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Beginning a Cooperative Office Education Program for the Career and Technical Education Students at Essex High School

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**Beginning a Cooperative Office Education Program for the Career and Technical
Education Students at Essex High School**

**A Research Paper
Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Department of Occupational and Technical Studies
at Old Dominion University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirement for the
Master of Science Degree**

**By
Teresa P. Fallin
August, 2002**

APPROVAL PAGE

This research paper was prepared by Teresa P. Fallin under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in OTED 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science.

Approval By: John M. Ritz 8-20-02
Date

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Teresa P. Fallin

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to the *Vocational Cooperative Education Guide for Teacher-Coordination* developed by the Virginia Department of Education, cooperative education is defined as a method of instruction that combines vocational classroom instruction with paid employment directly related to the classroom instruction. (VCE Guide, p. 5) With a goal of contributing to the student's career objective and employability, student instruction and employment are designed and supervised by the school and the employer.

There are two types of cooperative education:

1. Students who have had no previous training in their occupational area.
2. Students who have had previous training in their occupational area.

This research will attempt to explore several characteristics necessary to produce an effective and successful cooperative education program with the emphasis on Cooperative Office Education in Essex County. First, Essex High School must develop a written policy on the COE program addressing such things as the teacher-coordinator duties and qualifications, content of the training plan, course credit, student wages, and administration of the program. The need to identify employers willing to train and employ students is another important part of the COE program process.

The Virginia DOE has specific guidelines that must be followed when offering Cooperative Education. Among those are requirements of teacher-coordinators endorsement to teach the course in which the cooperative method is used, training for the teacher-coordinator, the possibility of extended contracts, maximum class size, supervised work experience hours required for approved programs, training agreement, and training plan.

After these have been outlined, community support must be established. This research will provide the methods of garnering training sponsors and sites. Once each consideration has been established, the administration will be apprised of the research, and implementation will then be considered.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to examine the feasibility of beginning a Cooperative Office Education Program for the Career and Technical Education students at Essex High School in the school term 2002-2003 as a determinate of implementing the program.

RESEARCH GOALS

With the purpose of examining the feasibility of beginning a cooperative education program at Essex High School, the research objectives were to:

1. Identify what a cooperative office education program entails.

2. Identify the level of internal and external interest of (a) the students, (b) the administration, and (c) the community at large.
3. Determine the practices of other COE programs in Virginia in order to gain insight from experienced coordinators.
4. Determine the implementation possibilities of beginning a feasible cooperative education program with emphasis on cooperative office education at Essex High School, or as a result of this study, decide to study a COE Program for another year.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

In the fall of 2001, several key administrative personnel from Essex High School met with the Guidance Department chairperson, the Career and Technical Department chairperson, and a teacher of Business and Information Technology to discuss the problem of senior students leaving school early with no accountability. The ensuing discussion examined the problem and possible solutions. Questions arose, such as: Did these students actually go to a job? Was there someone who held them accountable for that job? Did the job enhance their learning opportunities at school?

Realizing that a large percentage of students (30%) were leaving school after actually only having been in school for two classes, and determining that this was not in the best interest of these students, a study was launched to seek the best alternative for the next school year for this population of students.

The Cooperative Education learning experience was suggested as a means of meeting the needs of career and technical students who met the criteria set by the school's administration. (That criteria being only seniors could be in the program, they would have to take at least four classes plus a Cooperative Education (business) class, and they would have to qualify for the program through standards set by the COE coordinator and school administration.) Since a Cooperative Education program had never been implemented at Essex High School before, research was needed to understand exactly what such a program would require, if indeed the school administration would be in support of a COE Program, if students were interested, and if the business community at large would lend support.

Essex High School is a small school in a rural community. It has a Career and Technical Education Department that includes business and information technology, agriculture, automotive repair, food service, nursing, carpentry, and work and family studies. By examining these offerings and the students seeking careers as a furtherance of their study, can a Cooperative Office Education program be developed?

LIMITATIONS

This study was completed with the following limitations:

1. The population of this study was limited to career and technical education students at Essex High School.

2. The data collected were limited to the Virginia public schools and private business organizations.
3. The fact that the school budget for next year had not been approved yet could be a limitation in implementing a COE program in Essex High School.
4. This study was conducted during the current school year, 2001-2002, but it was proposed for the next school year, 2002-2003.

