Year-Round Schools Planning and Implementation Prepared for Virginia Board of Education

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# **INTRODUCTION**

This report provides findings from a planning grant to create and sustain year-round schools (YRS) for Chesterfield County Public Schools (CCPS). A review of research and pros and cons for CCPS is followed by an analysis of the best recommendation for CCPS.

**Goal of This Project**

The goal of this project is to develop and implement a plan to begin a YRS in CCPS in 2018-2019. The most effective solution found is to begin a YRS at Bellwood Elementary School as a way to both test on a smaller scale and learn from the experience before expanding to other schools.

**Scope of the Report**

The report’s scope includes background research that evaluates YRS. After attending site visits to learn more about YRS, attention is given to a single-track model that students attend for the same 180 days with intersessions. An evaluation of the feasibility for CCPS to begin a YRS is explored. A particular focus on the capacity within Bellwood was emphasized. The report also assesses the projected costs.

**Methodology**

* Completed literature searches on YRS
* Requested, received, and reviewed articles and reports from YRS
* Conducted site visits at YRS in North Carolina and Virginia
* Analyzed data to summarize staff responses

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **Introduction**

Research demonstrates that summer learning loss is a critical issue, especially for economically disadvantaged students. One study found that low-income students made similar achievement gains to other students during the school year, but the widening of the achievement gap between the two groups occurred over the summer (Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson, 2007). Schools with high concentrations of poverty often are experimenting with different programs to mitigate issues, such as academic remediation and food programs. One way to combat these issues is year-round schools (YRS). It is an approach to school calendars in which instructional days are spread over the course of the entire year, instead of broken up by a single long summer break. While the academic impact of YRS is yet to be determined, other aspects show promise. The key is a YRS calendar and schedule that begins with staff buy-in and financial support. CCPS could benefit from YRS because there are many schools with economically disadvantaged students.

## **CCPS Needs**

CCPS has 63 schools and there are three that consistently report among the highest numbers of students in poverty within the county, as indicated by eligibility for free and reduced-priced (F/RM) meals. The following are percentages for F/RM at Falling Creek Elementary (78.5%), Bellwood (76.4%), and Falling Creek Middle (70.2%). All three schools are highly diverse, with majority-minority enrollments and high numbers of English Language Learners. They are all located in eastern Chesterfield County and draw from neighborhoods along the Jefferson Davis/Route 1 Highway corridor. Creating a safe and supportive environment with a consistent schedule is critical to the success of these students.

**YRS as a Strategy to Enhance Schools**

Year-round schools (YRS) are generally defined as schools that are in session through the summer months and the traditional academic year with students attending the same total number of days whether in YRS or the traditional school calendar. The difference is that rather than one long summer break, YRS have shorter breaks that are scheduled throughout the year (NAYRE, 2015). These shorter “intersessions” may be used as opportunities for acceleration, remediation, and/or enrichment.

## **Recommended Strategy for CCPS**

Over the initial months of the planning year, the three schools polled staff and conducted surveys. They also considered other county-wide initiatives that are proposed for the upcoming school year and beyond. By early December, Falling Creek Elementary and Falling Creek Middle had concluded that they needed more time to prepare their communities and to work through the logistics of becoming a YRS. It is recommended to begin at Bellwood as an opportunity to learn from one school that has complete staff buy-in and majority community buy-in before expanding to other schools. Starting at the elementary level in the same feeder pattern helps transition to other YRS at Falling Creek Elementary and Falling Creek Middle. The projected additional cost over the next year is $175,000. The majority of the projected funding gap will be addressed by an existing 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, applying for a VDOE YRS implementation grant, and CCPS budget funds. Through a multi-step approach, a YRS with ample out-of-school experiences for every student to grow will be created. This is a major objective in CCPS’ strategic plan, *Design for Excellence 2020* where CCPS will “provide an engaging and relevant education that prepares every student to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world.” Building an environment that is open and more accessible ultimately leads to commitments to help positively impact student growth.

# **YRS STRATEGY TO ENHANCE CCPS**

**Bellwood, Falling Creek Elementary, and Falling Creek Middle**

Falling Creek Middle, Falling Creek Elementary, and Bellwood Elementary are three schools in CCPS where over 70% of all students qualify for free and reduced meal rates. Their students experience challenges confronted by schools with large numbers of students living in poverty. By taking advantage of these extended-year options, students may attend classes for up to 220 days out of the calendar year, with attendant academic and social/emotional benefits. There is a significant body of research that supports year-round school operation, particularly in high-poverty schools. Loss of academic progress over the summer months is among the most significant causes of the achievement gap between high- and low-income students. Studies indicate that each summer, low-income students lose two to three months in reading and about two months of math skills. By fifth grade, summer learning loss can leave low-income students 2-1/2 to 3 years behind their peers.

