Virginia Association of Counties
ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact **Gage Harter**.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Henrico County, Virginia

Program Title: Equipping Students With the Skills to Adapt, Innovate and Succeed

Program Category: Health and Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Kourtney Bostain

Title: Director

Department: Henrico County Public Schools Department of Teaching, Learning and Innovation

Telephone: 804-836-8429   **Website:** _____

Email: kdbostain@henrico.k12.va.us

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Eileen Cox

Title: Chief of Communications, Henrico County Public Schools

Signature: _Eileen M. Cox_

1. Summary

Henrico County Public Schools has implemented an innovative elementary curriculum focused on developing "durable skills" outlined in the Henrico Learner Profile, the school division's blueprint for student learning. The elementary program integrates digital learning and computer science standards in monthly K-5 lessons, equipping students with critical life skills such as character, citizenship, collaboration, communication, and critical and creative thinking.

Delivered as part of elementary schools' schedule rotation, the initiative ensures that all K-5 students participate in nine carefully designed lessons each year. Lessons are aligned with HCPS' core curriculum and supported by a "transfer document," to help teachers connect Henrico Learner Profile skills to broader learning objectives.

The program aims to empower students with the tools needed to navigate a changing, technology-driven world while fostering personal growth and lifelong learning. Through interactive, engaging activities, students identify durable skills, provide real-world examples, reflect on their growth and connect learning experiences to the Henrico Learner Profile.

The innovative approach has strengthened curriculum integration, enhanced instructional practices and improved students' readiness for future challenges, setting a model for education that combines foundational academic knowledge with essential skills.

2. The Problem or Need for the Program

As the world rapidly evolves, today's students require more than academic knowledge to thrive — to adapt, innovate and succeed in the workforce and as engaged citizens, they need skills that will not become obsolete. Henrico County Public Schools identified a gap in providing elementary students with opportunities to explicitly develop and practice these "durable" skills, such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration and technology literacy.

Prompted by the increasing demand for graduates who are "life-ready" the program was developed to address the need by integrating the Henrico Learner Profile in elementary education. Additionally, Virginia's Digital Learning Integration Standards and Computer Science Standards emphasize preparing students for a technology-driven world, providing a framework for HCPS' efforts.

By designing an innovative curriculum aligned with these standards, HCPS ensures that every student gains the foundational skills necessary to meet the demands of the 21st century, fulfilling the school division's commitment to academic excellence and personal growth.

3. Description of the Program

Program objectives: The primary objective of the program is to equip HCPS elementary students with the empowering durable skills outlined in the Henrico Learner Profile, the school division's blueprint for learning. These skills include critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, character and citizenship, preparing students for the workforce and community engagement. Specifically, the program aims to:

- Help students identify and define skills included in the Henrico Learner Profile.

- Provide real-world examples that demonstrate the application of these skills.

- Encourage students to reflect on their growth throughout the school year.

- Connect students' academic and extracurricular learning to the Henrico Learner Profile.

- Integrate the Virginia's digital standards in a curriculum that enhances students' technology literacy and problem-solving skills.

Program development and implementation timeframe: The program was conceptualized in response to the need to better prepare Henrico County students for a technology-driven, globally interconnected world. Development began in spring 2021. HCPS leaders collaborated with curriculum specialists, instructional designers and teachers to align the program with Henrico Learner Profile skills and Virginia standards. By summer 2022, the curriculum was

developed, including lesson plans, interactive materials and a transfer document to help teachers connect the skills to core subjects.

Implementation began in September 2023 and continues as part of the master schedule rotation for all HCPS K-5 students. Each month, students participate in one 45-minute lesson from September through May, resulting in nine lessons each year. Lessons are designed to align with a student's grade-level curriculum while embedding Henrico Learner Profile skills in engaging, hands-on activities.

The curriculum includes technology integration components, such as coding, robotics, digital storytelling and other interactive tools, which promote digital literacy while reinforcing durable skills like problem-solving, communication and collaboration.

The program serves all K-5 students in Henrico County — approximately 23,000 elementary learners across diverse socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It also supports teachers by providing resources, lesson plans and professional development opportunities to ensure seamless integration of durable skills in daily instruction.

The program helps students foster critical life skills, and indirectly benefits families, communities and future employers by preparing a generation of adaptable, innovative and responsible citizens.