ASSUMPTIONS

The results of this study were based on the following assumptions:

1. It was assumed that this research would be a conclusive study for a COE program for Essex High School.
2. It was assumed that business and industry would want to participate in the COE program with Essex High School.
3. It was assumed that all applicable students completed a survey indicating their interest in participating in a COE program.
4. It was assumed that beginning a COE program at Essex High School would be a major enterprise but would benefit the

learning experience of career and technical students.

PROCEDURES

As a precursor to the study, the school administration of Essex High School requested research be done to see if beginning a COE program would be feasible. The Guidance Department of the school, in coordination with the Business and Information Technology Department, developed a questionnaire to gauge student population interest in being a part of a COE program. The findings were then analyzed and conclusions and recommendations were recorded. Consideration was given as to who would implement a COE program and how it would be implemented. Once students who qualified for this program were determined, local businesses/prospective employers needed to be identified. This was accomplished by contacting the local Chamber of Commerce to find out the top five employers in Essex County. In order to fully understand the COE program and process, the DOE was contacted and a list of COE programs in other high schools were identified. From the list, a survey was developed to gain useful information on a personal level of current implementations of COE programs.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are defined to assist the readers of this study.

1. **COE Program** – Cooperative office education program.

2. **DOE** – Department of Education.
3. **COE Coordinator** – The person designated to oversee the COE Program.
4. **Career and Technical Education Students** – formerly called Vocational Education students; students enrolled in such career-related classes as: agriculture, automotive repair, business and information technology, carpentry, family and consumer sciences, food service, or nursing.
5. **Training Sponsor** – the experienced business or tradesperson who agrees to work with and train the student on the job.
6. **CBE** – Competency Based Education.
7. **CRM** – Criterion Referenced Measures.
8. **Training Agreement** – a written statement of commitment between the student, the parent, the teacher-coordinator, and the training sponsor.
9. **Training Plan** – tasks required for the student on the job.

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

Chapter I proposes the need for establishing a COE program at Essex High School. Certain factors need to be recognized including the limitations of living and working in a rural area.

Chapter I of this research paper introduced cooperative education as a viable learning method of career and technical education students at Essex High School. The need for establishing a Cooperative Office Education program was discussed. Goals were established and a background of the problem was discussed along with the reason for studying this problem. In order to study this problem, limitations and assumptions were drawn to make the actual study possible.

The information in this study has been divided into five chapters. Chapter I contains the introduction and gives a general overview of the paper. Chapter II includes a review of literature. Included in the review of literature will be important variables that would affect the implementation of a COE program at Essex High School. Chapter III will discuss the methods and procedures used to conduct the study. The procedures for determining the validity and reliability of the study will be investigated.

In Chapter IV the finding of this study will be discussed and evaluated. The findings will be analyzed to establish if the data collected has any application to the study. Finally, in Chapter V, all the data gathered will be summarized and conclusions and recommendations will be proposed from the findings.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter is a review of the literature that was available to this researcher on the topic of this study. A number of important variables that would affect the implementation of a Cooperative Office Education program at Essex High School will be presented under the following subheadings: the need for cooperative education, identification of the interest and support of a COE program, benefits of a cooperative education program, explanation of cooperative education, practices of other COE programs in Virginia, and community support for a COE program.

THE NEED FOR A COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

According to the Vocational Cooperative Education guide's most recent publication, before cooperative education is established in a Virginia public high school, the need for such a program must be determined. (VCE, 1993, p.11) Stated in this publication is the following:

Two important factors for a successful program are student interest and community support. If these exist, a cooperative education program may be established. In order to ensure both student interest and community support, the cooperative education program must offer clear benefits to students, the school, the community, and especially to employers in the community. (VCE, 1993, p. 11)

There are specific procedures for establishing a cooperative education program once the need for one has been determined. Establishing the interest

of the students was done by explaining to prospective students of Essex High School (juniors and seniors in good standing) the cooperative education program in general and the cooperative office education program specifically. Students were given the facts and asked to indicate their desire to apply for the program to their business teachers. Along with garnering student interest, the school administration was also surveyed. Originally, the county's assistant superintendent indicated the desire of the school board in researching the need and feasibility of beginning a cooperative education program. The principal and guidance counselors also gave their approval in researching the feasibility of beginning a cooperative education program that would begin as a COE (cooperative office education) program.

