determined by the work agreement.

The capacity and experience of the school board and experienced consulting teams have prepared VA to launch with much more confidence than the typical start-up school. The planning committee includes educators, parents, a former Florence County School Board Member, Business Owners, Registered Nurse, and a Controller for City of Florence and former SC State Trooper. The controller has also participated in SC Department of Education audits (See Section 2, Planning Committee). Fiscal services for the planning committee are being provided through McCay, Kiddy & Associates and will after charter approval be awarded by the planning committee via a bidding process; school model support via Francis Marion University, Erskine College, education consultants and community partners. For up to ten days each year, teachers and administration will have intensive curriculum writing and instruction PD. Every Friday for two 1/2 hours, will be PD as determined by the Leadership Team. McCay, Kiddy & Associates, LLC, is a Charleston CPA

firm dedicated to helping individuals and businesses succeed financially through quality tax, accounting and advisory services. If awarded, the Planning and Implementation Grant will be utilized to support implementation of the school's education model. The administrative team will ensure candidates are highly qualified and properly certified as well as able to carry out the mission and vision of VA. Following this process, new staff members are provided support and training on the PBL model. PCSASC connects schools with area business contacts that have a good reputation with schools in SC. In addition, the PCSASC provides free online training to board members as required by law and online required courses to school staff members through Safe Schools Online Training.

Budget and Finance McCay Kiddy, and Associates, LLC of SC is providing fiscal services during the planning and application process. The budget is prepared in accordance with SC Education Financial Accounting Handbook. The budgetary philosophy is to fund the teacher and student in the classroom; all budget items will be judged by improvement to the student's educational experience. The budget includes salaries for educational and operational needs including core classes, special education teachers, other educational classes, and the administrative team. VA has allocated funding for salaries, purchased services, and instructional supplies for special needs students. Specific employees are discussed in section 12 of the application. We have structured our budget to be conservative; concentrating on keeping costs down so that we can invest in the best education for our students by keeping money in the classrooms. Our first year enrollment projections are for 345 students, needing a minimum enrollment of 180 students to be able to operate and meet educational priorities.

VA plans on providing catered food service and to support students who bring student lunches with access to microwaves and refrigerated storage. These are operational priorities that are necessary to meet the student and parent's needs. The School believes an appropriate facility is crucial for both the educational and operational needs of the school. In preparation for the annual audit and

fiscal service providers, we will solicit three bids from independent Certified Public Accountant (CPA) firms and fiscal service providers firms and select the firms that best suits our needs and budget. We will take into consideration whether the firm has prior charter school experience, the location of the firm, and their pricing structure. The audit will be facilitated through the fiscal services provider and the school management and will be conducted in the same manner as all schools sponsored by The Charter Institute at Erskine College. The Board of Directors will receive, review and approve the Auditor's Report prior to official reporting. The fiscal service provider will forward all necessary (paper or digital) copies to our authorizer as well as to the SCDE. VA plans to pursue soft funds, but did not include in the budget to show the school is not dependent on soft funds for availability (Appendix W). VA will rely on a combination of the principal, the board of directors, and the fiscal service provider to assist with making sound financial decisions for the school. The fiscal service provider will provide the school's administration and the Board of Directors on a monthly basis a balance sheet, profit and loss, budget to actual comparison, and a cash flow projection to ensure the school is on track and is fiscally solvent not only currently but also into the future. McCay Kiddy who is assisting the planning committee during the application process is a Certified Public Accounting firm that has over ten years of experience with charter schools including auditing various charter schools in SC. They regularly implement and audit financial statements under generally accepted accounting principles, understand the SC funding manual and guidelines, and the dynamics of school finance and charter schools. Due to their experience as current fiscal management providers to SC charter schools, auditors of SC charter schools, and their history with charter schools and school finance, they will be able to advise VA and the Board of Directors on the best internal control structures ensuring we have the appropriate segregation of duties and monitoring in place. The School has budgeted for a qualified data clerk to compile and maintain the appropriate data in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the SC Pupil Accounting Manual and the SC Student Accountability Manual. We have not negotiated any

contracted services at this time, but will be continuing to research our options for food services, custodial services, maintenance, fiscal services, audit services, curriculum, library and technology services, and so forth. We intend on seeking competitive bids for significant contracts based on sound procurement policies and practices. We will thoroughly examine all opportunities and proceed with the best options that meet both our educational and financial needs.

