# Agenda Item: I (Revised)

## Date: July 27, 2023

## Title: First and Final Review of College Partnership Laboratory School Application from Virginia Commonwealth University

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## Presenter: Jim Chapman, Director of Board Relations

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## Purpose of Presentation

Action required by state or federal law or regulation (i.e., a change in law requires a change in program requirements; this is part of a regulatory action).

## Executive Summary

On May 26, 2023, Virginia Commonwealth University (“VCU”) submitted a college partnership laboratory school (“lab school”) application for consideration by the Board of Education (“Board”). In accordance with the Board’s [*Guidelines for the Approval of College Partnership Laboratory Schools*](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/42624/638118965497000000) and [the process](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/44483/638188915537430000) established by the Board’s College Partnership Laboratory Schools Standing Committee (“Standing Committee”), the application was reviewed by a subject-matter expert group (“SME group”) composed of staff of the Virginia Department of Education (“VDOE”).

The VDOE SME group generated a completeness and compliance review (“compliance review”), which was submitted to the Standing Committee for review at its meeting on June 5, 2023. The Standing Committee received the application and compliance report, and it also asked questions of representatives from VCU. The Standing Committee also directed VDOE staff to post the application for 10-day public comment period.

On July 7, 2023, the VCU lab school application returned to the Standing Committee for final review. The Standing Committee heard a presentation from Dr. Kim McKnight, Director of the VCU Center for Teacher Leadership, and reviewed additional material received from VCU after first review. The Standing Committee unanimously voted to endorse the VCU lab school application and refer to the Board for approval.

The application proposes for VCU to begin a lab school in conjunction with CodeRVA, an established school that has been operating successfully since the 2017–2018 school year and has consistently met the requirements set by the Standards of Quality, Standards of Accreditation, and Standards of Learning. CodeRVA is currently classified as a Regional Center. The school has an existing board of directors, operational procedures regarding school administration, student records administration, financial planning, and budgeting.

The proposed lab school would combine an innovative and personalized course of instruction for students with the VCU Teacher Residency Program, an undergraduate and graduate teacher residency program that recruits, trains, and supports teachers for high-needs and hard-to-staff schools. The lab school would address multiple desirable outcomes for students, future teachers, and corporate hiring needs, including the following:

* Students will be gain valuable workforce readiness skills in computer science;
* Students have opportunities for dual enrollment for college degrees;
* Future/student teachers will be mentored in unique educator preparation programs and become mentors themselves, making lessons available to others across the state; and
* Virginia companies will have access to computer/technology trained candidates.

There was an expansive level of detail on budget line items, as well as a strong governance structure. The Applicant’s addition of the VCU staff to the CodeRVA board of directors’ works to balance board control. Nevertheless, the Lab School statutes favor control by the institute of Higher Education. VDOE SME team will work with the Applicant to develop a mechanism to transition CodeRVA from a Regional Center to a Laboratory School meeting statutory compliance within the Applicant’s constitution, governance, and bylaws.

The approval of lab schools aligns with Priority 1 of the Board’s *Comprehensive Plan 2018–2023*: provide high-quality, effective learning environments for all students.

## Action Requested

First and final review: Action requested at this meeting.

## Superintendent’s Recommendation

On the basis of the recommendations from the Standing Committee, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (“Superintendent”) recommends that the Board of Education waive first review and approve the VCU lab school application for a three-year period with annual reviews.

The Superintendent further recommends that the Board delegate to the President of the Board and the Superintendent final negotiation of the college partnership laboratory school contract with VCU, including awarding start-up funds and up to $6 million in per-pupil funding from the College Partnership Laboratory School Fund in accordance with the Board’s [*Guidelines and Criteria for the Award and Distribution of Lab School Start-Up and Per-Pupil Operating Funding Grants for Approved Lab Schools*](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/39712/638067155633670000).

## Rationale for Action

The VCU lab school proposal partners allows a highly regarded institute of higher education with one of the Commonwealth’s premier, innovative high schools. The underlying school model is proven and operational, and the partnership with VCU is ready to implement through the lab school model. Additionally, the proposal has undergone a thorough review process by the Standing Committee. Approval at the July 27, 2023, meeting of the Board is critical to allowing the lab school to open for the 2023–2024 school year.

## Previous Review or Action

The VCU application has undergone two reviews by the Board’s Standing Committee:

**Date:** June 5, 2023

**Action:** First Review of College Partnership Laboratory School Application from Virginia Commonwealth University

**Date:** July 7, 2023

**Action:** Final Review of College Partnership Laboratory School Application from Virginia Commonwealth University

## Background Information and Statutory Authority

[Chapter 19.1](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter19.1/) of Title 22.1 of the *Code of Virginia* sets the statutory requirements for lab schools and the process for approving such schools.