BENEFITS OF A COOPERATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM

A cooperative education program benefits students, the school, the community, and employers/trainers. These benefits can be a lasting part of the learning experience.

Students develop an understanding and a respect for both the work and the worker. Useful employment skills and on-the-job training under actual working conditions give students the opportunity for learning on a practical level. When students apply for a job, get it, and then hold on to it, these young people develop an established and levelheaded concept of self. (VCE, p. 15) The school-to-work transition is made easier and is another benefit to students.

For the school, interaction with trained professionals in the work world outside the school provides the training for students. As employment conditions change, teachers, guidance counselors, and school administration are able to provide opportunities to apply those changes to the needs of the cooperative education program. (Crow, 1997, p. 2)

Cooperative on-the-job training helps improve the community's pattern of job stability by giving local students valuable job skills and community responsibility. School and community partnerships can develop. As the number of young people make a successful transition from school to work, the community benefits by the addition of productive members of society. (web, Coop.uc)

The training sponsor assists the cooperative education coordinator in analyzing jobs and developing training outlines. As students are prepared to work in their own localities, the skills they develop will be specific to the methods of the local employer. (web, co-op. edu)

EXPLANATION OF COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

Cooperative education, as defined by the Department of Education in Virginia, is "a method of instruction that combines vocational classroom instruction with paid employment directly related to the classroom instruction." (VTE, p. 5) For the purposes of this research, it is cooperative education for seniors at Essex High School, and it is more specifically to be cooperative office

education to be directly related to business classes in which these seniors would be enrolled.

There is an abundance of literature maintaining the usefulness and long-term benefit to students of cooperative education programs. In *Cooperative Education: Characteristics and Effectiveness*, Kerka (1997) details positive outcomes of cooperative education such as increased relevance of learning and motivation for study, improved self-reliance, self-confidence, and responsibility.

Cooperative education involves agreements between schools and employers to provide on-the-job training related to students' work aptitudes and interests. Schools and employers would agree upon these training opportunities and experiences. (Smith and Edmunds, 1999) By combining the academic/business class work with paid, progressive work experience in a related field of interest and expertise, students can earn money to assist in future college or training expenses, learn how to apply their education and assemble connections as well as a resume to help them with getting a job after graduation.

An annual wage and hour report is submitted at the end of the school term to document the number of students and employers involved in cooperative office education programs. Total wages earned by students enrolled in the program is also reported. (VTE, p. 21)

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR A COE PROGRAM

In order to determine if the community of Tappahannock would be supportive of a COE program, community leaders and business people were

contacted to inquire of their feelings about participating in such a program. This was done first by inviting prospective employers/trainers to a Career Fair at the high school. From those who agreed to participate in the Career Fair, an evaluation form was filled out with indication given as to the level of participation they might be willing to give. Of the those polled, many indicated that they would be interested in learning more about the COE program and would indeed give consideration to becoming an employer and mentor.

PRACTICES OF OTHER COE PROGRAMS IN VIRGINIA

Along with the information obtained from the literature already referenced, a survey was sent to a group of business education COE coordinators in order to gain a better picture of those currently working in a COE program. These coordinators told of their experience, rated their satisfaction (or lack thereof) with their programs, and gave examples of success stories of students. When asked about the time involved to plan an effective COE program, one coordinator related the following:

Time spent coordinating COE takes lots of time, but it's worth it. There's not a day that goes by that I don't call an employer, visit an employer, call a COE parent, recruit new students for the next year, or recruit new employers. (Stowers, email)

The types of employers and time management issues were also addressed in the survey. Examples of good employers were given such as medical offices, engineering firms, retirement homes, insurance offices, and school board offices.

Most coordinators stated that they had extended contracts and/or an extra planning period per day to work on the COE program.