Students may also lose access to healthy meals over the summer. Six out of every seven students who receive reduced price meals no longer have access when school is not in session (National Summer Learning Association). For students living in poverty, long summer breaks do not present opportunities for exciting new experiences at camp or a chance to travel extensively, but are rather a time when families struggle to afford food and to find a safe place for their children to spend their days. As CCPS begins to introduce the YRS calendar in our highest need schools, we anticipate not only improved academic outcomes for students but also the potential that others in this large 63-school division will see the benefits of leaving the 19th century agrarian calendar behind and moving to a year round model.

**Pros and Cons of Year-Round Schools**

In order to understand the costs and benefits of creating a YRS in CCPS, it is important to review the current models and research. Site visits to schools with similar demographics to the three schools in CCPS highlighted the benefits and importance of partnerships and planning. Wake County has offered YRS in selected schools for over 20 years. Alexandria, Virginia has one YRS in an otherwise traditional calendar school district. Teachers, administrators, and students at the visited schools were universally in favor of the YRS. Observations, feedback, and takeaways from the trip included:

* More frequent breaks result in less burnout for both teachers and students
* Teachers and students return from intersessions refreshed and ready to work again
* Fewer discipline and behavior problems
* Fewer grade retentions because of more frequent opportunities for remediation
* Teachers are able to plan effectively for the following quarter by using one teacher workday within the intersession
* Teachers have the option to work during intersessions or to substitute in other schools, which allows teachers to earn additional income and increases the pool of highly qualified substitutes
* Students have opportunities to receive remediation, academic enrichment, and experiences not otherwise available to students in poverty
* Students are safe, fed and well-cared for
* Students in poverty have the opportunity to maintain positive routine and meals during breaks
* Not all teachers work all intersessions, which provides opportunities to travel and take family vacations during less expensive times of the year

# **FALLING CREEK ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE’s CAPACITY**

Falling Creek Elementary and Middle are two schools led by strong principals and staff that exhibit Panther Pride. Pam Johnson, principal of Falling Creek Elementary, was Virginia’s 2015 National Distinguished Principal. In addition, Aurelia Ortiz has brought energy and vision from her administrative experience in Northern Virginia to Falling Creek Middle. Between the two schools, fifteen staff members attended the site visits for YRS. They returned to their schools excited for the possibilities of transitioning to YRS.

Due to the county-wide changes that include spot redistricting that will affect the proposed schools and a proposed change to school start times, Falling Creek administrators’ agreed in delaying the transition to YRS. By early December, Falling Creek Elementary and Falling Creek Middle had concluded that they needed more time to prepare their communities and to work through the logistics of moving to a year round calendar.

In addition, some staff indicated a need to transfer to schools with a traditional calendar because of family’s schedules. Human Resources has approved a transfer process for Falling Creek staff members to transfer if necessary during the 2018-19 school year.  Unlike the two other schools, Bellwood had received an internal innovation grant from CCPS prior to the VDOE planning grant to begin exploration of year-round schools and had begun preliminary research.  As a result, and as documented through subsequent survey data, Bellwood feels ready to proceed without delay. Falling Creek Elementary and Middle are already taking the appropriate steps to begin their transition to YRS for the 2019-2020 school year.

# **BELLWOOD’s CAPACITY**

Bellwood Elementary has a history of piloting programs that have then become countywide initiatives. It was selected as a National Title-I Distinguished School for sustained achievement in 2011, National High Flying School Award in 2012, and a Panasonic School Change Award in 2013. Strategies and programs that have helped students achieve include a data-based approach to instruction, grade-level professional learning communities, before- and after-school tutoring, Power of an Hour family nights, strong community partnerships, school-wide vocabulary program and celebrations throughout the year for students who demonstrate core values and achieve academic success. They have an understanding and have met the need for out-of-school space for over twenty years. For example, they created a community-centered hub where families come for resources twelve-months a year (weekly summer food distributions, on-site English Literacy Classes for Spanish speaking families and on-site GED lessons for community members)

Buy-in must be in place to not only launch YRS, but also to continue it. This is evident when 100% of the staff has committed to changing to a YRS. An important component of beginning YRS is leveraging effective partnerships, which is part of Bellwood’s success. The YMCA has committed to helping Bellwood with their intersessions, both financially and logistically. YRS can shift school cultures by its unique design of shifting the traditional instructional calendar to quarterly calendar that reduces burnout and increases teacher satisfaction, which is critical for those who work in challenging schools. The staff at Bellwood is prepared to realign curriculum for the new calendar and work two of the three weeks of each intersession to provide academically at-risk students with remediation and enrichment, as supported by staff data report. Although there is a strong support for the transition to YRS, it is important to note the additional costs to this model. The proposed model for Bellwood is followed by the projected costs of transitioning to YRS.

