

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
 BOARD OF EDUCATION
 P.O. Box 2120
 RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23218-2120

REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF CERTAIN ACCREDITING STANDARDS
 AND/OR APPROVAL
 OF AN INNOVATIVE OR EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAM

The *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia*, ([8 VAC 20-131-10 et seq.](#)) set the minimum standards public schools must meet to be accredited by the Board of Education. Accreditation of public schools is required by the Standards of Quality (§§ [22.1-253.13:1 et seq.](#)). The annual accrediting cycle for public schools is July 1 through June 30.

This cover sheet, with the supporting documentation, must be submitted to the Department of Education for review and recommendation to the Board at least 90 days prior to the beginning of an accrediting cycle or the proposed implementation of the program or activity that precipitates the request for the waiver. The types of waivers available and the corresponding section of the standards are indicated below. Please attach additional sheets or information deemed appropriate. (The Board will consider this request in its monthly meeting and school divisions **are required** to appear before the Board **in person or electronically** to explain a waiver request.)

SCHOOL DIVISION Chesterfield County Public Schools

TITLE OF PROGRAM/ACTIVITY Year Round School

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:

- Approval of an Alternative to the Standard School Year and School Day ([8 VAC 20-131-150](#))
- Approval of an Alternative Accreditation Plan ([8 VAC 20-131-280.D](#))
- Approval of an Experimental Program (§ [22.1-79.1](#) of the *Code of Virginia* and [8 VAC 20-131-290.D](#))
- Approval of an Innovative Program (§ [22.1-79.1](#) of the *Code of Virginia* and [8 VAC 20-131-290.D](#))
- Approval of a Waiver of Other Provision(s) of the Standards ([8 VAC 20-131-350](#))
 (Complete Pages 1 and 3 of the application only.)

SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS INVOLVED IN THE PROPOSED
 PROGRAM/ACTIVITY

Bellwood Elementary School

March 23, 2018

Date Approved
 by the Local School Board

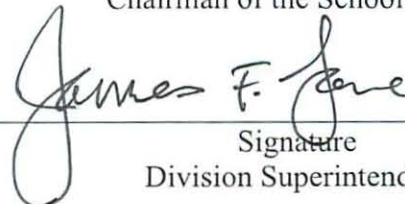


Signature

Chairman of the School Board

March 23, 2018

Submission Date



Signature

Division Superintendent

IF THE PROPOSED PROGRAM IS EXPERIMENTAL OR INNOVATIVE, FOR EACH SCHOOL EXPLAIN HOW THIS IS SO AND PROVIDE A PROGRAM DESCRIPTION, INCLUDING THE TYPE OF PROGRAM, ITS PURPOSE, THE GRADES SERVED, DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION DESCRIBING THE STUDENTS WHO WILL BE ATTENDING, THE RATIONALE FOR THE PROGRAM, THE PROGRAM'S GOALS, EVALUATION PROCEDURES, AND OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION.

Type of Program: Chesterfield County Public Schools (CCPS) is submitting a Year Round Schools Labor Day waiver application on behalf of Bellwood Elementary. Year round schools are generally defined as schools that are in session through the summer months as well as during the traditional academic year with students attending the same total number of days, whether in year round or the traditional school calendar. The difference is that rather than one long summer break, year round schools have shorter breaks that are scheduled throughout the year (NAYRE, 2015). These shorter "intersessions" may then be used as opportunities for acceleration, remediation, and/or enrichment beyond the traditional 180 instructional days. Bellwood is planning a year round school calendar with four intersessions that last approximately three weeks. The proposed intersession services are supplemental to the mandated instructional year and will be funded initially through grants. (pp. 10-11 in the following report).

