

**NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
CHARTER SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS**

**CHARTER SCHOOL RENEWAL
VISITATION SUMMARY REPORT
October 3, 2012**

VirtualLearningAcademy



Visitation Conducted by:



Southeastern Regional Education Service Center, Inc.
29 Commerce Drive
Bedford, NH 03110
(603) 206-6800
www.seresc.net

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
A. Charter School Renewal Process	1
B. Overview of Site Visitation Process	2
Visitation Team	2
Charter Renewal Application Review	3
Criteria and Schedule for Visitation Team Review	3
Findings and Recommendations	4
Indicators of Progress Toward Achieving the Mission of VLACS	4
Indicators of Responsibly Using Public Funds	5
Indicators of Promotion of Student Attainment of Expected Knowledge	7
Indicators of Sustainability	8
Recommendations	9
Commendations	10
 APPENDIX A	
Renewal Evaluation Team Biographies	11
 APPENDIX B	
VLACS Visitation Schedule – October 3, 2012	14
Invitation to Participate: VLACS Accreditation Visitation Team	15
 APPENDIX C	
Case Study Process	16
A Case Study	17

**New Hampshire Department of Education
Charter School Renewal Program
Charter Renewal On-Site Visitation
For
Virtual Learning Academy Charter School
October 2012**

Summary Report

INTRODUCTION:

A. Charter School Renewal Process

The renewal of a charter school is an established process that requires the conducting of an on-site evaluation of the school by a team of qualified educators in accordance with New Hampshire RSA 194-B:10. The statute requires a program audit for the renewal of the charter school for a five (5) year period that determines the attainment of academic, financial and organizational goals as declared in the school's charter application. The on-site visitation to Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS) on October 3, 2012 was conducted in accordance with the requirements for charter renewal to include validation of attainment of the school's standards and operational procedures established in the original charter school application, provides evidence of sustaining academic performance and the responsible use of public funds—all leading to a reasonable premise for sustainability.

The conditions for renewal are defined in RSA 194-B: 16 (VI) where the conditions for renewal of a New Hampshire Public Charter School note that by the end of its final contract year, the charter school shall meet or exceed the objective academic test results or standards and goals as set forth in its application. If the school does not meet these results or standards and goals, it shall not be eligible for renewal of its charter. Assessment of the charter school's attainment of performance targets sufficient to merit renewal of its charter will include the school's cumulative performance across the five years of its initial term.

The process of re-authorization has multiple components and involves notification of the intent to seek re-authorization, an on-site visit, interviews and documentation. The process is as follows:

- Intent to Apply
- Submission of application for review
- School Review and on-site visit
- Department of Education Review and recommendation to State Board
- State Board decision

As established in RSA 194-B:10, the requirements for renewal of the Charter School license are defined in The New Hampshire Charter School Accountability Process which requires four indicator areas to be evaluated:

- (1) Progress toward meeting the Mission of the charter school
- (2) Evidence of the responsible use of public funds
- (3) Evidence of student attainment of expected knowledge and skills
- (4) Indicators of purposeful planning for the school's sustainability

The on-site visitation team is charged with the responsibility of obtaining evidence that substantiates the school's self-study and material representation of the indicators noted above. The team will formally record findings of the school's performance and confirm adherence to the stipulations for charter renewal.

The VLACS renewal application process began with the school's submission of a completed Application for Renewal to the New Hampshire Department of Education. Upon the initial review of the renewal application materials, the school was notified of the application's acceptance. The New Hampshire Department of Education contracted with the Southeast Regional Educational Service Center (SERESC), an independent organization, to conduct the renewal site visit and prepare a report summarizing the team's findings relative to the NH Charter School Accountability Process. Consistent with the stipulations in the statutes, the four key questions noted above served as a framework for assessing VLACS's eligibility for renewal of its charter. The visiting team, accordingly, was attentive to:

- Evidence of progress in academic, programmatic and organizational goals
- Evidence of fiduciary integrity in financial practices to include requirements for financial audits and quarterly reports
- Indicators of student growth (achievement) on state required assessments to include (NECAP) as well as site-based instruments designed to measure student achievement and growth
- Indicators that the school's infrastructure operates effectively and the governance for VLACS is aligned to ensure the school is sustainable and meets the regulatory requirements for charter schools in NH

Following the renewal site visitation, a draft report was prepared with the collective notations of the visiting team members and shared with VLACS's administration for review. After incorporating any factual corrections in the report, the visiting team endorsed the final report before submitting it to the New Hampshire Department of Education for review and forwarding to the State Board of Education.