11. Employees The Principal will be hired by the school board and will report directly to the board. The Principal will manage the day-to-day operations of the school and will have board-delegated authority in all staff related matters. Furthermore, the Principal is responsible for hiring, firing and administration of employee discipline. The Assistant Principal answers directly to the Principal, as does the Guidance Counselor, Special Education Director, Librarian/Technology Director, Clerk and all staff and teachers. (See Sample Organization Chart O). For projected staff positions, see Appendix I and Chart Section I Below.

Weekly staff development is an integral part of VA's structure and culture to maintain continuity and consistency. The Curr. Coord. in consultation with the Leadership Team will plan for the provision of PD based on the needs of students, changes in state requirements or assessment, and specific charter components including: application of instruction technology, accelerated learning, closing achievement gaps, use of data, PBL, creation and implementation of rigorous, standards based and culturally relevant PBL units of study. PD will be designed and delivered in a manner consistent with the National Staff Development Council's *Standards for Staff Development* (as revised in 2001), including week before students arrive and continuing throughout the school year and beyond in the form of workshops, classroom modeling and demonstration, development of "model classrooms" and teacher inter-visitation within the school and to other schools. Financial Support for ongoing PD is budgeted.

Administrative and Teaching Staff: In compliance with the SCCS Act of 1996 and as amended, at least one member of the administrative staff will hold a current SC certification in administration

or have at least one year of experience in the field of school-based administration. Employment will meet the SCCS Act guidelines with a minimum of 75% of teachers having certification in their subject area. Teachers in each core academic area will either be certified in that area or hold a baccalaureate or graduate degree in subject. Special education teachers, either as employees or contracted or purchased services, will have certification consistent with the state regulations in each area of disability for students needing special education. Each school year, administrators and teachers will review the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for all students to determine the special education staff requirements. A Federal Programs Coordinator will ensure compliance in all areas of special education. As student enrollment is established, if the need for other professional services to meet the needs of special education students develops contracted or purchased services appropriate to fit the needs will be established.

Note that Position Totals Indicate Maximum Projections and May Be Reduced Based on Enrollment and School Development Priorities

All Positions Full Time Employment starting Year 2 as Enrollment May Require						
*Art, Music, Physical Education, and Spanish Teachers are (0.5) Year 1						
Teacher Position	**Certification Code**	**2017-2018**	**2018-2019**	**2020-2021**	**2023-2024**	**2029-2030**
Early Childhood Position K-2nd	85	7	8	9	9	9
Elementary Position 3rd-6th	01	8	8	9	12	12
Middle School 7th-8th	04,10,20,12,14,15	0	2	4	4	6
High School 9th-12th	04,10,20,12,14,15	0	0	2	8	12
Special Education	21	1	1	1	1	1
RC (Grant)	01	1	1	1	1	1
Media Specialist/Technology	60	1	1	1.5	2	2
Art	50	0.5	1	1.5	2	2
Music	54	0.5	1	1.5	2	2
Physical Education	67	0.5	1	1.5	2	2
Foreign Language	07	0.5	1	1.5	2	2
5K Instructional Assistants	N/A	3	3	3	3	3
RTI Instructional Assistants	N/A	3	3	3	3	3
Principal	71, 73, 7B, 7D	1	1	1	1	1
Assistant Principal		1	1	1	1	1
Assistant Principal 6th-12th		0	0	0	1	1
Administrative Secretary/Bookkeeper	N/A	1	1	1	1	1

PowerSchool/Enrollment Clerk	N/A	1	1	1	1	1
Curr. Coord.	01, 21	1	1	1	1	1
Curr. Coord. 6th-12th	04, 10	0	0	1	1	1
Federal Programs Coordinator	21	1	1	1	1	1
Guidance	86	1	1	1	1	1
Guidance 6th-12th	86	0	0	1	1	1
Nurse (Grant)	N/A	1	1	1	1	1
Special Needs Contracted Services (ESOL/OT/PT, etc.)	As required	As Needed	As Needed	As Needed	As Needed	As Needed

Non-certified teachers will be appropriately qualified for the subject matter taught, will have completed at least one year of study at an accredited college or university, and will have met the qualifications outlined in S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-115. Qualifications and experience of all faculty and staff of the school will be open to the public.

