



# **VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION**

---

# **AGENDA ITEM**

**Agenda Item:** O

**Date:** April 21, 2022

**Title:** First Review of Recommendations for School Division of Innovation (SDI) Designation

**Presenter:** Brendon Albon, Director of Office of STEM & Innovation

**Email:** [brendon.albon@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:brendon.albon@doe.virginia.gov)

**Phone:** 804.225.2034

**Purpose of Presentation:**

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

**Executive Summary:**

The 2017 Virginia General Assembly approved [House Bill 1981 \(Greason\)](#), directing the Virginia Board of Education (Board) to develop regulations for the designation of School Division of Innovation (SDI). To be eligible for designation, a local school board would submit a plan of innovation according to Board criteria as presented in the regulations. The legislation defined “innovation” as a new or creative alternative to existing instructional or innovative practices or school structures that evidence-based practice suggests will be effective in improving student learning and educational performance. An SDI is defined as a school division in which the local school board has developed and for which the Board has approved a plan of innovation to improve student learning; educational performance; and college, career, and citizenship readiness skills in one or more schools for the benefit of all schools in the school division.

Per this directive, the Board initiated the regulatory review process beginning on September 28, 2017. The proposed regulations went through a two-year regulatory process and the *Regulations Governing the Designation of School Division of Innovation*, [8VAC20-760](#), went into effect on September 19, 2019.

The regulations established the procedure and criteria for the designation of a SDI and provided that the Superintendent of Public Instruction establish a format and timelines for local school boards to submit plans of innovation. The regulations included provisions to evaluate the performance of a SDI including revocation in the event that performance expectations, as

included in the Goals and Performance Measures and Timeline sections, are not met.

The intent of the SDI designation is to encourage public school divisions to develop a divisionwide plan of action to challenge current methods and strategies in order to support the academic success of all students and educators. The plan for transformation may be small steps leading to larger changes or may be a complete overhaul of current structures and practices.

### **Application Components**

School division applications for the SDI designation included the following components:

- Rationale for Change;
- Description of Innovations;
- Goals and Measurement;
- Training and Support;
- Collaboration and Strategic Partnerships;
- Communication;
- Evaluation and Reflection; and
- Timeline and Plan for Sustainability.

### **Evaluation**

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) staff members served on teams that provided multiple evaluations of school division applications using a rubric which included the following components:

- Strength of evidence presented to support the rationale for change and the alignment to the innovations proposed;
- Alignment of goals and performance outcomes to the practices, strategies, and innovations proposed in the application and include how the innovations will meet the requirements established by legislation;
- Demonstrated understanding of necessary components (communication, professional learning, partnerships, and resources) that must function together as a system to bring about the innovation;
- Description of a comprehensive evaluation to assess effectiveness of goals and performance outcomes for innovations;
- Extent to which the application meets the definition and intent of an innovative school division; and
- Extent to which the innovative school/division model or practices are inclusive to all students and is able to be replicated and sustained over time.

### **School Divisions Recommended for the School Division of Innovation Designation**

Five school divisions applied for the 2022 designation. School divisions' applications were reviewed against an evaluation rubric that is based on the goals of the legislation. School

divisions that were not successful were provided the opportunity to resubmit their applications based on feedback from the review committee. The following list highlights selected initiatives from the school division recommended for designation as a School Division of Innovation.

- **Radford City Public Schools**

- Delivery of education to prepare students to be “life ready” by focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, plus Computational Thinking (STEM +C). The primary goals of STEM+C are:
  - building well-defined career pathways, K-12,
  - and showcasing student work through exhibitions.
- Creating integrated curriculums (core + technology + STEM) to support whole school skills and topics.
- Partnering with universities to enhance teacher pedagogies and enrich student learning.

As established in the regulations, SDI are required to submit to the VDOE an annual report that provides information demonstrating progress toward meeting the goals and performance targets included in the approved plan of innovation. SDI will maintain their designation for three years.