Week 1- Acceleration, enrichment, or remediation for students

Week 2- Extracurricular camps voted on by the students

Week 3- YMCA will provide transportation and various extracurricular activities

The Purpose:

- 1) Loss of academic progress over the summer months is among the most significant causes of the achievement gap between high- and low-income students. "Traditional-program students lose about two months of grade level equivalency in math over the summer. The loss is particularly severe for low-income children" (French, 2013, p. 29). Studies indicate that each summer, low-income students lose two to three months in reading and about two months of math skills. By fifth grade, summer learning loss can leave low-income students 2-1/2 to 3 years behind their peers.
- 2) Year-round schooling benefits students who are non-English speaking by giving them extra opportunities to continue learning their second language (Ballinger, 1998) and more continuous exposure to formal English language use and instruction.
- 3) Students may also lose access to healthy meals over the summer. Six out of every seven students who receive reduced price meals no longer have access when school is not in session (National Summer Learning Association).
- 4) The year round school calendar provides a safe place for students.
- 5) Teacher stress and burnout is lessened by more frequent breaks (Cengage, 2011).
- 6) Vacations may be less expensive for families as they can schedule throughout the year rather than just at peak season rates (Cengage, 2011).
- 7) Teachers prefer how extended breaks in the year-round calendar fall at the end of an academic period (Gerard, 2007). This creates a natural cycle of a completed grading period followed by a break to strategically assess how teachers should instruct for the following quarter.
- 8) Intersession options provide a more effective approach than traditional summer remedial instruction, which often occurs too late for students to catch up and generally lacks sufficient focus to be of much assistance (Ballinger, 1995).
- 9) Specific to Virginia, research shows that "black, Hispanic, limited-English proficient and economically disadvantaged students [at year-round schools] improved at a faster rate than their peers at traditional calendar schools. For instance, black students at 74 percent of the year-round schools studied improved their English test scores faster than the average at traditional schools, and 65 percent improved their math test scores faster than the traditional school average" (Hanover Research, 2015).
- 10) A strong positive correlation is found between teacher perceptions of year-round calendars and improved student achievement (Huffman, 2013).

Grades Served: Prekindergarten to fifth grade.

Demographic Information: Bellwood Elementary Schools is located in eastern Chesterfield County and draw from neighborhoods along the Jefferson Davis/Route 1 Highway corridor. It currently has a free or reduced-meal rate (F/RM) of 76.4%, fourth highest in the county. Of the school's 557 students in grades PK-5, 20.3% are African American, 3.2% are Asian, 41.0% are Hispanic, 32.5% are Caucasian and 2.6% identify as two or more races.

The school's transiency rate is 29.7%, an indicator of both the high percentage of undocumented immigrants and the insecure lives of the school's parents and guardians. The community has a higher than average emergency call rate for police, fire and EMS services, and the Group A crime rate (more serious crimes) are the highest in the county. School administrators provide anecdotal support for

this fact, stating that gangs are active in the area and that illegal drugs are readily available in their communities. According to the Bellwood Principal, seven current Bellwood students have lost parents to heroin overdoses. An extended summer break presents very real dangers to the community's children, whether from lack of enriched learning opportunities, reduced nutrition, or exposure to drugs and crime.

In spite of these challenges, it is testimony to the school's teachers and administrators, a strong Communities In Schools Site Coordinator, and the presence of an extremely successful 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, that the school is now fully accredited. Three years ago, Bellwood was provisionally accredited and math and reading SOL scores were substantially lower than state and district averages. Although now meeting benchmarks, the school still has significant academic challenges: 31% of students read below grade level and the high transiency rate means that teachers have to identify and meet children's needs very quickly, whether they are arriving from nearby Richmond or from out of the country.

Rationale for the program: The beginning of the 2016-17 school year, the CCPS Superintendent, Dr. James Lane, issued a call for internal "innovation proposals" in which principals could request support for innovative approaches to instruction. The Bellwood Principal began working with her faculty and staff to develop a new instructional model that incorporated a year round calendar. Previous feedback from parents and longstanding knowledge of the community had made the school staff aware of the hardships suffered by families over the long summer months, ranging from the academic impact of summer slide to lack of adequate nutrition and safe spaces for play.