Administrative Staff: The administrative staff will include the Principal and Assistant Principal. Other Support staff as enrollment and school development priorities may dictate could include a Curr. Coord., Federal Programs Coordinator, Responsive Classroom (dependent on grant funding), Guidance Counselor, Nurse, Media Specialist, and Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper and PowerSchool/Enrollment Clerk. Instructional staff includes grade level content, related arts and special services Teachers/PBL Facilitators and instructional assistants. Job Descriptions for staff are included in Appendix P. Job descriptions include the essential job functions and responsibilities, qualifications including skills, education, experience, knowledge and effort and other employment specifications for the positions. VA will begin in the 2018-19 school year, with a projected enrollment of 345 students, with up to 15 full time teaching positions (see Appendix I). The school will grow to a total of 552 students in 4 years with a combination of up to 48 full time and part-time positions, or as may be required at the time to meet the educational needs of the students. The student to teacher ratio per class will average 23 to 1.

Employment Process: VA is committed to recruiting and hiring, using at-will work agreements, the best- qualified employees without regard to race, religion, handicap, gender, or age. As an equal opportunity employer, VA will follow all state and federal rules, regulations and laws regarding employment practices. Recruitment and hiring of professional and support personnel will be based upon qualifications, merit, and commitment to the mission and philosophy of the school. The recruitment and selection process will include: An analysis of the job vacancy conducted by the Principal, a job description, which reflects the needs of the school; Principal approved recruitment strategies. Strategies for recruitment will include advertisement newspapers and professional publications; contact with college and university placement services; interviews with students enrolled in teacher education programs; professional contacts with organizations that promote the interest of minority groups; activities and events for prospective applicants and Internet advertisements. Announcements/advertisements for the job vacancy will be published in accordance with all related legal requirements and may include such information as the following: job title, summary description of the job responsibilities, location of the school, description of the application process, minimum requirements, entry salary and/or salary range, opening and closing dates for applying, statement certifying that the employer is an equal employment opportunity employer, work schedule, and whether the position is full or part-time; Applications for a position must be made in writing and shall include at a minimum: the SC teacher application form (CERRA), teaching credential; copy of diploma, degree, or certificates, or a transcript, if applicable; and three professional references. The school will not consider the individual's application file complete until it has received these documents. VA will advise all applicants for employment of the school's employment policies and application process, including a check of all criminal records. Applicants that make any falsification of information, either by omission or commission, will face grounds for disqualification from consideration or grounds for discharge, should they be employed. The

school's Principal or designee will paper screen applications to ensure the applicant meets the minimum training, education and experience requirements for the position. At the finalist level, all application information, including education and job-related training, work experience, prior employment records and criminal records will be verified. Utilizing the information gained during the screening process, the school Principal will make a determination as to who will be invited to participate in interviews. Employees of the school who apply for a position will be given consideration for transfer or promotion. The interview team will be composed of the school Principal and any others he/she determines to be appropriate to provide input into the selection process for the particular position. The selection process may include interview(s), observation of performance of work, review of other appropriate documents, and contact with appropriate professionals having knowledge of the applicant's performance. The Principal will evaluate all information gathered and select the best-qualified candidate for the position. The Principal will offer the position to the selected candidate via an AT WILL WORK AGREEMENT and will notify the Board of the new hire in the monthly personnel update at the regular board meetings. An induction process will be developed and implemented by the Principal which will include an introduction to the mission and goals, knowledge of the student body and community, PD regarding instructional materials and strategies, procedures and reporting required, and mentoring. The school will base personnel policies on the following long-range goals: to recruit, select and employ the best qualified personnel to staff the school; to provide staff compensation and benefit programs sufficient to attract and retain qualified employees; to provide a PD program for all employees to continually increase competence especially in the areas of personalized learning, PBL, and applied instructional technology, integrated content curriculum development, and use of data for continuous improvement; to conduct an employee appraisal program that will contribute to the continuous improvement of staff performance; to assign personnel to ensure as effective use as possible; to develop quality

human relationships; and to develop fully and utilize the potential of all personnel who serve the school. VA will be an equal opportunity employer. The school will maintain a policy of equal opportunity in all areas of Human Resource management including: recruitment and recruitment advertising, selection and hiring criteria and practices, transfer and promotion, demotion, termination, layoff and recall, compensation, working conditions, benefits and privileges of employment, and training.