# **BELLWOOD YRS MODEL**

* 45-15 Schedule: 9 weeks of instruction, 3 weeks of intersession
* School year divided into four quarters beginning in late July and ending in late-June
* Four intersessions: October, January, April and July
* Intersessions capped at 150 students, invited based on academic need
* Student: Adult ratio 12:1, 13 teachers including one SPED, plus 2 instructional aides
* Intersession Structure
  + Daily transportation provided by CCPS in Weeks 1 & 2
  + **Week 1**: **Remediation and Academic Enrichment** taught by Bellwood teachers
    - 58% of current staff expressed interest in providing one or more weeks of intersession remediation
  + **Week 2**: **Enrichment Camps** (running, chess, STEAM, coding, music, etc.) taught by Bellwood teachers
    - 59% of current staff expressed interest in leading one or more enrichment camps
  + **Week 3: School closed.**  Partner YMCA will provide care and transportation for Intersession students
    - Per Betsy Peters: Program can be housed at Camp Thunderbird during October, April, and July intersessions and at Bellwood in January.
    - Staffing and transportation provided by YMCA for four weeks of intersession at no charge
    - The YMCA will also provide off-site care for Bellwood students not invited to attend intersession programming at their regular sliding scale rate
    - Custodial staff will have access to Bellwood during Week 3 of Intersessions 1, 3, & 4 and over winter break.

# **PROJECTED COSTS**

The overall additional costs are approximately $175,000 to transition to a YRS. The following budget is based on an estimated 200 children in grades PreK-5th attending each intersession.  The 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant, Year Round Schools Implementation grants, allotted Summer School funding, and Chesterfield County budget funds can be used to cover the additional costs.

The cost model is displayed with overall costs.

**Projected Costs**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Administrative** |  |
| Assoc. Principal to 12-month contract | $7,761 |
| Registrar to 12-month contract | $3,814 |
| **Administrative Total** | **$11,575** |
|  |  |
| **Intersession Staffing** |  |
| 18 teachers @ 22.29/hr x 7.25hrs/day x 40 days (inc. SPED & EL teachers) | $116,354 |
| 6 Instructional Aides @ $16/hr x 6 hrs/day x 40 days | $23,040 |
| FICA | $10,664 |
| **Total Estimated Intersession Staffing** | **$150,058** |
|  |  |
| **Intersession Transportation** |  |
| Background information per L.Carter Evans: Bellwood school year transportation:  545 students = 8 bus routes = $81,106/8 buses/180 days = $56.32/bus/day  2 ExEd buses @ $32,000 avg ea/180 days = $178/day | |
| 200 students = 4 bus routes @ $56.32/bus/day x 40 days | $9,011 |
| Adder for Field Trips estimated at 3 buses @ $3.30/mile x 50 RT avg x 8 trips | $3,960 |
| **Total Estimated Intersession Transportation** | **$12,971** |
| **Total Estimated Intersession Costs** | **$174,604** |

* Teachers’ planning for upcoming quarter will occur during each intersession. Included in current contracts - no additional cost to CCPS
* Food Services has confirmed that breakfast and lunch can be provided through current USDA reimbursement program - no additional cost to CCPS

**Potential Supplemental Funding**

* $175,600 - 21st CCLC grant;
  + Part-time Intersession Coordinator to build relationships with partners, external childcare centers, coordinate enrichment schedules, etc.
  + Intersession transportation costs
  + Additional staffing for academic remediation, enrichment, and support
  + Materials & supplies
  + Available for after school and intersessions
  + Can pay for transportation & staffing costs for eligible students
  + Will require amendment and approval by VDOE
* $11,000 - Title I Summer School Funding; available for intersessions
* $3,250 - estimated summer school reimbursement assuming 100 students participating in intersessions qualify for reimbursement
* $300,000 - Year Round Schools Implementation grant

# **TIMELINE**

* Jan 30:  Board Memo from Dr. Lane for Board Packet
* Feb 12, 2018: School Board Meeting - Presentation by John Gordon
  + Research/rationale for going to YRS calendar
  + Pertinent information
    - Draft calendar
    - Intersession structure
      * Staffing, Transportation, Food Services, and Partnerships
  + Financial Impact
    - Staffing
    - Transportation
  + Policies impacted
* March 13, 2018: CCPS School Board Meeting Decision
* April 2018: Virginia Board of Education Labor Day Waiver presentation

# **BELLWOOD SURVEY RESULTS**

**Year Round School Parent Survey Results**

There are approximately 557 students at Bellwood Elementary. There were 416 surveys returned (74.6% response rate).

