

TALLWOOD HIGH SCHOOL  
GLOBAL STUDIES AND WORLD  
LANGUAGES ACADEMY

YEAR-ONE EVALUATION

VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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This year-one evaluation provides the School Board and superintendent information related to the implementation of the Global Studies and World Languages (GSWL) Academy at Tallwood High School during the 2005-06 school year. On January 11, 2005, the School Board approved the proposal for the GSWL Academy to be implemented in September 2005. The academy is a specialized school-within-a-school designed to provide students with intensive training in global issues and world languages and to prepare them for postsecondary advanced studies or for entry into international occupations. During the 2005-06 school year, the academy enrolled 85 ninth-grade students.

**FINDINGS**

- Most of the tasks outlined in the academy time line were completed as scheduled. There were items, however, which occurred later than proposed. Due to budgetary constraints, the coordinator was hired at the start of the 2005-06 fiscal year, later than proposed. Also, due to a lower than expected enrollment rate, a second round of applications was necessary. This delayed scheduled events pertaining to student enrollment as well as course and transportation scheduling.
- The proposed application process was followed; however, the time line for the application process was extended in an effort to increase enrollment. Those students applying during this period followed the same documentation and review processes as those applicants who applied during the initial window.
- Following the design described in the proposal, a committee of 20 administrators and teachers from throughout Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) was selected to participate in the academy selection process. Due to a low initial response, a second round of applications and a subsequent selection committee were needed. This committee consisted of four individuals, who followed the same process employed for the first round.
- Together, both application rounds attracted 157 applications. Of these, 136 students (86.6%) were found to be qualified and were offered admission. Eighty-five students (62.5%) accepted the position and enrolled in the academy as of September 30, 2005.

- Tallwood High School had a capacity of 2,143 students in 2005-06 with an enrollment of 1,961. The school was more than 8 percent under capacity in 2005-06, which was further below capacity than both 2004-05 (1.4% under capacity) and 2003-04 (2.8% under capacity). Thus, it would appear that the academy enrollment did not appear to adversely impact Tallwood High School's capacity.
- At least 89 percent of the students and parents agreed that the application process was clear and that the forms were easy to complete. A lower percentage of students than parents indicated that they had enough time to fulfill the application requirements (72.6% and 97.5%, respectively). Both parents and students had the lowest levels of agreement when asked if they had enough information before deciding to enroll in the academy (82.5% versus 58.9%).
- When students were asked to explain their reasons for joining the GSWL Academy, the majority of responses focused on improving their career options, learning about different cultures and languages, and the valuable opportunity that the academy provides. To a lesser extent, students said that it would look positive on academic transcripts for college admissions.
- During the first year of operations, 3 students exited the academy program, thus, leaving a student population of 82 who received the end-of-year survey. Of the 73 students who responded to the survey, 60 (82.2%) indicated that they plan to return for their sophomore year, while 12 (16.4%) said that they would not be returning. One student (1.4%) was unsure.
- Every VBCPS middle school and high school attendance zone was represented by the students enrolled in the academy. The greatest percentage (29%) of students at the GSWL Academy came from the Brandon Middle School attendance zone. Tallwood High School's attendance zone accounted for approximately one-third (29%) of the students attending the GSWL Academy.
- The academy had a higher percentage of female students compared to the female students in ninth grade at Tallwood or the rest of the division's ninth-grade students (71.8%, 47.3%, and 48.2%, respectively). In addition, the GSWL Academy had relatively similar racial/ethnic percentages as the school and the division. The exception to this is the percentage of Asian/Pacific Islanders, which was nearly double the percentage of the division (10.6% and 5.8%, respectively). When compared to Tallwood High School, the academy had a lower percentage of African Americans and a higher percentage of Asian/Pacific Islanders and Caucasians.
- On average, academy students took part in three extracurricular activities. Academy-related activities that were mentioned by more than 10 percent of the students included the American Sign Language Club, Foreign Language Immersion Cafés, World Quest, and the Student Advisory Board. The only other extracurricular activity found on more than 10 percent of the responses was Band.

