

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Office of the Secretary of Technology

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**VIRGINIA NAMES PHYSICS “FLEXBOOK” CORE TEAM
MEMBERS**

*~ Team members to develop content for VA open-source physics
“flexbook”~*

RICHMOND – Secretary of Technology Anesh Chopra and Secretary of Education Tom Morris today announced the selection of thirteen individuals to form a core team to pilot the development and release of an open-source physics “flexbook” for Virginia. This electronic material will focus on high school physics and contain contemporary and emerging 21st century physics and modern laboratory experiments.

The *Virginia Physics “Flexbook”* project is a collaborative effort of the Secretaries of Education and Technology and the Department of Education that seeks to elevate the quality of physics instruction across the Commonwealth by allowing educators to create and compile supplemental materials relating to 21st century physics in an open-source format that can be used to strengthen physics content. The Commonwealth is partnering with the Palo Alto, California-based non-profit, CK-12 on this initiative as they will provide the free, open-source technology platform to facilitate the publication of the newly developed content as a “flexbook” – defined simply as an adaptive, web-based set of instructional materials.

“We need transformational ideas to ensure all Virginians are educated to compete in an increasingly competitive global economy,” said Secretary Chopra. “This pilot initiative is a step in the right direction to introduce our students to contemporary physics topics and lab materials at no additional cost to the taxpayers or students,” added Secretary Morris.

The need for this type of material was made clear in recommendations from a panel of practicing physicists that met in the summer of 2007 under the auspices of Virginia’s Secretary of Education to review the current Virginia physics content standards of learning (SOL). The panel found that while well-written and clear, the current physics SOL fall short of what our children will need to participate in the 21st century global economy. In particular, the panel recommended that dated material be supplemented by contemporary physics of the most recent 50 years and provide laboratories that engage students with industry state-of-the-practice equipment. Furthermore, the panel recommended that teachers have access to an open-source software capability in order to develop curriculum content in a more timely fashion.

This pilot is also aimed at evaluating the potential cost savings associated with moving to the use of more electronic texts as well as to analyze the value add for teachers when offered the capability to customize a text to their needs for any given year or for any set of students through simple editing.

The core team was selected based on the evaluation of responses to a request for collaboration released on September 9, 2008. The team plans to complete and release the initial content by February 2009. The members of the core team and their affiliations are:

Mike Fetsko	Henrico County Public Schools
David Slykhuis	James Madison University
Mark Mattson	James Madison University
Tom O'Neil	Shenandoah Valley Governor's School
Bruce Davidson	Newport News Public Schools (retired)
Angela Cutshaw	Newport News Public Schools
Mark Clemente	VA Beach Public Schools/National Institute of Aerospace
Andy Jackson	Harrisonburg Public Schools
David Stern	NASA Goddard Spaceflight Center (retired)
John Ochab	J. Sargent Reynolds Community College
Tapas Kar	Utah State University
Tony Wayne	Albemarle County Public Schools
Pranav Gokhale	Montgomery County, MD Schools (student)

Jim Batterson will lead this effort for the Commonwealth and Professor David Armstrong of the College of William and Mary physics department will serve as technical advisor.

This announcement also seeks additional affiliate members from throughout the Commonwealth to follow the development of v 1.0 to be released on February 27, 2009 and to participate in subsequent releases.

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