Chesterfield County Public Schools received a year round school VDOE planning grant to explore the possibility of transitioning up to three schools to a year round calendar. Through background research, site visits to North Carolina and Northern Virginia, one school that has been an innovative model in the past, Bellwood Elementary, showed majority support through survey data with staff (100% said yes), students (80.6% said yes), and their community (88.7% said yes) saying they would like to transition to a year-round calendar.

Bellwood Elementary has a history of piloting programs that have then become countywide initiatives. It was selected as a National Title-I Distinguished School for sustained achievement in 2011, National High Flying School Award in 2012, and a Panasonic School Change Award in 2013.

Program Goals: Research demonstrates that summer learning loss is a critical issue, especially for economically disadvantaged students. The goal of Bellwood Elementary School's proposed Year Round School calendar will be to reduce summer learning loss by providing four instructional quarters of approximately 45 days interspersed with breaks of approximately 15 days through each calendar year. This schedule will provide a more consistent schedule of instruction as well as opportunities for remediation and acceleration.

Bellwood Elementary students will demonstrate improved academic performance through increased opportunity for continuous learning, supplemented by targeted remediation during regular intercession periods.

Evaluation Procedures:

Evaluation of the success of the Year Round School calendar will be determined through examination and comparison of student academic performance and behavior data before and after the transition to the year round calendar. As a result of reduced summer learning loss and more frequent opportunities for remediation, Bellwood anticipates the following specific measurable outcomes in reading performance:

Objective 1: Each school year, a minimum of 50% of 2nd through 5th grade students (baseline 34% in 2017) who attend Bellwood for the entire academic year will maintain progress or show growth as demonstrated by their performance on beginning- and end-of-year Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA) or Measures of Academic Progress reading assessment (as applicable).

Objective 2: Each school year, a minimum of 75% of 4th and 5th grade students who have attended Bellwood for the current and previous academic years will pass or increase their previous year's Reading Standards of Learning score.

Other Relevant Information: Please see report written below

DOES THE PROGRAM REQUIRE THE SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS REFERENCED IN THIS APPLICATION TO OPEN PRIOR TO LABOR DAY?

YES NO.

IF YES, EXPLAIN WHY.

Based on a Year-Round School calendar of nine weeks of instruction followed by three weeks of intersession, Bellwood Elementary in Chesterfield County will need to begin its school year in July in order to meet the mandated 180 days of instruction while aligning with the traditional calendar to the greatest extent.

IF THE PROGRAM IS EXPERIMENTAL, FOR THE SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS REFERENCED IN THIS APPLICATION INCLUDE INFORMATION THAT EXPLAINS WHY THERE IS REASON TO EXPECT THAT THE PROGRAM WILL BE SUCCESSFUL.

N/A

DESCRIBE THE ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRAM FOR EACH SCHOOL.

N/A

SCHOOL DIVISION

Chesterfield County Public Schools

TITLE OF PROGRAM/ACTIVITY

Year Round School

IF YOU ARE SEEKING A WAIVER OF A PROVISION OR PROVISIONS OF THE ACCREDITING STANDARDS, STATE THE PROVISION AND THE RATIONALE FOR SEEKING A WAIVER FOR EACH.

N/A

DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO EVALUATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WAIVER/PROGRAM/ACTIVITY. (Include information that includes measurable goals, objectives, and student academic achievement that will be expected as a result of the implementation of the program/activity.)

N/A

Number of students involved in the program

557

What is the anticipated length of the program or duration of the waiver?

Indefinite

Questions should be directed to the Division of Policy and Communications at (804) 225-2092, or by e-mail to Zachary Robbins. This application and supporting documentation must be sent to:

Division of Policy and Communications
Department of Education
P. O. Box 2120
Richmond, VA 23218-2120