B. Overview of Site Visitation Process

Visitation Team—The following professionals participated in the charter renewal visitation:

Dr. Richard Ayers - Team Lead
Ms. Susan Ballard
Ms. Jennifer Gillis
Dr. Deborah Osgood
Ms. Susan Patrick

Note: See Appendix A for Visitation Team qualifications

Charter Renewal Application Review

The VLACS Application for Charter School Renewal was received in September 2012 and contained an extremely comprehensive overview of the school's commitment to; "*Advance learning through new and emerging distance learning technologies.*" This is accommodated through internal goals for accountability in program development and delivery as measured by a range of assessments of student learning, organizational attention to planning for its future and the measures of integrity in fiscal accounting and communication. Prior to the review of the application, the team leader conducted a formal review of the documents on file at the NHDOE that illustrated the detail to which the regulatory requirements for reporting out programmatic and fiduciary status were met. The review confirmed that all requirements were met for each of the five years of the school's operations and illustrated that while the school advanced exponentially in student population and program offerings, all operational and programmatic requirements were met, if not exceeded.

The Charter Renewal Application was reviewed by the NHDOE and thereafter forwarded to the lead consultant for confirmation of the application's relevancy in meeting the requirements for accreditation renewal in accordance with the requirements outlined in RSA 194-B: 10. The application was shared with the visitation team and served as the primary reference for the visitation team as they conducted an expanse of focused discussions with the various stakeholders in VLACS's programs and services.

Criteria and Schedule for Visitation Team Review

The overarching criteria for the visiting team review was the four primary questions for the renewal process previously noted. The primary questions were outlined in an individualized rubric for each of the following stakeholder groups—Board of Trustees, School Administration and Staff, Teachers, Parents/Guardians, Students, Special Education and NH Schools and School Districts. The schedule for the stakeholder's focus groups was jointly established by the VLACS administration and lead consultant and were conducted in sessions that included a combination of group participation on site as well as individuals who joined the discussion over web-based contacts. The visitation team was divided into two groups, each with a full schedule of focus groups as outlined in the schedule in Appendix A. To introduce the visiting team to the dynamic of profiles from stakeholders in their testimonials on the significance of the educational relevance of VLACS, a *case study* of randomly selected students, parents and faculty was conducted prior to the August 3, 2012 on-site visitation by the lead consultant. This *case study* served as an example of the depth of inquiry appropriate to glean an accurate sense of the significance of the educational profile VLACS presents to students and their families as well as the dedication and extent to which faculty serve the students and their families. A copy of the *case study* may also be found in Appendix B.

A unique aspect of the on-site visitation was the open discussion or symposium on, *The Trends that Craft the Future of Learning* featuring Ms. Susan Patrick, President & CEO of the International Association of K-12 Online Learning. Susan accepted the invitation to be a member of the visitation team and provided an invaluable national/international perspective of the stature of VLACS in relation to other settings nationally and internationally. Ms. Patrick's comments at the close of the discussion were to the affect that; 'VLACS presents a profile of on-line learning unparalleled in any setting in the US.'

The visitation concluded with a preliminary report-out by the visitation team to all VLACS personnel and several invited guests. As will be apparent when reviewing the findings to follow, this was a significant aspect of the on-site visitation, as all visitation team members gave a summary of the focus group discussions and forwarded acknowledgements and recommendations in support of VLACS' confirmed mission to provide a 'personalized educational experience.'

Findings and Recommendations

The Findings of the on-site visitation will follow the key questions for the renewal process: 1) Is the charter school making progress toward achieving its mission; 2) Is the charter school responsibly using public funds; 3) Is the charter school promoting student attainment of expected knowledge and skills; and 4) Is the school sustainable? For each question there will be a review of how the question is responded to in the Application for Renewal of Charter submitted by VLACS, followed by the finding of the visitation team.

Indicators of progress toward achieving the mission of VLACS:

Mission: "The Virtual Learning Academy Charter School will use new and emerging distance learning technologies to provide anytime, anywhere access to a rigorous personalized education that helps students learn today, graduate tomorrow, and prepare for the future."

