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Students in Four School Divisions Trade Textbooks for iPads ***Classroom Potential of Digital Media & Wireless Technology Explored***

The backpacks of nearly 300 students in four Virginia school divisions will be lighter this fall as the students exchange their history textbooks for Apple iPads loaded with interactive content, media and applications aligned to the commonwealth's History/Social Science Standards of Learning (SOL).

The four school divisions — Arlington County, Henry County, Newport News and Pulaski County — are participating in the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) "Beyond Textbooks" initiative, which is designed to explore the potential of wireless technology and digital textbooks to enhance teaching and learning. The initiative is supported by a grant from the Governor's Productivity Investment Fund and products and services donated by multiple private-sector partners, including textbook publishers and software developers.

"Digital technology holds enormous potential for transforming instruction and for cost savings for Virginia school divisions, which currently spend \$70 million a year on textbooks," Governor Bob McDonnell said.

VDOE analyzed SOL assessment data to identify elementary, middle and high school history content with corresponding achievement levels that suggest a need for additional instructional resources and tools. School divisions were selected for participation in Beyond Textbooks based on the infrastructure and support required for the initiative and existing relationships with the participating textbook publishers.

"The experiences of students and teachers will be evaluated, and the knowledge gained will help policy makers, educators and our private sector partners better understand the potential instructional uses of interactive digital media and wireless technology," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright today as she announced the Beyond Textbooks initiative during a news conference at Rich Acres Elementary in Henry County. "We will learn what works in the classroom and build on that as our schools move beyond traditional textbooks."

"Our teachers and students are excited to be part of an initiative that will help shape the future of instruction in the commonwealth's public schools," Henry County Superintendent Anthony Jackson said.

Fourth-grade students at Rich Acres Elementary and Sanville Elementary in Henry County and Drew Model School in Arlington County will use iPads to learn and interact with Jamestown-related content adapted from "Our Virginia: Past and Present," published by Five Ponds Press. Digital content from selected chapters of the textbook was developed by Victory Productions using newly developed software donated by Adobe.

Students at the three elementary schools also will create multimedia projects on their iPads using content from the digital library of the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation on a platform developed by web software developer MashON.

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Middle school students at Achievable Dream Middle and High in Newport News and Pulaski Middle in Pulaski County will use what education publishing and technology company Pearson describes as the nation's first fully integrated digital social studies curriculum. The content, apps and assessments are based on Pearson's "America: History of our Nation, 1865 to Present" and were developed specifically for the iPad.

Ninth-grade students at Washington-Lee High in Arlington, Achievable Dream Middle and High and Menchville High in Newport News, and Pulaski County High also will leave their history textbooks in their lockers as they log on to a similar program Pearson has created based on its "World History: Volume I" textbook.

Advanced Placement (AP) biology students enrolled in Virtual Virginia, VDOE's online learning program, are also participating in Beyond Textbooks. One group will use iPads with an interactive version of their AP biology textbook developed by Inkling, a Silicon Valley software developer, in cooperation with McGraw-Hill Education. The remaining students will rely on traditional textbooks and web-based resources.

Beyond Textbooks includes a research component to measure the impact of the initiative on classroom instruction. Researchers from Radford University will interview teachers, administrators and students in the participating schools about how the use of digital textbooks affected teaching and learning.

The 230 iPads that will be used by students in the four divisions were purchased through a grant from the Governor's Productivity Investment Fund. Pearson, Five Ponds Press, Victory Productions, Adobe, MashON, McGraw-Hill and Inkling are providing their digital content, platforms and applications at no cost to VDOE and the participating school divisions.

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