One who was surveyed told of her ten years of experience in Ohio. Their COE was called CBE for Cooperative Business Education because "COE tends to be thought of by students as secretarial jobs so males don't sign up." (Stowers, survey) The survey results gave factual information that the *Vocational Cooperative Education* manual did not.

SUMMARY

Chapter II, a Review of Literature, dealt with determining the need for a cooperative office education program at Essex High School and identifying the level of support of the students and the administration. It also covered the benefits of a cooperative education program to the student, school, community, and employer. A brief explanation of cooperative education was discussed, as was an overview of actual current COE coordinators' insights on their programs. Lastly, the question of whether there would be support from the community was presented.

This chapter gave an overall guide for determining the need for a COE program. In reviewing this generalized guide, it was determined that Essex High School does indeed have a need for a program such as this. Students and administration both indicated this need.

The benefits of a cooperative education program can have a long-range effect of success for the student in maturing and becoming responsible employees. The school benefits by having positive community, parental, and employer interactions. The employer and community benefit by having capable and trainable employees who may become permanent employees after high school and college, thus returning to be productive citizens in the community.

Cooperative education was determined to be a viable means of instruction combining the classroom training with paid on-the-job training outside the classroom as a continuation of the learning experience. In the case of this study, it is aimed at Essex High School seniors. Finally, it was determined that the community would be supportive in the locality of Essex High School for a cooperative education program. Chapter III will discuss methods and procedures used during this research.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The methods and procedures used to gather the data for this study will be discussed in this chapter. A descriptive method of research was used and will be explained in the following sub-sections: Population, Instrument Design, Methods of Data Collection, Analysis of Data, and Summary.

POPULATION

The population for this study was the prospective juniors and seniors at Essex High School, school administration, COE coordinators in Virginia, Virginia Department of Education's Program Specialist for Business and Information Technology, and prospective trainers/employers for a cooperative office education program.

INSTRUMENT DESIGNS

The first instrument design chosen for this research was a very basic survey (Survey I) of upcoming junior and senior business education students with both open-ended and closed-ended questions. This survey consisted of seven questions, and a copy of the survey is included in Appendix A. This survey was designed to seek the interest and aptitude of students desiring to be involved in a future COE program at Essex High School.

The second instrument design was a cover letter and survey (Survey II) sent to COE coordinators in Virginia public schools. The survey consisted of both

open-ended and closed-ended questions, and a copy of the cover letter and survey is included in Appendix B. Designed to gather data to determine the practices of other COE programs, this survey was intended for those experienced in the field of cooperative office education in Virginia.

A third instrument design was a telephone interview guide used to interview the Department of Education's Program Specialist for Business and Information Technology. From this interview, clarity was established in the difference between cooperative education and cooperative office education. A copy of this telephone interview guide is found in Appendix C.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Data from prospective junior and senior students at Essex High School were collected from Survey I. Data were then collected from Survey II where COE coordinators from public high schools across Virginia responded. In addition, a follow-up letter was sent three weeks after the original cover letter was mailed seeking further survey data. A copy of the follow-up letter can be found in Appendix D. A telephone interview was completed with the VDOE Program Specialist for Business and Information Technology.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Information was collected and tabulated from the surveys to the Essex High School students. Percentages were determined from the results received. The surveys sent to COE coordinators were faxed, mailed, and emailed back to

this researcher for analysis. The participant responses for the interview were recorded on the interview guide with brief notes regarding contextual responses. All data having been collected, it was analyzed and tabulated to determine its relationship to this study. This information has been placed in table format with percentages and averages relating to the responses.

SUMMARY

Chapter III presented the methods and procedures that were utilized to obtain the essential data for this study. This descriptive study examined the population, instrument designs, methods of data collection, and analysis of data. In Chapter IV, the finding of the data collected will be reported.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the feasibility of beginning a Cooperative Office Education Program for the Career and Technical Education students at Essex High School. This chapter will show the results found by conducting a review of the literature and surveys taken.

Research Question One

Research question one was to identify through the review of literature what a Cooperative Office Education Program entailed. Through this review, it was determined that:

1. COE is a method of instruction that combines classroom instruction with paid employment in a training station outside the classroom.
2. Cooperative Education would benefit the student, school, community, and employer.
3. COE would need a coordinator to work directly with students, parents, and employers.