This aim is well articulated in the application where notation is given to the primary objectives in the original charter (2007) that spoke to the intention for delivering and monitoring student learning with the benefit of distance learning in an environment of rigorous academic study with the inherent flexibilities that technology can provide. The indicators of VLACS fulfilling, if not exceeding, the mission and primary objectives in the original charter application is substantial (as described in the application), to include:

- NECAP results for full time students at or above the state average
- Course completion rates exceeding 80%
- Course Completion rates for students taking dual credit courses for college credits exceeding 90%
- Aggregate average for VLACS students taking Advanced Placement exams exceeding national averages
- SAT results for full-time students taking the SAT exceed the national average
- VLACS graduates being accepted to 47 different colleges and universities
- Completion of course competencies for all middle and high school and dual credit courses (SNHU) and the fact that students in 2012 passed competency assessments with a grade of 75% or better

The systems developed by VLACS to support a 'personalized education' are expansive to include a fully implemented system for sustaining instructional quality, a deliberate process for fully engaging parents in their child's education, and formal partnerships with NH schools that include training opportunities for local school officials in supporting the unique learning styles of students.

The visitation team's focused discussion with a wide range of individual stakeholders confirmed the significance of the impact of the school's mission upon the students, families and schools and served. Notable observations of the team included:

- The unilateral belief of the members of the Board of Trustees interviewed that the VLACS organization is firmly committed to a 'value-added' model for learning that is student-centered and benefits families
- The endorsement of partner schools for the breadth and depth of program offerings with note that the rigor is comparable to that any middle or high school in NH. The partner schools also spoke to the excellent support and communication consistently throughout the organization, always centered upon what will best serve the student
- The expressed commitment of the administration and staff to create new options for learning and 'pushing' education forward
- Parents speak to the 'competency-based approach' and built-in opportunities for second attempts to demonstrate understanding
- Parents also speak enthusiastically about the proposed post-graduate option
- Students spoke to the vitality of the instruction to include the common integration of video and web-based material in the course of study
- Students spoke specifically about the skills and knowledge they were learning and that the flexibility and pacing of the courses was a real advantage to their learning
- The advantage to the 'pace chart' was mentioned by many students as the concept was very beneficial to their completion of course work

In brief, the visitation team acknowledges the significance of the educational character of VLACS and the universal praise for the academic significance, organizational structure and programmatic innovation. The clarity in expressions of the educational advantage to students and their families are, in themselves, an indicator of VLACS *admirably achieving its Mission*.

Indicators of responsibly using public funds:

The extensive background research on VLACS acknowledged that the requirements for quarterly financial reports and external yearly audits were appropriately recorded and acknowledged for meeting acceptable standards for public school accounting, as required. The minutes of the Board of Trustees are available on the VLACS website and were reviewed for assurance of notation of the school's favorable financial condition. The Application for Renewal of Charter includes a comprehensive reporting of the funding sources and resource allocations. Of note is the thorough attention to the following:

The formula for receipt of state aid based on the course completion percentage which is then converted to average daily membership (ADM) for full and part-time students. This method of funding is unique in that funding is tied to completion of competencies, all translated to ensuring public funds are used responsibly:

- The historical receipt of awarded grants
- The protocol for bringing recommendations forward to the Board of Trustees regarding resource allocation as well as notation of the services and personnel that monitor and record financial operations

- The transparency in communication and oversight on the school's financial practices to include the attention given to the school's financial stability by the Board of Trustees

It is important to recognize that the educational options provided to students and families in NH through VLACS provide *direct and indirect savings to school districts and families*. As noted in the application: "VLACS is the only school in New Hampshire that can offer both efficiency and equity of access to a wide range of students." This is substantiated by the fact that:

- The course options available to all schools, but significantly beneficial to small schools, such as multiple foreign languages, AP courses, advanced mathematics and science studies, etc., at a fraction of the cost to deliver in a majority of school settings
- The expanded middle school options to include access to high school courses
- The SAT Prep availability to students and families that currently serves over 350 students annually
- The credit recovery option for students that, in many cases, save the school district the cost of a fifth year of individualized support to students who need a minimum of credits to be eligible to receive a diploma

The dual enrollment option where college credit can be earned at any time can provide considerable savings to young adults and families while providing a supportive transition to college level studies.

