



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**Department of Education**

August 15, 2014

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: The 2014-2015 Science through an Interdisciplinary Approach (SIA) Institutes for Elementary Teachers**

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), Office of Science and Health Education, is pleased to announce the 2014-2015 Science through an Interdisciplinary Approach (SIA) Institutes. The SIA Institutes program consists of three separate institutes, each with a different focus. The Institutes are designed for elementary teachers and will offer learning experiences that support the implementation of the 2010 *Science Standards of Learning* (SOL) using an interdisciplinary approach that also incorporates connections to mathematics, language arts, social studies, and the arts. Schools not meeting the state benchmark for accreditation in science are encouraged to have a team of teachers apply.

Each Institute will include four face-to-face weekend sessions of professional development for teachers offered across the school year. Each Institute will also include additional support for the teachers during the year consisting of webinars, conference calls, and possible school classroom visits by the Institute instructors. Each Institute will model exemplary science instruction with a focus on the use of interdisciplinary instruction, student teams, inquiry-based, project-based, and place-based learning. The participating teachers will work as school-based teams throughout the school year to design and teach an interdisciplinary unit. Upon successful completion of the full Institute, each teacher will be provided with an incentive of \$300.

To support the teams of teachers and the instructional leadership from the participating schools, the school principals and other instructional leaders from the schools are invited to participate in a three-day Leadership Conference which will be held on October 28-30, 2014, at the [Natural Bridge Hotel](#) in Natural Bridge, Virginia. This conference will provide information and research with a focus on interdisciplinary instruction using science as the integrating context. The conference will also act as a forum for discussion and future planning for participants. Registration for the leadership conference will be conducted in September once the Institute registration is finalized.

The VDOE will assume the cost of registration, lodging, and meals for all Institute participants and for all principals and school leaders who attend the leadership conference. School divisions are encouraged to cover mileage expenses for the sessions for division participants as this cost is not assumed by the VDOE; however, this is not a requirement of the program.

The schedule for the three Institutes and the Leadership Conference can be found in [Attachment A](#).

Enrollment for each Institute is limited to 36 teachers from across the state. Schools will be encouraged to send teams of teachers. A team from a school or division will be given preference over individual teacher applications. Priority will be given to those teams from schools not meeting the state benchmark for

accreditation in science (Priority and Focus Schools) and/or serving a large population of minority and low-income students. An attempt will be made to provide representation from each Superintendents' region. Final selection of participants for all the Institutes will also be based on the order in which applications are received.

Registration for teachers can be completed online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/siaj>. Registration for the Institutes will be closed on September 17, 2014, at 5 p.m. Notifications of acceptance will be provided to applicants and the applicants' school principals by e-mail on or before September 19, 2014.

Questions regarding the Institutes should be directed to Barbara P. Young, science specialist, by e-mail at [barbara.young@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:barbara.young@doe.virginia.gov) or by telephone at (804) 225-2676.

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Attachment:

- A. [Science through an Interdisciplinary Approach Institutes & Leadership Conference](#) (PDF)