The school division's role in implementation: HCPS played a pivotal role in designing, implementing and sustaining the innovative program. HCPS:

- **Developed the curriculum:** The HCPS Innovation Department team collaborated with educators and instructional specialists to create lessons aligned with Henrico Learner Profile skills, and Virginia's Digital Learning Integration Standards and Computer Science Standards.

- **Provided professional learning resources:** HCPS' innovative learning coaches received professional development to better integrate Henrico Learner Profile skills and

digital learning tools in their instruction. Training sessions included workshops on coding, robotics, digital storytelling and strategies for teaching durable skills.

- **Allocated resources:** The program was incorporated in elementary schools' master schedule rotation to ensure that all students received consistent exposure to the curriculum. Additionally, HCPS provided technology, including tablets, laptops and robotics kits, to facilitate interactive, hands-on learning experiences.

- **Prioritized equity:** HCPS made equitable access to the program a focus, ensuring that students in all schools, regardless of socioeconomic status or geographic location, received high quality instruction.

Contributions of other partners: The program's success was amplified through partnerships with various stakeholders:

- **Families and caregivers:** Families play an essential role in encouraging students to reflect on their learning and apply Henrico Learner Profile skills at home. HCPS provided resources to help families understand the Henrico Learner Profile and support skill development.

- **Technology providers**: Partnerships with technology companies enabled HCPS to acquire and maintain digital tools and resources, such as coding software, robotics kits and other innovative learning technologies. These tools enhanced the program's ability to teach durable skills in engaging, interactive ways.

- **Higher education institutions:** Local colleges and universities contributed by offering workshops and resources to support professional learning for teachers and by connecting student learning to career- and college-readiness paths.

Conclusion: Henrico County Public Schools' innovative elementary curriculum, focused on durable skills and technology integration, represents a transformative approach to elementary education. The program equips students with essential life skills that extend beyond the

classroom by aligning with the Henrico Learner Profile and state standards. The program's success reflects HCPS' commitment to academic excellence, personal growth and preparing students to navigate an ever-changing world with confidence and competence.

4. Responding to Economic Downturn

The development and implementation of the HCPS elementary curriculum in durable skills and technology integration were achieved with a clear focus on cost-effectiveness and resource optimization, addressing the economic realities faced by the county. HCPS used innovative strategies without placing additional strain on the county's budget.

- **Using existing resources:** Rather than relying on new or costly resources, HCPS capitalized on existing tools, technology and staff. Many of the digital devices, such as laptops and tablets, were already part of the county's one-to-one student device initiative. Similarly, HCPS incorporated free and low-cost educational platforms for coding, robotics and digital storytelling in the curriculum, reducing the need for expensive proprietary software.

- **Integrating professional development:** Professional development for teachers was designed to align with existing training schedules and budget allocations. Instead of creating stand-alone workshops, training sessions on integrating the Henrico Learner Profile and its durable skills were included in ongoing professional learning days. Partnerships with other K-12 school divisions provided educators with professional learning opportunities, further reducing costs.

- **Incorporation within schools' master schedule rotation:** The program's structure within the master schedule rotation minimized the need for additional staffing. Lessons were designed to be delivered by existing instructional staff, such as technology specialists and resource teachers, who were already part of the schools' support

structure. By using existing personnel, HCPS avoided hiring additional staff members and maximized the program's impact within its current workforce.

- **Securing partnerships and grants:** To offset costs, HCPS pursued partnerships and grant opportunities. Local businesses, nonprofits and technology companies contributed resources, guest speakers and funding. For example, donations of robotics kits and subscriptions to online learning tools were secured through partnerships. These contributions helped expand the program's reach.

- **Ensuring long-term sustainability:** The program was designed with sustainability in mind, enabling the reuse of lesson plans, materials and technology over multiple years. This approach reduces costs over time and ensures that the curriculum remains a staple in HCPS elementary schools, providing consistent and equitable access to durable skills education despite economic fluctuations.

By employing these cost-saving strategies, HCPS successfully implemented the program while remaining mindful of budget constraints.

5. Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Henrico County Public Schools designed the elementary curriculum on durable skills and technology integration with a strong commitment to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion, Grounded in the principles of the Henrico Learner Profile, the program seeks to ensure that all students, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, language or ability, have equitable access to opportunities that develop critical skills and prepare them to succeed in an increasingly interconnected and technology-driven world.

