



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

January 17, 2014

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: New Digital Learning Resources

On January 13, the Virginia Department of Education released three new digital resources for schools: a virtual astronomy course on Virginia on iTunes U; an accompanying multitouch iBook; and EduWidgets, an online authoring application that teachers and students can use to create interactive digital content for classroom devices, tablets, and the Web.

The virtual astronomy course is aligned with the Commonwealth's Science Standards of Learning (SOL) and may be used as a stand-alone minicourse or as a supplement to full-year courses in earth science, physics, or astronomy. The course is optimized for delivery on iPad and is available at no cost via Virginia on iTunes U at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/course/astronomy/id795942897>. A companion astroimaging iBook, *Say "Cheese, Moon!"*: *An Introduction to Astroimaging*, will be released in February. The virtual astronomy course may be used to satisfy a state diploma requirement (effective with this year's first-time freshmen) that students complete at least one virtual course. The Virginia on iTunes U course does not require constant Internet access, making it an option for students who lack access at home.

EduWidgets authoring tools may be used to create, share, and customize widgets (self-contained applications) to enliven digital content on Web sites, e-books, interactive whiteboards, and other digital classroom devices. Teachers and students can use EduWidgets to create interactive timelines, sequences, graphs, and images. Teacher registration is available now at www.eduwidgets.org. The authoring tools will undergo beta testing for approximately six weeks. Users are encouraged to report technical issues or suggest enhancements to the tool during the beta test period.

EduWidgets software was developed using HTML5 to create widgets that work with tablets. For best performance, it requires Chrome, Firefox, or Safari. Although Internet Explorer 11 supports many features, it is not fully compliant with HTML5. Earlier versions of Internet Explorer will not support EduWidgets.

If you have questions, please contact Debbie Staughton in the Office of Digital Innovations and Outreach at (804) 225-2047 or via e-mail at debbie.staughton@doe.virginia.gov.

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