Department of Education

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# **CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MEMO NO. 181-21**

**DATE:** July 13, 2021

**TO:** CTE Administrators

**FROM:** George R. Willcox, Director

Operations and Accountability

Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

Dr. David Eshelman, Director

Workforce Development and Initiatives

Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

## SUBJECT: Announcement of Virginia Work-Based Learning Coordinator and Regional WBL Specialists

Work-Based Learning (WBL) is an integral component of Career and Technical Education instruction that prepares students to be college and career ready. The Department of Education has prioritized providing support for WBL across the Commonwealth. The WBL instructional resource guide has been revised, a WBL Coordinator and three Regional WBL Specialists have been employed to support secondary, postsecondary, and business/industry in offering students opportunities for real world career experiences.

The WBL unit VDOE support and services will focus on:

* Establishing a professional network among secondary, postsecondary, and business and industry;
* Fostering innovation through the identification and promotion of promising and proven career and technical education programs, practices, and strategies, which may include programs, practices, and strategies that prepare individuals for nontraditional fields; and
* Support career and technical education programs in rural areas, areas with high percentages of CTE participants, areas with high numbers of CTE participants, or areas with disparities or gaps in performance.

On behalf of the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, please join us in welcoming the new staff.

WBL Coordinator

Ms. Sharon Acuff has been appointed Virginia’s first Work-Based Learning Coordinator. Over the years, Sharon's leadership has been significant as the Virginia Marketing and Related Cluster Specialist. While at the agency, Sharon has been an exemplary team player leading initiatives such as Work-Based Learning (WBL), Experience Works and Career Success Stars just to name a few. Under Sharon's leadership, there has been continued growth, support and understanding of the significance of WBL throughout the Commonwealth.

Sharon's official start day was July 10, 2021. However, Sharon began her new role effective

July 12, 2021. As each of you are aware, this is a new leadership position for our office providing support to local school divisions, community colleges and business and industry to expand WBL opportunities and resources through sustainable partnerships in support of student success. We are excited to see what lies ahead in the Virginia WBL space under Sharon's leadership and the work of the entire WBL team. Ms. Acuff may be contacted at [sharon.acuff@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:sharon.acuff@doe.virginia.gov).

Regional WBL Specialists

Effective on March 25, 2021, the first three of eight Regional WBL Specialists began their employment with the Virginia Department of Education. Each of the positions have a regional leadership responsibility in order to work closely with their communities in support of local school divisions to expand WBL opportunities throughout the Commonwealth to meet the labor market demands in targeted industry sectors. Based on available funding, the goal over the next couple of years is to have one Regional WBL Specialist in each of the eight Superintendent Regions.

Currently assigned to Regions 1, 2 and 8 is Dr. Nikki Finley. Dr. Finley has a doctorate in business administration, a Master's of Science in Marketing Education with an endorsement in Vocational Special Needs and a Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Merchandising with a concentration in Marketing. Dr. Finley has been a business educator for over twenty (21) years. Five (5) years as a graduate coordinator and assistant professor at Hampton University, and sixteen (16) years as an educator in Career and Technical Education with Newport News Public Schools. Dr. Finley may be contacted at [nikki.finley@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:nikki.finley@doe.virginia.gov).

Currently assigned to Regions 3, 4 and 5 is Stefanie Ells. Ms. Ells holds a Virginia Postgraduate Professional Teaching License in Administration & Supervision K-12, Biology 6-12, Spanish K-12 and is a Project Lead the Way (PLTW) Certified STEM Teacher in Biomedical Science. Stefanie has a Master of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies from the University of Richmond and a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of Michigan. Prior to joining the VDOE staff, Stefanie was the CTE Work-Based Learning Facilitator for Stafford County Public Schools. Ms. Ells may be contacted at [stefanie.ells@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:stefanie.ells@doe.virginia.gov).

Currently assigned to Regions 6 and 7 is Erika Temple. Ms. Temple holds a Masters of Business Administration from Strayer University and a Bachelor of Science in Business Education from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Prior to joining the VDOE staff, Erika was the Education Program Manager for Homeland Security in the District of Columbia and most recently held the position of Career Experience Consultant for Chesterfield County Public Schools. Ms. Temple may be contacted at [erika.temple@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:erika.temple@doe.virginia.gov).

If you have questions or need assistance pertaining to WBL, contact Sharon Acuff, Work-Based Learning Coordinator, by email at [sharon.acuff@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:sharon.acuff@doe.virginia.gov) or by telephone at (804) 225-3119. If you have questions about plans for employing additional WBL Specialists, contact Dr. David Eshelman, Director, Workforce Development and Initiatives, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education, by email at [david.eshelman@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:david.eshelman@doe.virginia.gov) or by telephone at

(804) 225-2051.

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