1. Count of “Would you send your student to year-round school at Bellwood?”

Yes = 369 or 88.7%

No = 47 or 11.3%

2. Count of “Would you be comfortable with your middle and/or high school students being on a different school calendar?”

Yes = 295 or 70.9%

No = 121 or 29.1%

**Year Round School Student Survey Results (2nd-5th grade)**

1. Count of “Would you like for Bellwood to become a year-round school?” There were 289 responses among students in grade 2-5.

Yes = 223 or 80.6%

No = 56 or 19.4%

# **DRAFT CALENDAR**

Proposed Calendar for Bellwood Elementary for 2018-2019.

**Waiver Process Example**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Special Permission Reason** | **Circumstances** | **Time Frame to Apply** |
| Employee Special Permission | Parent or guardian works at a Chesterfield County Public school and would like to have their child attend their school.  The parent will provide transportation to and from school.  There must be sufficient capacity. | March 1-August 15 (*Note, only parents who work at a school where they wish to bring their student(s) may apply starting March 1, otherwise, the parent should apply beginning April 1)* |
| Special Permission | Parent or guardian would like their child to attend a school with available space outside of the school boundary, which serves their current Chesterfield residence. The parent will provide transportation to and from school. There must be sufficient capacity. | April 1-August 15  \*YRS - This seems to be the category in which parents would request that younger siblings of students at secondary schools with a traditional calendar would apply to attend an elementary school in the secondary school’s feeder pattern (SD) |
| Family Relocation (Move-In) | Parent or guardian is currently residing in Chesterfield County, but is building, buying, or will rent a home where the student will reside during the school year in Chesterfield County, and would like their child to start at the school which serves their future residence.  There must be sufficient capacity in the requested grade for elementary-age students. | Year Round\* (you will need to register your child at the school that serves your current attendance zone and then fill out a [Family Relocation form](https://www.lcps.org/Page/77642) and provide proof of a pending lease or settlement date which occurs during the school year. |
| Family Relocation (Move-Out) | Parent or guardian moves out of the school zone (still within Chesterfield County) where their student started the school year and would like their child to finish the school year at the same school.  The parent will provide transportation to and from that school. | ONLY during the current school year until June 1\*  CLICK [HERE](https://www.lcps.org/Page/77642) FOR MOVES WHICH OCCUR AFTER 8/24/17 |

**Special Permission on-line request form:**

**Please carefully review each reason for requesting permission to attend a school outside your current residence before making your selection:**

**Special Permission**

The parent/legal guardian of a student may request to attend a school of his or her choice, by special permission of the school division, for one academic year based on space availability or program capacity.

The special permission window is open during the following dates:

* March 1 – August 15 CCPS employees
* April 1 – August 15 - Chesterfield County residents

Special permission is contingent on the following:

* Special permission is granted for one (1) school year.
* Parents must renew their request for special permission annually
* Parents must provide transportation
* Students must be in compliance with school rules, including attendance/tardy rules.

How to apply:

* Review the special permission policy guidelines available at: https://www.lcps.org/Page/76705
* Complete the online special permission application
* Applications are reviewed in the order they are received.
* Parents will be notified within 30 days of making their request.

Other factors:

* Kindergarten and New Students must register at their home school prior to applying for special permission. New Students must receive their student ID number before applying, however kindergarten students may apply before they receive a student ID number.
* For students requesting to attend Full-Day kindergarten at a school other than their school of assignment, priority shall be as follows:
  + ELL learners
  + Free and Reduced Lunch
  + Other students if space is available

Family Relocation (Move-In)

* A family in the process of buying, building, renting, or leasing a home in an attendance area, other than the one in which they presently reside may be assigned to the school that the student will attend when the family moves into its new home, provide that:
  + The school is not in overflow
  + The purchase, lease, etc. will be completed with the school year.
  + The parent or guardian will provide transportation to and from school.

Family Relocation (Move-Out) OPTION ONLY AVAILABLE for families that move during the school year.

* A student who changes residence within the County during the school year may complete that school year in the school in which the student was originally enrolled provided that:
  + The parent or guardian provides transportation to and from school.