

Lab School Standing Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 14, 2022

Committee Members Include:

Bill Hansen	Pam Moran
Andy Rotherham	Tag Greason
Joan Wodiska	John Bailey

Elizabeth Schultz opened the meeting with a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the following key topics:

- Overview Presentation
- First Things – Conflicts of Interest, FOIA, Public Records Act
- Background and Virginia Code
- What is a Lab School?
- Eligible Entities
- Lab School Application Process
- Draft Process and Timeline Considerations
- Key Elements of the Review Process of Lab School Applications
- Discussion on internal processes, decisions, and Q&A

Ms. Schultz reviewed the key training points that are required under the Code of Virginia. All members of the Standing Committee will need to complete required FOIA questions and training. Ms. Schultz informed the Standing Committee that all emails, handwritten notes, electronic notes, texts, etc. related to the Standing Committee’s business are subject to FOIA. Ms. Schultz explained that the main purposes of Lab Schools are to “increase choice and opportunity, inspire innovation, and promote achievement in prek-12 public education and leverage the resources, expertise, and capacity based at the IHEs to provide inventive education service delivery models to students.”

The Standing Committee reviewed a draft timeline of the application process. The process set by the Board makes the Virginia Department of Education (department) responsible for receiving the application, rather than the Standing Committee or the Board.

Some reminders:

- Standing Committee meetings are public meetings, and as such must be properly noticed
- There must be a quorum physically present
- Communications are subject to FOIA
- The Board may review the Standing Committee’s recommendation and approve (or not) a Lab School at any subsequent Board meeting

Mr. Rotherham questioned how much information needs to be reported to the board. Ms. Schultz responded that the Committee will want to include what is relevant; a synthesis of not only what

is in the application, but also the conversation, taking into account the public comments. Mr. Rotherham recommended doing the public comments in writing, making sure everyone has the ability to weigh in quickly. Ms. Schultz recommended that if that is the direction the committee would like to go for compiling public comment, perhaps the best step would be to get a designated email address for Lab School public comments so that they are all in one place.

Dr. Mark L'Esperance, the Dean of the College of Education at James Madison University (JMU), presented to the Committee regarding the Lab School for Innovation and Career Exploration with the goal of becoming an information hub for career exploration. According to Dr. L'Esperance, recent reports have highlighted the need to innovate in education, and the JMU lab school would maximize student's potential academic and social growth. Dr. L'Esperance also talked about community partnerships with the JMU College of Health and Behavioral Studies, Blue Ridge Community College, local businesses, community organizations, and governmental organizations that will aid in the success of the Lab School.

Mr. Rotherham inquired as to what happens to students who decide that a lab school is not for them and whether there is a plan to reintegrate them back into their school. Dr. L'Esperance explained the process and highlighted the ability of students to make choices at different intervals.

Mr. Hansen asked whether there is a process for 7th and 8th grade students to be informed and prepared for entering the program in 9th grade. Dr. L'Esperance responded that there are programs in the middle schools where students do have that exposure and that there are visitation experiences available to students.

One member of the committee stated that they do have additional questions about topics such as the selection process and the number of students. Ms. Schultz suggested that the Committee may want to contribute questions to a document and perhaps identify a point person to interface with an IAG to answer additional questions that you think of that may come up, with the understanding that those questions are subject to FOIA.

At this time, Ms. Schultz informed the presenters for the Southern Virginia Career Academy that one member of the Committee had to leave the meeting, which resulted in not having a quorum. However, Ms. Schultz stated that a presentation is permissible with the understanding that the presenters can ask questions, but the Committee can't make any decisions without a quorum in the room.

Dr. Quentin Johnson, President of Southside Virginia Community College, began his presentation by highlighting the partnerships that will contribute to the success of the lab school program as well as five key pieces of student success: dual enrollment, teaching and learning, community engagement, premier workplace for credentialing, and providing resources to sustain and advance to college admission.

Mr. Paul Nichols, Superintendent of Mecklenburg County Public Schools, gave an overview of the six academies that are already in place; the Advanced Technology Academy, the STEM Academy, Health and Human Services, Law and Leadership, Airforce ROTC, and

Environmental Science. According to Mr. Nichols, credentials and pathways to apprenticeships and internships make a large difference as students pursue associate degrees and other diplomas.

Mr. Hansen asked how state funding and the designation of “lab school” would change the model of the current Mecklenburg County Middle and High School career academies. Dr. Johnson responded that the new Southern Virginia Career Academy would need an executive director who is able to oversee all pieces and components of the lab school, as well as overseeing the development and administration of apprenticeships and curriculum instruction. Further, the lab school would need to identify measurable, administrative and finance staff, and human resource professionals to help get qualified individuals to southside Virginia.

Mr. Rotherham commended the presenters for highlighting the work being done to bring exciting educational opportunities to students in rural southside Virginia communities and the potential it has to change students’ lives.

Ms. Schultz offered her assistance to the Committee as this new and exciting program gets underway. Mr. Hansen stated that it would be helpful for the Committee to understand the cascade and flow of applications, as well as the funding, in order to better understand the allocation of grant funds.