Teacher Evaluations: VA will use the SC Expanded ADEPT Support and Evaluation System (ADEPT). School counselors, speech and language therapists, and library media specialists will be evaluated under the 2006 ADEPT guidelines until such time as the state updates these guidelines. Evaluations shall be based upon the following: Knowledge of Curriculum; Effective Use of Instructional Systems; Management of the Learning Environment: Student Assessment Results: Promotes Equity and the Appreciation of Diversity; and Professional Responsibilities. The Principal and/or the Assistant Principal of the school will serve as the teacher's primary evaluator(s) along with appropriately trained professional educators. The evaluation cycle at a minimum will consist of the following: Self-evaluation by the teacher; Goal setting, and Principal's review of the teacher collected student data; a professional learning plan developed by the teacher; at least two (2) classroom observations. As part of the ADEPT process, a team of at least two professionals will be assigned and feedback provided from the team according to state guidelines and the state calendar for evaluation milestones and deadlines. Observations will be followed by self-reflections. At the Summative Conference, usually held in the spring, the teacher and Principal will review assessment data and student progress data. A written summary of the observations and other evaluation findings will be provided by the Principal to the teacher for review and signature. A copy of the review will be filed in the teacher's personnel file. The teacher may attach comments.

Terms and Conditions of Employment: Committee members and subsequently members of the school's Board will approve the terms of employment for all employees. The Principal will make all

hiring, promotion, demotion, transfer, and dismissal decisions. The employment terms will comply with Para 41-10-30 of the SC Code of Laws, 1976. The Terms and Conditions of for At- Will Employment will be included in the employment agreement (See Appendix II), printed on the pay stub and/or the Employee Handbook with: Pay Dates, Salary Schedule, Vacation Days if applicable, Holidays, Sick Leave, Severance Pay (VA does not offer Severance Pay for At-Will employees.), Deductions, Three Day Deadline for Notification of Absences, Tuberculin Skin Test (Form 1420), SC Teaching Credential Requirement (if applicable), Additional Terms of Employment, SLED/National Sex Offender Registry Check. Official personnel records for all employees will be maintained in the administrative office using appropriate security measures. Personnel files will contain signed employment agreement; credentials and certifications or professional tests, if applicable; academic transcripts; health certificates; birth certificate if applicable; social security number; employment eligibility form; benefits declarations; signed terms of employment form; signed receipt of employee handbook; evaluation documentation and commendations; and other official correspondence. An employee handbook outlining policies and procedures will be developed and approved by the Planning Committee and subsequently the Board. This handbook will be given to all employees and updated by administration annually. Employees will sign a statement indicating their receipt of the handbook and acceptance of the policies/procedures contained in it. The Employee Handbook will include personnel policies and procedures. All policies and procedures will comply with SC and US Federal Laws.

Termination: VA employees are expected to meet certain criteria and standards regarding conduct and performance which includes all aspects of the employee's job description, all aspects of the school's approved charter, and generally accepted expectations of workplace decorum and professionalism. Employees who do not meet these standards may be given the opportunity to correct their conduct or performance through performance reviews and corrective action or may be dismissed according to the At Will Employment Agreement. After conferencing with an employee

who is not meeting expectations and job responsibilities, the Principal or immediate supervisor may provide to the employee written record of concerns, recommendations for improvement, corrective actions and a timeline for improvement if performance concerns are considered minor or reflect a change from previous good performance. Corrective action may include administrative leave, suspension or termination. In that case, the Principal will meet with the employee if possible or otherwise in written communication notify the employee of the dismissal, last date of employment, any trespassing notice required, final payment of compensation procedures, referral for resources for information regarding health or other benefits, collection of property belonging to the school, appeal options, and any other information appropriate to the employment and dismissal situation. VA employees are At-Will employees as defined in the Work Agreement.

Complaints and Grievances: The employee handbook will detail complaint or grievance resolution and/or termination procedures: The employee will meet with the staff member who is the cause of the concern and attempt to resolve the problem through professional discourse. If unable to resolve the concern directly with the staff member or if the concern is with the immediate supervisor, the employ will schedule a meeting with the supervisor to attempt to resolve the issue through professional discourse. If the issue is not resolved after meeting with the supervisor, then the employee should put his/her concern in writing describing the issue in detail, desired result, and the proposed solution. The written concern should be turned into the school Principal within ten (10) business days of the occurrence of the concern or the meeting with the supervisor (whichever is later). After the Principal receives the written concern, he/she will meet with the employee and the immediate supervisor to discuss the policies and procedures relating to the issue. Usually, the review of policies and procedures will dictate a resolution. If, after the employee has met with the immediate supervisor and Principal, the issue has not been resolved, the employee can provide the written concern to the Board Chairman and request a hearing. The Board will review the issue and policy and may, at its discretion, schedule a hearing with the employee, immediate supervisor,

and/or Principal. After the hearing the Board will make a final decision and report the resolution to the employee within three business days.