### **Requests for Flexibilities around Regulatory Provisions**

Pursuant to the regulation, an “SDI shall be exempted from selected regulatory provisions and permitted to adopt alternative policies for school administrators, teachers, and staff to meet the diverse needs of students.” The regulations prohibited any exemptions to regulations that are mandated by state or federal law or are designed to promote health or safety, special education regulations, and certain provisions in the Standards of Accreditation. Radford City Schools did not request any flexibilities to assist with the operation of the innovations.

### **Action Requested:**

Other: The Board is requested to waive first review and approve the designation of School Division of Innovation for the recommended school division.

### **Superintendent’s Recommendation:**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education waive first review and approve the designation of School Division of Innovation for the recommended school division.

### **Rationale for Action:**

Pursuant to [8VAC20-760](#), Board approval is required for school divisions to receive the SDI designation.

### **Previous Review or Action:**

No previous review or action.

**Background Information and Statutory Authority:**

Pursuant to [Chapter 760 of the 2017 Acts of Assembly](#), the Board was directed to develop the *Regulations Governing the Designation of School Division of Innovation*. The Board initiated the regulatory review process beginning on September 28, 2017. The proposed regulations went through a two-year regulatory process and the *Regulations Governing the Designation of School Division of Innovation*, [8VAC20-760](#), went into effect on September 19, 2019.

[8VAC20-760-20](#) of the *Regulations Governing the Designation of School Division of Innovation* outlines the process for school divisions to apply for this designation.

**8VAC20-760-20. School Division of Innovation Designation.**

- A. Any local school board may apply to the board for the local school division to be designated as an SDI.
- B. Pursuant to a plan of innovation, an SDI shall be exempted from selected regulatory provisions and permitted to adopt alternative policies for school administrators, teachers, and staff to meet the diverse needs of students.
- C. An application for an SDI designation shall consist of a plan of innovation for the local school division, following a format prescribed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The plan of innovation shall include:
1. Goals and performance targets that may include:
    - a. Reducing achievement and opportunity gaps among groups of public school students by expanding the range of engaging and relevant learning experiences for students who are identified as academically low-achieving;
    - b. Increasing student learning through the implementation of high, rigorous standards for student performance and balanced assessments that measure both student growth and achievement;
    - c. Creating opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of learning at different points in the learning process based on readiness;
    - d. Increasing student participation in opportunities that enhance students' preparation for college, career, and citizenship;
    - e. Increasing the number of students who are college, career, and citizenship ready;
    - f. Increasing opportunities for students to learn from content experts through integrated course opportunities; or
    - g. Motivating students at all levels by offering additional curricular choices, personalized learning opportunities, and relevant student learning experiences such as community service projects, internship opportunities, and job shadowing;
  2. Divisionwide and school-level policies that will lead students to be better prepared for success in work and life;

3. A description of the ways in which designated schools will incorporate innovative practices;
  4. A description of how schools in the division will benefit from innovative practices and share experiences and practices for application in other schools;
  5. The incorporation of relevant professional development;
  6. Evidence of collaboration, support, and shared leadership among teachers in the school division;
  7. Evidence of the support and engagement of educators, parents, the local community, and the local business community in the development of the plan of innovation and of the capacity of such individuals and entities to support the implementation of innovation;
  8. Any requests for exemptions from regulatory provisions as provided in [8VAC20-760-30](#), including the rationale for such exemptions and alternative policies; and
  9. Specific measures of student success that may include alternate assessments or approved substitute tests that will be used to determine if students have met graduation requirements, as applicable.
- D. Applications for SDI designation shall conform to a format and timeline prescribed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The timeline shall include deadlines for (i) a preapplication conference to be held with staff if any exemptions are requested and (ii) submission for consideration by the board.

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**

Following Board approval, VDOE staff will notify local school divisions of the status of their application to be designated a School Division of Innovation.

**Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:**

No fiscal or human resource impact.