The visitation team discussions included the following observations about the benefit of VLACS to students, families and schools and insights to the operations of the school:

- A parent noted that their child was interested in taking Latin and that VLACS was recommended to them by their school counselor as a means of taking the course and receiving HS credit
- The Board of Trustees interviewed noted that since the creation of the school a business leader has been a member of the board to ensure, in part, that refined managerial and financial practices are sound
- Parents, staff and visiting members spoke made numerous comments to the effect; 'The fact that NH has such an affordable option for HS credits is amazing.'
- The comparison of VLACS to 'for-profit on-line learning schools' was central to discussions with staff, school administrators and board members, as well as the national leader on the team. The value of the non-profit status of VLACS and parameters for class load for teachers was recognized as the 'true-value' for VLACS, given that for-profit on-line school costs are considerably higher and student loads for teachers are often twice that of VLACS

In conclusion, VLACS employs sound practices for financial accounting and is deliberate in *meeting and exceeding regulatory standards for the use of public funds*. Of worthy note is the conscientious efforts of the administration, staff and Board of Trustees to provide educational opportunities at reasonable costs in order to equitably fulfill its mission. An important point of reference to this commitment is that the average cost nationally for online courses is \$6500; approximately 20% higher than VLACS.

Indicators of promotion of student attainment of expected knowledge:

The progression of measurements of student achievement by VLACS over the past five years is noticeable when reviewing the school's quarterly reports, minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting, SAT/ACT achievement scores and the historical NECAP achievement scores. A careful review of the composite scores (as represented in the Application for Renewal) shows that in all nationally-normed assessments, VLACS students scored above state and national averages. The assessment profile for students includes teacher-based assessments on student attainment of a satisfactory score on each of the course competencies. VLACS is unique from other NH charter schools in that 95+% of the students are part-time students and thus tracking overall achievement on NECAP or other normed instruments is difficult. The site-based standards created for each course, to include competencies aligned with NH Curricular Standards and more recent Common-Core Standards, compose the most reliable measure of student proficiency. This then, explains why VLACS continues to hold high standards for all teachers, has an extensive training program for new teachers to include mentoring in the initial year, conducts yearly in-service programs for teachers, and monitors all individualized assessments of student competencies in all subjects. Of note is the effort taken to measure the VLACS experience using Student Clearinghouse to gather data about full time students and their success at the post-secondary level (http://www.studentclearinghouse.org/high_schools/studenttracker/). Key questions included in the StudentTracker™ for High Schools are:

- How many of the school graduates enroll in college?
- Do they persist and graduate from college?
- How long does it take for them to get their degree?
- Do they go in or out of state, and do they attend a 4-year or 2-year school?
- Which colleges do they most commonly attend?
- Did any students go to college who started 9th grade in a high school but did not graduate?

As is validated in the responses to the visiting team members' inquiries to public school administrators and teachers, VLACS courses are near universally accepted for credit and students are being referred to VLACS in increasing numbers.

The visiting team observed widespread comments on the school's course of study and individualized attention given to students, to include:

- Parents spoke to the value of VLACS to include—the transparency, efficiency, and productivity of the learning process
- Parents like the structure, which provides for and encourages parent involvement. They appreciate the methodologies used by the instructors, and find the level of engagement by instructors in achieving learning objectives with the student outstanding
- The Board of Trustees speak to the original intent of VLACS to reach students who were underserved in traditional schools and were proud of the fact that the school now reaches over 15,000 course enrollments representing approximately 8,000 students, many of whom would otherwise be without a means of furthering their education
- Students were very open in expressing their satisfaction with the course work and individualized attention they received from their teachers. Many spoke to the flexibility, pacing chart and the fact that they could 'learn from any location, anytime, at any pace'

- Students also spoke to the value of their 'taking a leadership role in their education,' and the wide-range of interesting media and readings the instructors include in their lessons
- The Partner School administrators, counselors and teachers rely upon VLACS for credit recovery or advanced-level courses and speak with high praise for the instructors, the ongoing connection to students, and the assessments and feedback to students. They also find the tech support to be excellent

Through the expanse of information provided in the Application for Renewal and the introduction to the formal visitation by the school's director, Dr. Stephen Kossakoski, the purposeful attention to the success of all VLACS students through a personalized learning experience was most evident. The confirmation of all stakeholders to the depth and proficiency of the framework for teaching and learning speaks to the significance VLACS has in the educational character of New Hampshire. The Visiting Team confirms the school's significance in *sustaining high standards for proficiency in meeting curricular standards*.

