

## **Southside Virginia Regional Charter School Project Narrative - Abstract**

The Southside Virginia Regional Charter School (SVRCS) design/planning team members propose to locate our charter school in a high needs rural area in response to the Secretary's Invitational Priority 1. Our project purpose is four-fold: 1) to create a state-of-the-art charter school drawing upon current research in school restructuring and education reform; 2) utilize current best practices in teaching and learning; 3) create a rural model for charter school design and founding; and 4) build local capacity to advance excellence in curriculum development, best practices pedagogies, school structure and operations, fiscal management, and governance.

The mission of SVRCS is to educate scholars through exploration and teamwork providing a strong foundation for life-long curiosity and learning, postsecondary education and active citizenship. The founders of SVRCS envision a school in which children will learn rigorous academic content and master higher-order skills in preparation for middle and high school. The SVRCS rests on the belief that an exciting and nurturing learning environment steeped in local history and culture, and responsive to and supportive of all students' learning needs will yield high performance outcomes for our youngsters.

The Commonwealth of Virginia has only four charter schools – none of which are located in rural areas. We propose to locate our school in rural Prince Edward County. Population statistics and demographics, and proposed school location make it difficult to attract, develop and retain talent – particularly those with expertise in the design and establishment of new schools. For these reasons, embedded in our design and planning process, our founders will create a model for talent recruitment, development and retention thereby building local capacity to advance excellence in curriculum development, best practices pedagogies, school structure and operations, fiscal management, and governance. The culmination of these efforts will result in guidelines for rural charter school development – providing other locales with tools and strategies to found new charter schools. Together with our partner organization, the Moton Museum – having previously established goodwill and strong relationships across the southern Virginia region – we have assembled a design/planning team with expertise in school design, development, and start-up. We are, therefore, uniquely poised to develop a model for rural charter school development that can be replicated in other parts of the country.