Research Question Two

Research question two was to identify, through the review of literature, the internal and external interests of students, school administration, and the community at large. This was done first by giving an explanation to the students regarding COE (Appendix A), and by surveying the sophomores and juniors at

Essex High School to determine their interest in being a part of a COE program.

(Appendix B). The results are found in Table 1.

Table 1

Survey Results of Sophomores and Juniors at Essex High School	
Random Sampling of Survey Questions:	Results
Students planning to take a business class next year	181
Students currently holding a job	85
Average hours worked per week	20
Kinds of jobs worked:	
Office:	10
Clerk:	11
Food Service:	27
Other:	33
Students interested in participating in a COE Program	56
Total number of students participating in this survey	211

These findings indicate that 86% of the students surveyed plan to take a business class next year, 40% of the students work during the school year, and the average hours worked per week at the time of this survey were 20. The student job interests ranged from office (11%), to clerk (13%), to food service (32%), to other (39%). Of the 211 students surveyed, 26% indicated an interest in learning more about a COE program.

In addition, the school administration gave their approval of this research thereby giving their endorsement and support of beginning a COE Program. The community at large was polled informally at the most recent Career Fair held at

Essex High School in the spring of 2002. Of the ten local business people in attendance, eight indicated they would be interested in learning more about the cooperative method of education and would give consideration to becoming a training sponsor and mentor.

Research Question Three

Research question three was to determine from the survey (Appendix B) the practices of other COE programs in Virginia in order to understand how the program worked. This was done by mailing a cover letter (Appendix C) to 40 COE Coordinators in the state along with a survey (Appendix D) to be completed and then by following up (Appendix E) to get in more surveys in order to have a fair representation. An interview was also taken from the Virginia Department of Education's Business and Information Technology Specialist and these findings follow (Appendix F).

The responses from the survey to COE Coordinators are found in Tables 2 - 5. The total responses have been listed as well as an overall average. Originally, forty surveys were mailed. Of these, twenty-six were returned for a total response rate of 65%. Questions one and two were open-ended questions.

Table 2

Questions 1 and 2

Question	Average
1. How long have you been involved with the COE Program?	9 years
2. How long has your school had a COE Program?	18 years

Table 2 defines questions 1 – 2. These questions explore the length of COE Program experience and provide objective, quantitative data. Of the 26 responses, 15 had over 10 years experience; five had over 25 years experience with an average overall experience of 9 years.

The responses to Questions 3, 4, and 5 are in Table 3. These questions were open-ended questions and subjective and the findings are as follows:

Table 3
Questions 3, 4, and 5

Questions:	Responses:
3. What kinds of employers have proven to be the best at training students?	Law offices, government offices, banks, accountants, insurance offices, telemarketing, medical offices, educational institutions
4. Is your program in a rural community?	16 Yes – 10 No
5. Approximately how much time a week is devoted to the COE Program?	Anywhere from 5 hours a week to 23 hours a week

Respondents gave suggested office training areas as listed in Table 3 with banks and government offices being the most popular training sites. Since Essex County is in a rural area, it was important to note that a COE Program could run successfully in a rural area. The hours devoted to the COE Program reflected the number of students in the program. A larger program required more hours of commitment.

The responses to questions 6, 7, and 8 were closed-ended questions and subjective and are found in Table 4.

Table 4
Questions 6, 7, and 8

Questions:	Responses:
6. How would you rate your program?	Successful – 18 Struggling – 5 Needs Improvement – 3
7. How would you rate your employers/trainers?	Wonderful – 13 Good – 13 Fair – 0 Poor – 0
8. How would you rate the administrative support of your COE Program?	Extremely Supportive – 9 Supportive – 13 Could use More Support - 4

Overall, the respondents to the survey reported that their programs were successful with a 69% success rating. The responses were divided equally between wonderful and good when rating the employers or trainers. The support of administration for the COE Program was deemed generally supportive.

Questions 9, 10, 11 and 12

The findings of the responses for the remaining questions follow. Question 9 asked, "Is there anything you would change about your program? What?" The consensus of this question seemed to be summarized in the following:

- More time is needed to coordinate.
- More qualified students are needed for the program.
- Guidance needs to work with the coordinator in placing students.