Evaluation and Dismissal Procedures for Administrative, Paraprofessional, and Non-Teaching Staff: VA will follow the same general process and procedures for employment and termination for administrators and non-teaching staff as those described above. For evaluation of paraprofessional and non-teaching staff, the job description and attendance record along with any documentation of concerns or commendations will be used as the basis for an evaluation conference to be held by the principal or immediate supervisor with each staff member before May 30 of each year (other than certified teachers and certain certified support staff who will be evaluated with Expanded ADEPT, SAFE-T or GBE). Findings of the evaluation conference and goals for future growth or improvement will be provided in writing and signed by the Principal. The Principal will be evaluated by the Board of Directors as detailed in the Principal's employment contract. The Principal will receive a performance contract that includes due process and termination procedures The Principal's annual evaluation will be based on progress toward specific goals as established by the Board and in compliance with the goals of the charter and responsibilities as outlined in the Principal's job description. Each Board member will have the opportunity to provide written feedback on the performance of the Principal, commendations and areas for growth and improvement. This written feedback will be provided to the school's attorney to prepare a summative report for Board review and approval before presentation to the Principal. The Principal will be provided the opportunity to respond to the review. The board will issue a summative statement in a designated Board meeting regarding the outcome of the annual evaluation. The principal has the responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of all other school employees.

Dismissal Appeals for All Employees: Any employee who is dismissed by the Principal has the right to request an appeal hearing before the Board of Directors. The request must be in writing to the Board Chairman, must state the reason and basis for the appeal and must be presented to the

Board Chairman within five days after the notice for dismissal has been given. The Board will review the issue and policy and if the Board grants an appeal hearing for the employee, then the Board Chairman will schedule a hearing with the employee, the Principal and the Board within 10 business days. The Board may require documentation or request to hear witnesses, as determined by the Board. After the hearing, the Board will make a final decision and report the resolution to the employee in writing within three business days.

12. Insurance Coverage VA will arrange for all necessary and applicable insurance policies for the school. Where applicable, The Charter Institute at Erskine College will be named as an additional insured. The school's administrators and school board will be appropriately bonded. The levels of insurance and bonding will remain in effect throughout the term of the charter, unless changed by a charter amendment. For planning purposes, VA has obtained an estimate from The Insurance People, a licensed insurance company in SC. The estimate is presented in Appendices Y and Z.

Worker's Compensation Insurance: The Committee has obtained an estimated annual premium for worker's compensation. The Worker's Compensation Premium Estimate is $7,503.00. It includes an Employer's Liability of $500/$500/$500. See Appendix Y.

General Liability Insurance: The Committee has obtained an estimated cost for liability insurance. These policies are designed to match or exceed the minimum limits required by the SC Tort Claims Act S.C. Code Ann. § 15-78-120 (Supp. 2002). The General Liability premium estimate is $1,632. See Appendix Z.

Property Insurance: VA will lease a newly remodeled facility; Charter Committee has obtained an estimated annual premium for property insurance to cover contents only. The estimate insures $450,000 with a $1,000 deductible. The Property premium estimate is $675. See Appendix Z.

Indemnity Insurance: The Charter Committee has obtained an estimated annual premium for indemnity insurance. The D&O / E&O insurance estimate is $2,422. See Appendix Z. The estimate

reads: Named Insured includes the insured Organization (School Entity), its School Board, School Committee, Board of Trustees, Board of Governors or similar governing body, elected or appointed members of the Board of Education, Board of Trustees, School Directors, School Committee, Board of Governors or similar governing body, Employees, Student Teachers, School Volunteers, and Students while serving in a supervised internship program sponsored by the "educational institution."

Automobile Insurance: The Committee has obtained an estimated annual premium for automobile insurance. The estimate insures up to $1,000,000 for hired and non-owned automobiles. The Auto Premium Estimate is $181. See Appendix Z.