Section [22.1-349.6](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter19.1/section22.1-349.6/) requires the Board to “establish procedures for receiving, reviewing, and ruling upon applications and shall make a copy of any such procedures available to all interested parties upon request. If the Board finds that the application is incomplete, the Board shall request the necessary additional information from the applicant. The Board's review procedures shall establish a review committee that may include experts with the operation of similar schools located in other states.”

In accordance with § [22.1-349.6](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter19.1/section22.1-349.6/), the Board has set the [*Guidelines for the Approval of College Partnership Laboratory Schools*](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/42624/638118965497000000). Moreover, in preparation for receiving applications, the Board re-formed the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee met from 2010–2013 and had new members appointed by the Board President in December 2022. The Standing Committee comprises five members: Joan Wodiska (Chair), Dr. Pam Moran (Vice-Chair), and John Bailey, as well as Board members Bill Hansen and Andy Rotherham.

The Standing Committee has had four public meetings in 2023. After each meeting, the Standing Committee has provided a report on progress to the Board. In its meetings, the Standing Committee has setup a process for reviewing applications, including a SME review by VDOE staff; standardized process documents, such as application rubrics, compliance reports, and reports to the Board; revised the lab school application; reviewed applications from two applicants; and received public comment.

Upon receiving the VCU lab school application on May 26, 2023, Dr. Jeremy Raley, Chief of Staff for the Virginia Department of Education, convened a SME group in accordance with the process established by the Standing Committee. The SME group was composed of the following individuals:

* Dr. Jeremy Raley, Chief of Staff
* Mr. Kent Dickey, Deputy Director of Budget, Finance and Operations
* Dr. Samantha Hollins, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services
* Ms. Melissa Velazquez, Assistant Superintendent of Policy and Communications
* Dr. Brendon Albon, Director of STEM and Innovation
* Mr. Jim Chapman, Director of Board Relations
* Ms. Maggie Clemmons, Director of Licensure and School Leadership
* Mr. Edward Lanza, Director of Budgeting
* Ms. Amy Siepka, Director of Accountability
* Ms. Susan Williams, Director of Data Services
* Ms. Rebecca Askew, Senior Policy Analyst

The application was reviewed by members of the SME group reviewed the lab school application for completeness and compliance according to their areas of expertise. The compliance report was then provided to the Standing Committee when the application was received for first review on June 5, 2023.

At first review, the VCU applicants presented detailed information and insight to the Standing Committee on their plan for their lab school model. The Standing Committee queried the applicants on various portions of the application, with emphasis on parent/family engagement, sustainability of the apprenticeship/residency teacher training model, plans to develop the pre-K through 8th grade portion of the lab school program and teacher residency/retention after graduation. The VCU applicants responded to all questions, and the Standing Committee approved first review, and cleared the VCU application for the 10 day public comment posting period. The Standing Committee recommended the VCU application to advance to second review at the July 7, 2023 Standing Committee meeting.

At the Standing Committee meeting in July, the VCU applicants presented a follow-up presentation with a focus on the Standing Committee’s questions from first review. Satisfied with the detailed VCU applicant response to their inquiries, the Standing Committee endorsed the application and recommended the application be presented to the Board at its next meeting.

## Stakeholder Engagement

The Standing Committee has provided opportunity for public comment on agenda items, including the VCU application, at each of the meetings where the application was reviewed. Additionally, the application was posted for a 10-day public comment period in accordance with the Standing Committee’s process. The public comment was announced through Superintendent’s Memo [111-23](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/45325/638218255348370000).

The VCU lab school application has received letters of support from numerous stakeholders, which have been included in the materials for this item, including the following:

* Dr. Fotis Sotiropoulos, Provost and Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at VCU;
* Amelia County Public Schools;
* Hanover County Public Schools;
* Henrico County Public Schools;
* Powhatan County Public Schools;
* Sussex County Public Schools;
* Chandra, Briggman, President and CEO of Activation Capital;
* Dr. Robert Nomberg, President and CEO of Virginia Learns;
* Dr. Kathlene H. Campbell, CEO of the National Center for Teacher Residencies;
* Dr. Karen DeMoss, Executive Director of Prepared To Teach;
* Susanne Crump, President of REB Foundation; and
* Audrey Trussell, Vice President of Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond

## Implementation and Communication

Upon approval by the Board, VDOE staff will coordinate with the Office of the Attorney General to execute a contract between the Board and VCU to establish the lab school within 90 days, in accordance with § [22.1-349.5](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter19.1/section22.1-349.5/) of the *Code of Virginia*, as well as §§ [22.1-349.3](http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/22.1-349.3/)(C) and [22.1-349.4](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter19.1/section22.1-349.4/).

The approval of the lab school will be publicized through the VDOE, VCU, CodeRVA, and participating school divisions.

## Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

This item will not impact resources at the VDOE.