- Academy staff, students, and parents all had high percentages of agreement (100.00%, 87.7%, and 95.0%, respectively) when asked how well Tallwood High School provided opportunities for extracurricular and/or athletic activities.
- On average, the GSWL Academy teachers had 11 years teaching experience. Four of the six teachers (67%) held advanced degrees, while two (33%) held no endorsement. These two, however, were hired for specific content-specific knowledge and skills that qualified them to teach in the academy. The four teachers who held endorsements were teaching in the areas of their endorsements.
- Every teacher at the GSWL Academy was female. This was high compared to the percentage of female teachers, 71 percent for Tallwood High School and 66 percent for all of the VBCPS high schools overall. The percentage of Caucasian teachers in the GSWL Academy (83.3%) was similar to the percentage for all VBCPS high schools (82.5%), but was higher than Tallwood High School (66.7%). The GSWL Academy had a lower percentage of African-American teachers than Tallwood High School and all of the division's high schools, while having a higher percentage of Asian teachers than could be found in either the school or division.
- Staff development activities occurred as proposed, with activities selected based on instructional needs, curriculum development practices, and subject-area content. Surveys conducted immediately following these opportunities and at the end of the year indicated that attendees at these opportunities appreciated the instruction, found the training would help them improve student achievement, and that they would be able to use what they had learned in their practice.
- As proposed, the course of study was organized around five GSWL courses. Three of these courses, World Literature & Composition, Global Ecology, and Global Studies I, replaced core academic courses normally taken by ninth graders (English, Biology, and World History, respectively). The other two courses, Global Issues Seminar and International Careers, were one-semester courses that were tailored specifically to meet academy needs.
- There were two courses scheduled for the 2005-06 school year that were not offered. Advanced Placement Human Geography was not offered due to a lack of enrollment. In addition Arabic Language courses were not offered due to difficulties in finding qualified teaching staff, but were offered for the 2006-07 school year.
- There were several active learning opportunities provided for academy students, including trips to Historic Jamestown, Kiptopeke State Park, Washington D.C., and Port Isabel Island. These trips were intended to assist students in studying such diverse activities as archaeological investigations, migration patterns of birds, human impacts on ecosystems, and U.S. foreign policy.
- There were several ways in which the building was modified in preparation for the GSWL Academy primarily to consolidate all of the academy-specific courses with the global languages classrooms. In order to do so, the school store was moved and its former location

turned into a classroom. In addition, two portable classrooms were brought in, and a large classroom previously used for health classes was divided into two smaller classrooms to accommodate academy classes

- There were structural alterations to classrooms that housed academy classes. These alterations took the form of installing multimedia teacher panels that connected technologies within the classroom. In addition, ceiling mounted data projectors were installed in each classroom and connected to this multimedia teacher panel. These technologies allowed easy access to computer and network resources.
- Due to the implementation of a hub design, 11 buses were used to provide transportation for out-of-zone academy students to and from the Visual and Performing Arts Academy at Salem High School and the GSWL Academy at Tallwood High School. In addition, four activity buses were assigned specifically for academy students' transportation needs after school, and the activity buses were available Monday through Friday.
- In year one of academy operations, 60 percent of the academy students and 75 percent of the parents and academy staff agreed that school bus transportation allowed students to fully participate in the GSWL Academy.
- When asked for their perceptions about specific elements of the academy, students showed the highest levels of agreement on items dealing with their awareness about their responsibilities as academy students (80.8%) and the academy program's ability to offer opportunities to gain intellectual skills to make interdisciplinary global connections (69.8%). Parent surveys indicated levels of agreement of 90 percent or higher on items pertaining to the academy's ability to offer opportunities to gain intellectual skills (95.0%) and requiring the students to think critically (90.0%).
- The lowest agreement level for students was found on the item pertaining to how advanced the academy curriculum was compared to regular high school. On this item, only 30 percent of the students indicated agreement, while 38 percent indicated disagreement. For parents, the only three items with agreement levels below 80 percent were dealing with the academy's ability to provide technological skills (77.5%), whether bus transportation allowed students to fully participate in academy programs (75.0%), and whether academy course work was more advanced than regular high school (75.0%).
- All of the respondents to the staff end-of-year survey agreed with the statements concerning the clarity of their responsibilities (100%), the flexible nature of the GSWL Academy (100%), and the ability of the academy to provide intellectual skills to students (100%).
- According to comments made on open-ended questions on the end-of-year survey, students and parents believed the students gained content knowledge, job or career-specific skills or knowledge, and a broader perspective, understanding, and awareness of global issues. Teachers, academy leadership, and community partners echoed the sentiments of the parents and students in focusing on a global perspective and content knowledge as the major gains for academy students.