Indicators of Sustainability:

The intricacies of the sustainability and advancement of VLACS is a foremost topic of discussion and planning for the entire VLACS organization. From the Board of Trustees to the Chief Executive Officer and, in turn, to the administration and staff, there is a constant effort to plan for the future. The Application for Renewal describes in detail the efforts underway to expand the reach and assure the stability of the organization. This includes:

- A redesigned advisory program that will focus upon preparing students for career and college readiness, along with an emphasis upon citizenship
- Expanded experiential learning opportunities (ELO) program to include virtual learning studios and learning through interests options. The options include learning teams that are involved in real-world problems as well as opportunities for students to pursue academic study through their interests and passions. In both programs, experts and mentors will be available to learning teams or individuals as they pursue an area of real interest
- Middle college program will be initiated in May 2013 where high school students who have achieved a sufficient level of academic competency will have the option of beginning a full term college program after their sophomore year
- College transition program for students who lacked success in high school who, when ready, can enroll in an integrated model that will provide individualized support by a VLACS instructor who is approved to teach at the college level
- Adult education program will be initiated in September 2013 that will include new sections of VLACS courses such as Chinese, digital photography as well as traditional classes that are tailored to the adult learner. VLACS intends to work with existing adult education programs in the state to supplement their programs
- In January 2014 VLACS will initiate a full-time middle school program to include grades 6 through 8 and in September 2014 an elementary program for students in grade four and five will be available

VLACS faces a dilemma that they devote much of their planning effort to address: "In order for the VLACS program to grow to meet the diverse needs of New Hampshire students at all levels, it will be necessary to create additional funding streams for the school" (from Application for Renewal p.30). As the school continues to represent the entrepreneurial spirit of the charter school movement it seeks to become "the" virtual school of New England where students from out of state will pay tuition to access the school's programs. This effort is one of the school's expressed objectives for the next charter term that in total is:

- Maintain and/or improve upon the student, parent and school goals described in the original charter
- All full time students who graduate from VLACS will be college, career and citizenship ready
- Expand out-of-state enrollment for both part-time and full-time students
- Maintain adequate state funding that matches the enrollment growth of the school

The Visitation Team commends VLACS for their forward thinking and determination to make the school's programs and partnerships available to a greater audience of students, families and schools. This conscious effort speaks clearly to the *sustainability of VLACS through and beyond the next increment of charter renewal.*

Recommendations:

The following recommendations reflect the collective views of the visiting team and are forwarded with the aim of improving a sound and educationally significant organization.

- The supports available to students could include online tutorials, screencasts and videos for basic navigation and upgrades to programs and options for student supports
- Students suggest that opportunities for group activities be available to include on-line 'work groups,' 'live forums' and a calendar of available field trips or special project meetings; all allowing for students to interact personally with other students with shared interests
- Parents suggest that a series of webinars be available for parents that focus upon ways parents can support the child's learning or support the school's outreach to parents and public and private schools
- The Board of Trustees may wish to consider the creation of a Scholarship Fund that would support students who are independent or families that have limited resources
- Create a process for a more thorough review of student's schooling background to include prior designation as educationally disadvantaged. This is intended to counter the pattern of students/parents 'signing-off' for eligibility of special education supports they received in their public schooling. It is important to note that this appears to be a common occurrence with NH charter schools and is not a reflection of the exceptional attention given to students with learning challenges by the VLACS faculty and staff
- The initiation of an effort to inform policy makers who recommend and rule upon funding for charter schools in NH to the significance of this option for educating New Hampshire's youth and adults and the economic impact of an educated 'work-force' that follow the education of a majority of the students served by VLACS. This refers specifically to the uncertainty of funding for charter schools on a year to year basis and the limitations in supporting opportunities to expand the reach of this educational option for NH's youth and adults

Commendations:

1. The exceptional leadership to VLACS by Dr. Stephen Kossakoski whose intuition, vision and determination is reflected throughout this organization
2. The stature of the Board of Trustees who are truly committed to the mission and sustainability of VLACS
3. The excellence of the faculty and administrative staff of VLACS in ensuring a high quality of personalized education for each student and family
4. The unwavering commitment of the entire VLACS organization to creating an efficient, effective and cost-effective framework for the current and future educational profile for VLACS

The Charter Renewal On-Site Visitation Team recommends to the NH Commissioner of Education and State Board of Education that the Charter for The Virtual Learning Academy Charter School be renewed without reservation and with acknowledgement for the example it represents for a truly personalized educational experience for the youth and families of our state.

On behalf of the Visiting Team,



Richard W. Ayers, Ed.D.
Educational Consultant
SERESC

APPENDIX A

RENEWAL VISITATION TEAM

Dr. Richard Ayers
Lead Consultant
SERESC

Dr. Ayers graduated from Norwich University with a BS in Mathematics Education, and received his Masters in Educational Administration in Educational Leadership from the University of Colorado. He also received his Doctorate in Education from the University of Colorado with a specialization in curriculum, instruction and educational administration. Dr. Ayers was a teacher at the middle and high school levels before entering into secondary school administration in Colorado and New Hampshire. After 16 years of serving as a middle/high school principal, he served for 15 years as either assistant superintendent or superintendent of schools in New Hampshire. Dr. Ayers has taught graduate courses in education leadership and philosophy and ethics of education at the University of New Hampshire and Plymouth State University. Most recently Dick served as the Acting Executive Director of SERESC, where he was responsible for the oversight of all aspects of the nonprofit education consortium. Dick resides in Sanbornton, NH.

Susan D. Ballard
Visitation Team Member
President, American Association of School Librarians

Director, Library, Media, and Technology, Londonderry, NH, a SLYMPY recipient; Graduate, UNH and Simmons/GSLIS; past-president NHSLMA and NESLA; Served as AASL Secretary and on the Board of Directors; Chair, Standards and Guidelines Implementation (L4L); Affiliate Assembly delegate; participant on numerous other AASL committees; presently teaching online at Rutgers/SCLIS and supervising practicum students at Simmons; member of the editorial advisory board for Knowledge Quest, Teacher Librarian and H.W. Wilson Library Advisory Panel.

First recipient of the NH Excellence in Education Award, Library Media Services; cited in ALA's Whole School Library Handbook as one of "103 Outstanding School Librarians"; inducted into the NESLA Hall of Fame; recipient of the 2010 Thinkfinity/Allison Zmuda Challenge Grant

Numerous articles in a variety of professional and scholarly journals including: "Creation of a Research Community in a K-12 School System Using Action Research and Evidence Based Practice," (with Gail March and Jean Sand) in Evidence-Based Library and Information Practice 4.2 (2009): 8-36, selected by ALA's Library Instruction Round Table as one of the Top Twenty Library Instruction Articles of 2009.

Jennifer Chmiel Gillis
Visitation Team Member
Assistant Principal - Mountain View Middle School

Jennifer Gillis has a Bachelor's of Science, a Master's of Business Administration with a focus on leadership from Franklin Pierce College, a Certificate of Advanced Studies in the area of educational leadership from Plymouth State University, and is currently a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education in the area of educational leadership from Plymouth State University. Jennifer began her career in education following over a decade of work committed to brain injury survivors. The transition to the field of education provided an avenue to proactively reach a larger population. Jennifer has been dedicated to education for nine years; four years as a Special education teacher serving at risk students followed by five years in her current position as an Assistant Principal.

Dr. Deborah A. Osgood
Visitation Team Member
President/CEO of The Knowledge Institute

Deborah is cofounder, President and CEO of The Knowledge Institute and a recognized authority on entrepreneurship and positive human development. With a passion for leveraging people, process and technology to assist others, she has pioneered multiple training programs and innovative learning platforms to foster intrapreneurship and entrepreneurship. She is the author of *My Individual Learning Plan for Life: 6 Steps to Purposeful Living and Learning*, *Who Am I? A Guide to Career Planning*, *Team Building: a guide to organizational motivation and productivity*, and multiple works focused on starting and growing a small business. Her publications are used in training programs, academic institutions and economic development agencies nationally and internationally. Through multiple on- and off-line networks, she is helping millions of individuals to develop the knowledge, skills and experience to advance career and business development objectives.