- Trainers need to agree not to hire a student full-time, thereby eliminating the position for future COE students.
- A 4 x 4 schedule makes it difficult to always see the students who are in the program and keep up with their attendance.

Question 10 asked, "Can you share a success story?" This question garnered success stories of students being hired both after high school and after college in a full-time position. Some of the success stories shared are as follows:

- Employers solicit for students in the COE Program.
- Employers hire students full-time right out of high school and then offer financial assistance as they pursue higher education opportunities.
- A COE student became an office manager after graduation and has become a trainer of COE students now.
- A COE student became a web master and designed and published web pages for a company.
- Several students went into management positions.
- The COE Program meets the needs of diverse learning styles:
 - Student with lack of classroom success became a successful employee.
 - The training opportunity improved behavior of a student at school.

Question 11 asked, "Does the COE Coordinator have an extended contract? What kind?" Table 5 notes the different kinds of extended contracts that the surveys revealed:

Table 5

Extended Contracts of COE Coordinators

11-month contracts: 16	10-day extended contract: 2
5-day extended contract: 1	14-day extended contract: 2
7-day extended contract: 1	No extended contract: 4

Extended contracts are necessary to set up training stations, interview and match students with jobs, complete paperwork for the ending year and draw up contracts for students and trainers for the next year. Although the majority of the respondents reported an 11-month extended contract, the table shows that there are also other options offered by different school systems. These would be determined by budgetary constraints.

Question 12 asked, "Do you have a class period devoted to COE? What is the class?" Eighty-eight percent of the respondents reported that they have an extra planning period devoted to coordinating and administering the COE program. There is not a class called COE. Instead, the COE method of instruction is used in such classes as: Accounting, Computer Information Systems, Office Administration, Word Processing, and Desktop Publishing.

Interview with Specialist

An interview with the Business and Office Technology Specialist from the Virginia Department of Education revealed the following:

- Cooperative Office Education is a method of instruction for business students; Cooperative Education is a method of instructions for Career

and Technical students in other career tracks such as: Agriculture, Marketing, and Food Services.

- A teacher who is able to work with the students, the administration, and the community should be the correct candidate for Coordinator.
- The only costs involved in beginning a COE Program would be in offering an extended contract and in allowing the Coordinator an extra planning period for administration of the program.
- The time required to operate a COE Program should be covered in the planning period and the extension of time before school begins and after school ends.
- There may be as few as one student in a COE Program to as many as twenty.
- Training is offered each summer for new Coordinators.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, the responses given on the instruments used for this study were examined. The purpose of this study was to determine what a Cooperative Office Education Program was and explore what beginning such a program in Essex County would entail. The feasibility of offering a COE Program has been examined by reviewing the findings herein. In order to determine if implementation is possible, the study instruments were developed and have been explored in Chapter IV. In Chapter V, Summary, Conclusions, and

Recommendations, the results of the study will be summarized and conclusions and recommendations will be made on the findings of this study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter will first summarize all the information contained in the previous four chapters; conclusions and recommendations will be made on the findings of this study. This chapter will be made up of the following headings: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine the feasibility of beginning a Cooperative Office Education Program for the Career and Technical Education students at Essex High School in the school term 2002-2003 as a determinant of implementing the program. The research goals were then determined and included:

1. Identify what a cooperative office education program entails.
2. Identify the level of internal and external interest of (a) the students, (b) the administration, and (c) the community at large.
3. Determine the practices of other COE programs in Virginia in order to gain insight from experienced coordinators.
4. Determine the implementation possibilities of beginning a feasible cooperative education program with emphasis on cooperative office education at Essex High School, or as a result of this study, decide to study it for another year.

The limiting factors of this study were that:

1. The population of this study was limited to career and technical education students at Essex High School.
2. The data collected were limited to the Virginia public schools and private business organizations.
3. The fact that the school budget for next year had not been approved yet could be a limitation in implementing a COE program in Essex High School.
4. This study was conducted during the current school year, 2001-2002, but it was proposed for implementation during the next school year, 2002-2003.