- When asked what they would improve about the academy, student and parent comments focused on changes to specific classes or curriculum issues and improvements to the field trips. Academy leaders answered the same question by focusing on assuring differentiated instructional practices, providing meaningful community service opportunities, more intensive recruitment of students, provision of international travel opportunities, further use of instructional technology to foster international collaborations, and assurance of flexibility in scheduling of student and teacher time. Community partners, when asked to suggest improvements, indicated that the promotion of the academy and the subsequent recruitment of high quality students, including more opportunities for foreign exchange students, and community participation would be valuable additions to the program.
- When asked to describe what type of progress had been made during the implementation of the academy, the academy leaders indicated that the student population of the academy was qualified for enrollment, students were positive about the academy experience, teachers had worked hard on curriculum development, and effective partnerships had been created with community businesses and organizations.
- Academy leaders mentioned recruiting students and developing the curriculum as challenges that they had seen the academy confront. The curriculum development was difficult due to finding the “time needed for teachers to plan new curriculum for this school year - at the same time trying to establish objectives for curriculum of following years.” Also mentioned by the leaders as challenges were issues of finding qualified staff for the academy and solving general issues involved with busing academy students.
- The leaders, when asked about the strengths of the academy program, tended to focus on the support that the academy had received from students, parents, teachers, and the community. In addition, the leaders also focused on the academy coordinator, the focus on language learning, the offering of unique experiences, and the use of technology to communicate with global audiences. The community partners, when asked about the strengths of the academy program, stated that the content encapsulated a “critical field of study” and exposed “students to life in the rest of the world.”
- According to course enrollment data, all 82 academy students who completed the school year (100%) were enrolled in a mathematics course. In addition, academy students were enrolled in the required academy-related courses necessary to prepare them to complete the sequential program of study. According to the proposal, Global Studies I prepared students to take the World History (to 1500 A.D.) SOL end-of-course test and Global Ecology prepared students to take the Biology SOL end-of-course test. World Literature and Composition I served as the academy-specific English course. Every academy student enrolled in all three courses. The other two academy courses in which every academy student enrolled, Global Issues Seminar and International Careers, were required one-semester, half-credit courses.
- The only other academy-specific course offered during the 2005-06 school year was Mandarin Chinese. Nine students enrolled in this class due to the fact that it was only one of

many world languages. Each academy student enrolled in at least one world language, with 16 percent taking two languages.

- At least 91 percent of the academy students received a grade of A, B, or C in the core content areas English, mathematics, science, and history.
- Although no students have earned postsecondary credits through the academy as of yet, the process is ongoing and academy leadership made progress on planning the mechanisms for allowing students the opportunity to earn postsecondary credit as they progress through the academy program.
- Preliminary SOL results showed that academy students performed better than non-academy Tallwood High School students and the division's high school students on applicable SOL tests. Passing rates for academy students ranged from 96 to 100 percent, depending on the test, while ranging from 83 to 99 percent for non-academy Tallwood students and from 93 to 100 percent for the division's ninth graders as a whole.
- Contacts between the GSWL Academy leadership and faculty at Old Dominion University and Norfolk State University appeared to indicate that GSWL Academy leaders were developing collaborative partnerships and agreements. These contacts focused on assisting with grant writing, developing curriculum proposals, organizing guest speakers from their prospective universities, discussing the possibility of developing and implementing a summer institute on contemporary globalization, and the possibility of acting as a liaison for a possible trip to Kenya or South Africa.
- Every student in the academy participated in job shadowing and other academy activities such as mock interviews, guest speakers, and partial immersion cafés.
- Students worked toward completing a long-term project culminating in a presentation during their senior year in two ways. During their International Careers course, students started a portfolio featuring self-assessments, careers research, and samples of academic work. Throughout their time at the academy, students will continue adding to that portfolio to build towards the culminating presentation. In addition, students added to their long-term project through activities in the Global Issues Seminar, where they studied various issues of concern with the goal of determining one area of concern that will act as the basis for their large scale project.
- The total cost for the GSWL Academy to date has been \$996,505. This was \$48,937 higher than the projected costs. The largest difference where actual costs were higher than proposed costs was transportation (\$49,337), however, nearly \$200,000 of the cost for this item was shared between the Visual and Performing Arts and GSWL academies. Also having a relatively large discrepancy between actual and proposed costs was personnel (\$35,272). The largest difference where proposed costs were higher than actual costs was in nonconsumable instructional materials (\$36,437).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Continue the implementation process for the Global Studies and World Languages Academy.
- Investigate additional ways to attract a greater number of applicants and to entice qualified students to enroll.
- Continue to develop and revise the curriculum to ensure challenging opportunities for critical thought, leadership, and technology usage to communicate with a worldwide audience, and ensure that academy students are aware of these opportunities.
- Investigate ways to further diversify the instructional staff in order to meet the staffing objectives laid out in the proposal.
- Continue the development of partnerships with institutions of higher learning for the purposes of program development, assessment, and the offering of postsecondary credit to academy students.

