



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: Health and Medical App Shark Tank

Program Category: Community Development, Economic Development and Land Use

CONTACT INFORMATION

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1. Summary

In November 2024, Henrico County Public Schools' Center for Innovation at John Rolfe Middle School and the Advanced Career Education Center at Hermitage hosted a groundbreaking "Shark Tank" program for new apps that fostered crossdisciplinary learning and real-world problem-solving. This collaborative initiative brought together entrepreneurial students from John Rolfe's innovation-focused curriculum and health and medical students at the ACE Center at Hermitage. The event centered on the development and presentation of health-focused mobile applications designed to address real-world medical challenges or improve patient outcomes.

Students at the Center for Innovation at John Rolfe Middle School acted as visionary entrepreneurs, using their creativity and design thinking skills to conceptualize and prototype innovative health applications for mobile devices. These apps were pitched to ACE Center at Hermitage students, who served as industry professionals and potential investors. The high school students enrolled in Virginia's health services cluster evaluated the app concepts, assessing their feasibility, relevance and potential impacts in health care settings.

This successful collaboration showcased the integration of technology and health care, while fostering essential skills such as communication, teamwork and innovation. By merging expertise from both fields, the event provided an engaging educational experience that encouraged students to envision solutions to pressing health care challenges. The November 2024 program not only highlighted the potential for interdisciplinary learning but also inspired participants to explore impactful career pathways in health and technology.

2. The Problem or Need for the Program

This program was created for several reasons: the program was a great way to encourage collaboration between middle and high school students in a mentorship relationship. It also addressed the growing need for interdisciplinary collaboration between technology and health care. With the rapid rise of digital health solutions, there is a pressing demand for innovative thinkers who can bridge the gap between these fields. The program was prompted by the recognition that students often work within their own academic clusters, limiting their exposure to diverse perspectives and problem-solving approaches.

By bringing together students from the middle school Center for Innovation at John Rolfe and medical and health students from the ACE Center at Hermitage, the program provided a platform to develop practical solutions for real-world challenges. The collaboration encouraged students to combine their expertise in innovation and health care, fostering creativity, critical thinking and teamwork. This initiative aimed to prepare students for the demands of a rapidly evolving health care landscape driven by technological advancements.

3. Description of the Program

The Shark Tank program, a collaboration between the Center for Innovation at John Rolfe and the ACE Center at Hermitage, brought together students from diverse disciplines to tackle real-world challenges at the intersection of health care and technology. Held in November 2024, the program simulated a professional entrepreneurial environment where John Rolfe students conceptualized and developed innovative health-focused mobile applications. These apps aimed to address pressing medical issues or improve patient outcomes through creative technological solutions.

Students from ACE Center at Hermitage's health and medical programs acted as health care industry professionals and potential investors, critically evaluating the presented apps based on

feasibility, impact and relevance to real health care needs. Parents and community members also attended the event, providing valuable feedback and fostering broader engagement.

This dynamic exchange fostered crossdisciplinary learning, encouraging students to explore collaborative problem-solving, entrepreneurial thinking and professional communication skills.

The program provided an invaluable opportunity for students to apply their knowledge in meaningful ways, preparing them for future careers in a tech-driven health care landscape.

Through this unique experience, participants not only gained insight into each other's fields but also learned to merge innovation with practicality, making a tangible difference in addressing health care challenges.

4. Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The Shark Tank program advanced diversity, equity and inclusion by fostering collaboration among students from diverse academic disciplines, cultural backgrounds and lived experiences.

By bringing together entrepreneurial students from the John Rolfe Center for Innovation and health and medical students from ACE Center at Hermitage, the program created a platform where varied perspectives could intersect. This diversity enriched the creative process, as students approached health care challenges with unique ideas informed by their individual expertise, identities and personal experiences.

Equity was embedded in the program's structure by ensuring that every participant had an equal opportunity to contribute, learn and succeed. John Rolfe Center students, typically focused on technology and innovation, partnered with ACE Center at Hermitage students, who brought specialized health care knowledge. This collaboration empowered both groups to share their expertise, leveling the playing field and fostering mutual respect. By doing so, the program demonstrated the value of equitable partnerships in achieving common goals.

Inclusion was emphasized by engaging parents and community members in the event, creating a welcoming environment for individuals from diverse cultural and professional backgrounds to participate. Their presence reinforced the idea that community voices and perspectives are essential to solving real-world challenges. Additionally, the program's emphasis on addressing health care issues encouraged students to consider the needs of underrepresented and underserved populations. Many of the proposed mobile applications focused on making health care more accessible and equitable, showcasing a commitment to addressing systemic disparities in the health care system.

By promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, the program modeled a real-world approach to teamwork in diverse settings, preparing students to thrive in inclusive environments. It encouraged them to listen, respect different viewpoints and build solutions that reflect the needs of all individuals, regardless of background or circumstances.

Ultimately, the program advanced diversity, equity and inclusion by demonstrating the power of collaborative, inclusive problem-solving. It provided students with a meaningful opportunity to engage with diverse perspectives, address inequities and design innovative solutions that benefit not only specific communities but society.

5. The Cost of the Program

This program could be easily replicated because of its minimal costs and straightforward setup. With total expenses under \$200, covering a pizza lunch and transportation, the initiative is budget-friendly for most schools and school divisions.

The program's affordability stems from its reliance on existing resources, such as classrooms, student expertise and teacher guidance. No additional infrastructure or materials were required.

Furthermore, involving parents and community members as attendees and contributors added significant value at no extra cost.

Its structure is easily adaptable and scalable. Schools with tighter budgets can opt for virtual participation to eliminate transportation costs or organize a potluck instead of providing lunch. Local businesses or community organizations could also sponsor meals or other minor expenses, further reducing costs.

This program provides a high impact, low cost model for fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation, making it practical to replicate in a variety of settings.

7. The Results/Success of the Program

The Shark Tank program achieved remarkable success by fostering meaningful connections and providing real-time learning experiences for students. By bringing together students from the Center for Innovation at John Rolfe Middle School and high school students from the Advanced Career Education Center at Hermitage health and medical programs, the initiative created a dynamic, collaborative environment that yielded significant educational and personal benefits for participants.

Thirteen students presented their concepts as part of the Shark Tank, but the entire seventh and eighth grade classes at the John Rolfe Middle School Center for Innovation participated in the original app design project. In addition, five high school students from various medical courses within the ACE Center at Hermitage served as judges.

One of the key outcomes was the immediate peer feedback received by middle school students. Presenting their health-focused mobile app ideas to an audience of high school students enabled them to gain insights from a more experienced peer group. The high school students

offered constructive critiques, highlighting the feasibility, relevance and potential impact of the proposed applications. This feedback was invaluable in helping the middle school students refine their ideas, think critically and approach problem-solving with a deeper understanding of real-world challenges.

Additionally, the program successfully cultivated mentor-style relationships between the two groups. High school students served as informal mentors, sharing their knowledge of health care concepts, technology and presentation skills with the middle school participants. These interactions not only enhanced the middle school students' confidence but also provided the high school students with leadership opportunities and a chance to reinforce their own understanding of the material by teaching and guiding others.

The relationships formed during the event extended beyond the immediate learning outcomes, laying the groundwork for future collaboration and support between the two schools. Middle school students left inspired by the high schoolers' expertise and achievements, while the older students gained a sense of fulfillment by helping to nurture the next generation of innovators. This exchange of ideas and experiences fostered a sense of community and mutual respect, showing the power of cross-age collaboration in education.

Moreover, the program's success highlights the potential of interdisciplinary and intergrade initiatives to create enriching educational experiences. By providing a platform where students could learn from one another, it broke down traditional academic silos and encouraged participants to view challenges from different perspectives. These outcomes demonstrate that even a modest investment of time and resources can lead to meaningful educational and relational impacts.

In summary, the Shark Tank program was a resounding success, delivering immediate feedback, building mentoring relationships and fostering a collaborative spirit among students. The initiative not only enhanced the middle school students' learning but also provided the high schoolers with valuable leadership opportunities, creating a model for impactful and inclusive educational programs.

8. Worthiness of Award

The Shark Tank program is a compelling candidate for a VACo award due to its innovative approach to interdisciplinary education, community engagement and leadership development. By uniting middle school students from the Center for Innovation at John Rolfe Middle School with high school students from ACE Center at Hermitage health and medical programs, the initiative exemplifies how collaboration can inspire creativity and practical problem-solving.

The initiative provided immediate peer feedback, enabling middle school students to refine their health app concepts with insights from high schoolers acting as mentors and evaluators. These mentorship relationships fostered leadership skills among high school students while empowering middle schoolers with confidence and critical thinking abilities. The event also engaged parents and community members, reinforcing the importance of education as a community endeavor.

With minimal costs and high impact, the program is both scalable and replicable, offering a model for fostering innovation, equity and collaboration across age groups and disciplines. Its success demonstrates the transformative potential of education to build connections and address real-world challenges, making it a deserving recipient of a VACo award.

9. Supplemental Materials