Four basic assumptions were made during this research project. These assumptions were:

1. It was assumed that this research would be a conclusive study for a COE program for Essex High School.
2. It was assumed that business and industry would want to participate in the COE program with Essex High School.
3. It was assumed that all applicable students completed a survey indicating their interest in participating in a COE program.
4. It was assumed that beginning a COE program at Essex High School would be a major enterprise but would benefit the learning experience of career and technical students.

Data were successfully collected from students enrolled in Essex High School. From a sampling of COE Coordinators in Virginia's public schools, information was gathered regarding hands-on experience in administering a COE Program. The Virginia Department of Education Business and Technology Education Specialist was interviewed regarding the state guidelines for beginning a COE Program. The data collected from all instruments were compiled to use to draw conclusions.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings from the surveys and from the review of literature were analyzed and compared to the goals initially established for this study and are listed below:

Goal One: Identify what a Cooperative Office Education Program entails.

A Cooperative Office Education Program would need a coordinator to administer this method of instruction. Cooperative Office Education would allow students over sixteen years of age to work in a job related to their career goals and receive high school credit. Training sponsors would need to be secured.

Goal Two: Identify the level of internal and external interest of (a) the students, (b) the administration, and (c) the community at large.

The results of the surveys showed that fifty-six percent of the students surveyed would be interested in participating in a COE Program. The administration gave their approval to have a feasibility study for a COE Program. The community at large showed support of this program through participation at

the Spring Career Fair. There were thirty-five participants representing business, industry, and the armed services. Of these, ten indicated an interest in learning more about the COE Program.

Goal 3: Determine the practices of other COE Programs in Virginia in order to gain insight from experienced coordinators.

Forty surveys were sent to a random sampling of COE Coordinators across the state with sixty-five percent responding. The conclusions drawn by this researcher were that the COE Program can be:

- Administered effectively by a COE Coordinator who was given an extended contract and an extra planning period for administration.
- Effective when working with acceptable training stations such as: law office, banks, insurance offices, government offices, educational facilities, accountants, and medical offices.
- Administered effectively in a rural area such as Essex County.

Goal Four: Determine the implementation possibilities of beginning a feasible Cooperative Education Program with emphasis on a COE Program at Essex High School, or as a result of this study, decide to study it for another year.

After studying the data from the COE coordinators, the extra time and money needed to administer this program needed to be considered. A coordinator not only would need an eleven-month contract, but he/she would also have one less class to teach. Allowances in the schedule and the availability of another teacher to teach the class given up by the coordinator would need to

be resolved. This is data that needs to be not only put in the annual school budget, but it is something that must be planned for a year prior to the actual implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to determine if it would be feasible to begin a Cooperative Office Education Program for the Career and Technical Education students at Essex High School for the school term 2002-2003. Based on the findings in this study it is recommended that:

- Having studied implementation of a Cooperative Office Education Program for this school term, additional considerations need to be made concerning the appointment of a coordinator and inclusion of the program in the annual school budget.
- A COE Program would benefit the students and community in Essex County and should be implemented as soon as the above-mentioned details can be worked out.
- A COE Coordinator should be appointed and provisions should be started at the beginning of the 2002-2003 school term in preparation for implementation of the COE Program in the school term 2003-2004.

In addition, it is recommended that in order to implement a COE Program at Essex High School, the following would need to be done:

1. A proposal would be submitted to the Essex County School Board in November, 2002, requesting permission to implement a COE Program for the 2003-2004 school year.
2. Upon approval of the proposal, students will complete an application and begin the qualification process for being enrolled in the COE Program.
3. Prospective trainers/employers need to be solicited in the Essex County area.
4. Matching the student to the trainer would need to be finalized.
5. Developing manuals and responding forms to conduct the COE Program.
6. Funding consideration would need to be implemented for travel to and from the training sites for the coordinator.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Student Cover Letter

Appendix B: Student Survey

Appendix C: COE Cover Letter

Appendix D: COE Survey

Appendix E: COE Follow-up Letter

Appendix F: State Specialist Interview/Phone Survey

Appendix A

ESSEX HIGH SCHOOL
833 HIGH SCHOOL CIRCLE
TAPPAHANNOCK, VA 22560

June 4, 2002

Dear Students:

Next year, we are hoping to begin a Cooperative Office Education Program here at Essex. To better meet your needs and goals, I need your help.