- **Bridging opportunity gaps:** The program directly addresses existing racial and socioeconomic disparities by providing every K-5 student across all 46 HCPS elementary schools with consistent, high quality instruction in critical, durable skills. By embedding the program in the elementary master schedule rotation, HCPS ensures that

all students, regardless of school funding levels or geographic location, receive equal

access to the lessons and resources needed to thrive academically and socially.

Technology as a tool for equity: Recognizing that access to technology can be a barrier for

students in underserved communities, the program leverages HCPS' 1:1 student device

initiative, ensuring all students have access to the technology required to participate in the

lessons. Lessons include coding, robotics and digital storytelling activities designed to build

technology literacy, a skill essential for success in future education and careers. For students in

schools with limited resources, these lessons provide exposure to tools and experiences they

might not otherwise encounter.

Culturally responsive teaching practices: The program emphasizes culturally responsive

teaching by integrating examples, activities and learning scenarios that reflect the diverse

backgrounds of Henrico's student population. Instructional materials are designed to affirm

students' identities and provide opportunities for students to explore global perspectives,

fostering a sense of belonging and cultural awareness.

Supporting students with diverse needs: The program incorporates differentiated instruction

and universal-design-for-learning principles to meet the needs of all learners, including English-

learners and students with disabilities. Materials are adapted to ensure that all students can

engage meaningfully with the curriculum, while instructional specialists collaborate with teachers

to provide support for students requiring additional assistance.

Promoting inclusion and global citizenship: Through activities centered on collaboration and

global citizenship, the program encourages students to appreciate and respect diverse

perspectives. Lessons often involve teamwork, where students work with peers from different

backgrounds, fostering an inclusive learning environment and building skills for effective

communication and collaboration across differences.

By advancing accessibility, the program not only addresses existing disparities but also creates an inclusive foundation for lifelong learning, preparing all students to succeed in a diverse and equitable future.

6. The Cost of the Program

The HCPS elementary curriculum on durable skills and technology integration was designed cost-effectively and sustainably. Through careful planning and resource allocation, HCPS developed and implemented the program with minimal financial impact, using existing infrastructure, partnerships and professional expertise. Below is a breakdown of the program's capital and operating costs and considerations for replicating it elsewhere.

Development costs:

Curriculum design and development: $2,000

The curriculum was created by HCPS instructional specialists, innovative learning coaches and teachers, using existing staff resources. This avoided the need for external consultants or curriculum purchases. Staff time for planning and collaboration was absorbed within existing budgets for professional learning and curriculum development. In addition, some time was allocated for off-contract-hours curriculum development.

Estimated cost: approximately $41,000 (staff time, training and materials).

Technology integration: The program used HCPS' existing one-to-one student device initiative, which ensures that all K-5 students have access to laptops, tablets and other devices. Minimum additional funding was required for coding robotics purchases during development. Free and low-cost education platforms (e.g., coding tools and robotics apps) were incorporated.

Estimated cost: Minimal; existing hardware and free or low-cost software were used.

Implementation costs:

Instructional delivery: The program was embedded within the master schedule rotation and delivered by existing instructional staff without hiring additional personnel. Staff training on the curriculum was conducted during scheduled professional development days.

Estimated cost: $0 annually (ongoing curriculum development and lesson material updates).

Technology maintenance and support: HCPS used existing technology infrastructure to maintain devices and provide technical support for the program. Robotics kits and other supplementary tools were purchased through grants and community partnerships.

Estimated cost: $0 annually (maintenance, software subscriptions and replacement of supplemental tools).

Cost to replicate: The program is highly replicable and can be adapted by other counties or school divisions at a relatively low cost:

Personnel: Use existing instructional staff and embed the program in the school schedule.

Technology: Use existing devices where possible; secure grants or partnerships.

Curriculum development: Invest in staff time to develop lessons or purchase predeveloped materials aligned with local goals.

Training: Provide professional development within existing teacher training frameworks.

For a division with similar technology access, replication costs range from $25,000-$50,000 for initial curriculum development and materials and $10,000-$20,000 annually for ongoing implementation and updates. School divisions without a one-to-one device program may incur higher upfront costs to secure technology resources, but partnerships with technology companies or grants can significantly reduce these expenses.