Other Insurance: The Committee has obtained an estimated annual premium for a general liability umbrella policy, which has a $1,000,000 limit of liability. The Umbrella premium estimate is $2,387. See Appendix Z

13. Transportation. Transportation will not be a barrier to attendance at VA. Each family enrolling will be asked if they require assistance and assistance will be provided. Student recruitment materials will include information about available options for transportation assistance. We will provide information and financial assistance for use of public transportation through the Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority (PDRTA) which serves four cities in our potential attendance area including Darlington, Florence, Lake City and Marion. All PDRTA vehicles are handicap accessible. Students who qualify for Medicaid or qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act are provided free access to this service. In addition, we will employ free web-based technology through SC Rideshare and Carpool World, which services the Florence area. (https://www.carpoolworld.com/carpool_ride.html) Using this function, we will create a unique carpool web group for our students and families and use the match feature to assist parents in finding suitable carpool options. We will have a social prior to school opening to

connect families to carpools. Funds have been allocated in the proposed budget for

providing financial support for public transportation passes and will be adjusted in response

to the needs of our students. Based on preliminary research on proposed facilities it is likely

that a public bus stop will be within walking distance of the school site. Children in grades

K-4 riding public bus transportation will need an adult with them and financial support will

be provided if needed. If contracting of buses is required, a plan will be developed and

submitted for approval to our sponsor that complies with SC requirements for employment

of drivers, training and acquisition of school buses that meet state safety requirements.

Another programmatic feature planned to accommodate families who rely on public

transportation, carpooling or difficult work schedules, is free, daily early-bird-drop-off one

hour before school starts and a daily aftercare program from 3:30-6pm and 12:30 to 6 pm

on Fridays. The aftercare program will have a sliding fee scale for families qualifying for

free and reduced lunch. Through a combination of methods including vouchers and carpool

matching to support our families' transportation needs, we will support inclusion of a

diverse student population.

Special Needs Students: Our special needs students will be given access to a free and appropriate

public education and related educational services – including transportation. Federal Public Law 94-

142 and Chapter 33 of Code of Law of SC 1976: Title 59 (Sections 59-33-10 through 59-33-110)

will govern.

14. Facilities Our Facilities Committee has researched and identified locations in Florence that are

racially and socioeconomically diverse as well as easily accessible by automobile or city

transportation system. During this process we investigated services from the following construction

companies: American Charter Development (ACD), Highmark, and FBi. Three planning committee

members toured school facilities in SC and another state to see buildings constructed using various

floor plans and construction companies. Other planning committee members and volunteers

researched best practices in building designs to support PBL and visited four PBL schools in SC, all with different designs. We spoke with local banks and looked into financing options for charter school facilities and found that they are difficult to access. A proposal to provide funding for the property and buildings has been made available from Highmark Development, LLC. However, the planning committee does not think this proposal will be conducive for the present timeline for school opening in August 2018 nor for the financial sustainability of the school for the first years of operation. As a result, the facilities committee is engaging with local churches who have recently built family life centers as well as the local municipal convention center for securing space that will be ready to occupy by August 1, 2018. The planning committee still has a Letter of Understanding which has been executed between VA and Highmark Development, LLC to work together in good faith toward negotiating a fiscally responsible lease option at a desired location of 124 Cashua Dr., Florence, SC, and a floor plan that meets the needs of the school model and school population (See Appendix BB in application) but these plans are on hold at present. Estimates of costs based on sample leases are included in our budget projections. The planning committee is not precluded by the letter of understanding with HighMark to secure another lease option that is in the best interest of the school. The planning committee will continue to investigate competitive options for renovation and lease terms for the facility. The planning committee will make a formal request in early December, 2017 with the Office of School Facilities through Director Delisa Clark and with SCDOT for site assessment. The school will adhere to all sponsor and state timeline requirements for submitting required paperwork and obtaining approvals to insure that the facility is ready for students in August 2018. A Highmark construction engineer assessed the original proposed facility for renovations and determined that approximately three months would be the minimum requirement for completion of renovations on that facility. New charter schools do not have the option as other public school districts to sell bonds for building new schools. This is the reason most charter schools are in older facilities that may not have the technological capabilities needed to

prepare our students for World Class Skills of "communication, information, media and technology," as required in the Profile of the SC Graduate. SC has made access to internet and technology for all students a high priority. Technology is an integral part of the instructional model at **VA**. The building and property currently proposed by Highmark and any other facility secured by the planning comittee will meet the space, technological, and learning model for students of Virtus Academy.

15. School Management Contracts VA Committee at this time has neither plans nor proposals to engage the services of an Education Management Organization (EMO) nor a Charter Management Organization (CMO).