Please take a few minutes to consider and complete the following survey. For those who choose to include your name and current employer, please know that this information will be held in the strictest confidence.

Thank you for taking part in this survey.

Sincerely,

Teresa P. Fallin
Business and Information Technology Teacher

tpfallin@hotmail.com or tfallin@rcc.vccs.edu

Appendix B

SURVEY FOR SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS

Please answer the following questions honestly. (Circle or fill in the blank.)

1. Do you plan to take a business class next year? Yes No
2. What class do you plan to take?
CIS Business/Marketing Accounting
Intro. To Internet/Web Page Design Office Administration/Business Law
3. Do you currently have a job outside of school? Yes No
4. How many hours a week do you work? 10 20 More
5. What kind of job do you have? Office Clerk Food Service
Other: _____
6. Where do you work? _____
7. Would you be interested in learning more about participating in a Cooperative Office Education Program if one existed here at Essex? (You would be going to school for five periods and then going to a job related to your business education and being accountable to both an employer and the school COE Coordinator. You would receive a high school credit for successfully completing the program.)
Yes No

If you answered Yes to Question 7, then please give your name below.

Appendix C

ESSEX HIGH SCHOOL
833 HIGH SCHOOL CIRCLE
TAPPAHANNOCK, VA 22560

June 10, 2002

Dear COE Coordinator:

I am doing research for my school in order to seek the feasibility of beginning a COE Program for the coming school year. Our state Business and Information Technology Specialist has been most helpful in supplying me with some information, and I am hoping you will take a few minutes to fill out the enclosed survey to help me as I prepare to present my findings.

If you could fax this survey to me before July 10, I would be so appreciative. Also, I am not looking for personal names, but if you could supply your email so that I may ask any additional questions, I would also appreciate that. My email is at the bottom of this letter, so if you have any questions for me, I will gladly answer them.

May I thank you in advance for your help?

Sincerely,

Teresa P. Fallin
Essex High School

tpfallin@hotmail.com or tfallin@rcc.vccs.edu

Appendix D

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION SURVEY

Email: _____

Position: _____

School: _____

Please complete the following survey and return as per the instructions in the cover letter.

1.	How long have you been involved with the COE Program?
2.	How long has your school had a COE Program?
3.	What kinds of employers have proven to be the best at training students?
4.	Is your program in a rural community?
5.	Approximately how much time a week is devoted to the COE Program?
6.	How would you rate your program? a. successful b. struggling c. needs improvement
7.	How would you rate your employers/trainers? a. wonderful b. good c. fair
8.	How would you rate the administrative support of your COE Program? a. extremely supportive b. supportive c. somewhat supportive
9.	Is there anything you would change about your program? What?
10.	Can you share a success story?
11.	Does the COE Coordinator have an extended contract? What kind?
12.	Do you have a class period devoted to COE? What is it?

Appendix E

ESSEX HIGH SCHOOL
833 HIGH SCHOOL CIRCLE
TAPPAHANNOCK, VA 22560

July 1, 2002

Dear COE Coordinator:

This is a follow up letter I sent on June 10 regarding help with a survey for beginning a COE Program at my school. As I stated earlier, I am doing research for my school in order to seek the feasibility of beginning a COE program for the coming school year. The State Specialist has been most helpful in supplying me with information, and I am hoping you will take a few minutes to fill out the enclosed survey to help me as I prepare to present my findings.

I know how busy you are, but if you could fax this survey to me before July 10th, it would be very helpful to me in getting a more complete representation.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Teresa P. Fallin
Essex High School

tpfallin@hotmail.com or tfallin@rcc.vccs.edu

Appendix F

Telephone Survey with the Business Specialist for the Virginia Department of
Education

Taken by Teresa P. Fallin

1. What is the difference between Cooperative Education and Cooperative Office Education?
2. Who coordinates the COE Program?
3. Are there costs involved in beginning a COE Program?
4. How much time would be required to run a COE Program?
5. How many students would I need to begin a COE Program?
6. Is there training I could attend to learn more about Cooperative Education?