Sustainability and long-term savings: The program's sustainability lies in its reusability. Curriculum materials, lesson plans and digital tools are designed to be used for multiple years, reducing costs over time. By embedding the program within existing structures and professional learning schedules, HCPS has minimized ongoing costs while maximizing student impact.

7. The Results/Success of the Program

Henrico County Public Schools' elementary curriculum on durable skills and technology

integration has yielded significant success in empowering students to develop the critical skills

outlined in the Henrico Learner Profile. Through engaging, technology-rich lessons, the program

has improved student learning, teacher practices and overall school culture. Below are specific

examples and measurable outcomes:

Student outcomes:

Increased understanding of durable skills: Pre- and post-lesson reflections indicate that over

85% of students can now identify and provide examples of durable skills such as critical-

thinking, collaboration and creativity. Students also demonstrated an ability to articulate how

they applied these skills in academic and real-world contexts.

Enhanced technology literacy: Through activities like coding, digital storytelling and robotics,

students gain hands-on experience with technology. Assessments showed a 40% improvement

in students' ability to use technology tools to solve problems and create digital projects. For

example, fourth grade students successfully programmed robots to complete a series of tasks,

demonstrating creativity and problem-solving in action.

Reflection and personal growth: Each lesson included opportunities for students to reflect on

their learning and growth throughout the year. By the end of the school year, over 90% of

students could identify specific ways they had grown in collaboration, communication and critical

thinking.

Teacher Impact:

Improved instructional practices: Teachers reported that the program provided a clear

framework for integrating durable skills in core content areas. A survey of participating teachers

found that 92% felt more confident incorporating technology and Henrico Learner Profile skills in

their daily instruction. Many teachers noted that the program's transfer document was instrumental in connecting lessons to grade-level curriculum and promoting deeper learning.

Professional learning outcomes: Through professional development sessions, teachers gained valuable skills in coding, robotics and other digital tools. One teacher said, "I've never felt more equipped to teach students real-world skills while engaging them in meaningful learning experiences."

School and community impact:

Equity in access: The program ensures that all K-5 students, regardless of their background or school location, have equal access to high quality lessons that prepare them for future challenges. The equity-focused approach has helped narrow opportunity gaps, especially for students in underserved communities.

Increased engagement: The hands-on and collaborative nature of the lessons has led to greater student engagement. Teachers have observed more excitement and participation during the lessons, with students eager to apply what they've learned in other subjects and at home.

Recognition and community support: The program has received positive feedback from families, who appreciate its emphasis on preparing students for a technology-driven world. One parent remarked, "It's amazing to see my child coding and explaining how they're solving problems — it's a skill that will benefit them for life."

Outcome measures:

Participation metrics: The program reached 100% of K-5 students across all HCPS elementary schools, ensuring widespread impact.

Conclusion:

The HCPS elementary curriculum on durable skills and technology integration has successfully equipped students with skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a changing world. By fostering

critical thinking, creativity and technology literacy, the program prepares students for future challenges and strengthens Henrico County's commitment to educational excellence and equity.

8. Worthiness of Award

HCPS' elementary curriculum on durable skills and technology integration is a model of innovation, equity and excellence in education, making it highly deserving of the VACo Achievement Award. The program exemplifies the transformative potential of education by equipping more than 25,000 K-5 students with essential durable skills, such as critical-thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity and global citizenship, while addressing the demands of a technology-driven world.

What sets the program apart is its commitment to equity. By embedding the curriculum in the elementary master schedule rotation, HCPS ensures that all students, regardless of background or socioeconomic status, have access to high-quality instruction. The program also creatively uses existing resources, partnerships and technology to maximize its effectiveness without placing excessive demands on the school division budget.

The program's success is evident in measurable outcomes, including increased student engagement, enhanced technology literacy and teacher confidence in integrating durable skills in daily instruction. HCPS' approach serves as a replicable model for other county school divisions, demonstrating how public schools can create meaningful, scalable programs that prepare students to be "LifeReady."

This innovative and impactful initiative highlights Henrico County Public Schools' dedication to advancing education, equity and the future of its students. This makes it a worthy candidate for the VACo Achievement Award.