Deborah's passion for facilitating transformative change stems from having turned around a manufacturing business from Chapter 11 to industry preeminence early in her career. Having discovered and effectively utilized a number of government and nonprofit business assistance programs to achieve this feat, she launched a social entrepreneurial venture to help others learn about and connect with the resources they required to start, grow and succeed in business and life. Collectively, these virtual entrepreneurial resource and educational communities are driving over 125,000 business-to-business connections each month in support of venture launch, growth and sustainability.

Deborah holds with high honors a Doctor of Arts in Transformational Leadership with a concentration in entrepreneurship and youth development from Franklin Pierce University, an MBA from Southern New Hampshire University, and a Bachelor of Business Science from New Hampshire College. She also possesses certificate training in Webmaster Technologies, Communications, Leadership, Entrepreneurial Training and Graphic Design.

Susan Patrick
Visitation Team Member
iNACOL President and CEO

Susan Patrick is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL). iNACOL is the international K-12 nonprofit association representing the interests of practitioners, providers and students involved in online learning worldwide.

She is the former Director of the Office of Educational Technology at the U.S. Department of Education. As Director, she published the U.S. National Education Technology Plan for Congress and managed research and technical assistance programs on educational technology. In addition, she co-chaired the federal government's Advanced Technologies Working Group for Education and Training; and served as a member of the Secretary's Rural Education Task Force.

In 2008, Susan Patrick was named by *eSchool News*, a leading national education technology journal, as one of the top 10 national education leaders who "have had a profound impact on educational technology" in the past decade for her work at iNACOL and at the U.S. Department of Education.

Patrick holds a master's degree from the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication in Los Angeles and a bachelor's degree from the Colorado College.

Susan Patrick has published articles and appeared in a variety of national news media such as CNN, Newsweek, USA Today, ABC News, NBC, CBS, US News and World Report, Christian Science Monitor, CSPAN, Computerworld, Forbes, National Public Radio, Education Week, New York Times, London Times, eSchool News, Converge, and numerous other publications.

APPENDIX B

VISITATION SCHEDULE

VIRTUAL LEARNING ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL (VLACS) NHDOE Accreditation Renewal Process

October 3, 2012

9:00 a.m.	<i>Welcome and Introductions</i>
9:15 a.m.	<i>About VLACS—Dr. Stephen Kossakoski</i>
9:45 a.m.	<i>Review Schedule for the day and intended outcomes</i>
10:00 a.m.	<i>Interview Parents (Group I) (4 w/ representation of ft & pt)</i> <i>Interview Students (Group II) (3ft, 3pt)</i>
10:40 a.m.	<i>Interview Staff (Group I)</i> <i>Interview Administration (Group II)</i>
11:20 a.m.	<i>Interview School Districts (Group I)</i> <i>Interview Faculty (Group II) (4ft, 4pt)</i>
12:00 p.m.	<i>Interview VLACS Board Representatives</i>
12:30 p.m.	<i>Lunch</i> <i>(Open Discussion w/ VLACS Administration, Staff and Board members over lunch)</i>
1:15 p.m.	<i>SYMPOSIUM</i> <i>(Open to all VLACS personnel, invited guests, Board Members)</i> <i>'The Trends that Craft the Future of Learning'</i> <i>Ms. Susan Patrick</i>
2:15 p.m.	<i>Visitation Team Work Session</i>
3:00 p.m.	<i>Report of preliminary findings</i>

September 18, 2011

INVITATION

VIRTUAL LEARNING ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL (VLACS)

Accreditation Renewal Visitation Team

You are cordially invited to participate as a member of the Accreditation Team who will review the credentials and program integrity of VLACS as part of the charter renewal requirements in New Hampshire. The team will convene on **October 3, 2012** at the VLACS center in Exeter, NH and will include a full day of discussions, interviews and collective discussions that will speak to the stature of VLACS but also include an open discussion on *"The trends that craft the future of learning."* The schedule for October 3rd is attached.

Dr. Richard Ayers will chair the visitation team with the support of Dr. Ed Hendry, Ms. Jane Bergeron, Ms. Susan Patrick (President and CEO of iNACOL) and four educators/consultants from NH schools or educational organizations. Please consider joining us for what will be an insightful professional experience. (Reply to rayers@seresc.net or 603-206-6878)

(Note: Several educational leaders in our state will also be invited to the afternoon symposium; your suggestions for additional invitees are welcomed.)

Look forward to hearing from you,

Richard Ayers

APPENDIX C

CASE STUDY REPORT



SERESC

*Inspiring innovation and excellence in
education and professional practice.*

September 6, 2012

VLACS Accreditation Renewal

Case Study Process

The Case Study component of the Accreditation Renewal process is intended to capture a portrait of the essence of the school from the perspective of students, teachers and perhaps parents. In essence, this is an important component of the process for relating the relevance of VLACS in the 'story' of the school that will be described through this process and which will validate the current and future 'footprint' of the school in the educational landscape of New Hampshire and beyond.

The Case Study will focus on expressions of the school's posture in regard to:

- Mission- is the mission understood and purposely applied?
- Goals- are the goals clear from an organizational perspective as well as for individual student's learning?
- Curriculum & Instruction—Is the curriculum well established, connected to competencies and standards and conscientiously applied in instructional methodologies?
- Assessment—Is assessment of student performance thorough, connected to competencies and the driver for supportive instruction?
- Student Services—are appropriate accommodations made for individual student learning styles and predetermined learning or behavioral challenges (SPED)?
- Family engagement—Are parent/s/ involved in student's learning and effectively engaged through communications in their child's learning plan?

VIRTUAL LEARNING ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL (VLACS)**CHARTER RENEWAL – October 3, 2012*****A Case Study***

Tyler is a fourteen-year old student who continues a family tradition for enrollment in VLACS. His sister is currently completing her High School studies following a home school education through elementary and middle school; Tyler now intends to follow the same path through his high school studies. Tyler speaks to the convenience of on-line learning, the flexibility of continuing a single course of study through to completion and to the individualized attention he receives from his teachers. He is fascinated by the teachers use of ‘film’ and other media in the lessons and finds the ‘pace chart’ that records his weekly progress a sensible way to illustrate his progress to his family. For a young adolescent, he is very pronounced in stating that VLACS is not for everyone, but is pleased that it works “amazingly well” for him.

Anne is a parent who grew-up in a family of teachers and who states in the very beginning of our conversation that: “I have never come across such an engaging learning experience as VLACS presents to Alex (her daughter).” Alex now attends VLACS full time, taking four classes and benefitting greatly from having the freedom to work at “her own pace”. Aside from speaking to the expanse of learning venues provided (such as YouTube videos in math, etc.), Anne spoke to an assignment that involved her family in the critique of a film. She has high praise for all of her daughter’s teachers, each of whom speak personally to Alex once a week. In the closing of our conversation, Anne speaks her regret that VLACS was not available to her son in his high school years—that he dropped out of school in part because he was not “challenged” academically.

Jen is a full-time teacher with ninety-seven students she directs in an array of social studies courses. She comes to VLACS following several years of teaching in military-based high schools. She goes far beyond stating that VLACS fits with her priorities (3 young daughters) to describing the relationship she has with each of her students and their families. This portrait began with a description of the 'welcome call' where teachers have an extended initial conversation with the students and their families that includes a mutual commitment to monitor and promote the student's course of study. This initial conversation leads to many follow-up conversations on the student's learning style and progress in meeting expectations. Interestingly, most of the assessments of student's progress are tallied in discussion-based assessments that are personalized and purposely challenging for the student. A touching conversation was about a bi-polar student who was at times difficult to reach and engage in discussions about his course work. She persisted with a most grateful parent who stated to her that she was the only teacher in her son's schooling who did not "give-up" on his learning. Jen was informed of the student's disability, conferred with his school-based teachers and devised a systematic approach to working with the student, through one course at a time, to the successful completion of the student's course of study. As our conversation came to closure, I asked Jen how VLACS fit with her future aspirations as a teacher. She responded by saying; "I am very committed to VLACS and am inspired by the fact that the school is always evolving and everyone is passionate about what they doing. I could not return to the traditional 'brick and mortar' school after seeing what a difference a 'personalized' education means to students and their families."

RWA

Oct. 2012