



COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP LABORATORY SCHOOLS
STANDING COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION REPORT
College Partnership Laboratory School Application For:

James Madison University

January 2024
VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

Lab School Application for James Madison University

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INTRODUCTION

College Partnership Laboratory Schools (Lab Schools) have fueled innovation and excellence in preK-12 education across the nation. Some of the nation's most prestigious schools were started as Lab Schools. Virginia has identified Lab Schools as a critical part of ensuring a high-quality, innovative, and diverse educational ecosystem in the Commonwealth.

BACKGROUND OF THE COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP LABORATORY SCHOOL FUND

The College Partnership Laboratory Schools Fund (Fund), set out in § [22.1-349.2](#) of the *Code of Virginia*, was first established in 2010 for the purpose of establishing and supporting College Partnership Laboratory Schools. During its 2022 Session, the General Assembly appropriated \$100,000,000 to the Fund.

The Virginia Board of Education (Board) is authorized to award up to \$5,000,000 from the Fund for planning grants to entities pursuing the creation of new Lab Schools. Additionally, the Board is authorized to award up to \$20,000,000 from the Fund for initial start-up cost funding grants (Start-Up Grants) for entities approved by the Board and awarded a contract to create a new Lab School and to distribute the remaining balance (\$75,000,000 or more) in per-pupil operating funding grants (Per-Pupil Funding Operating Grants) from the Fund for entities with approved Lab Schools.

Section [22.1-349.2](#) of the *Code of Virginia* and [Item 137.C.44](#) of the 2022 Appropriation Act direct the Board to establish criteria and guidelines for the distribution and award of moneys from the Fund prior to disbursement.

PURPOSE OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

The Board's College Partnership Laboratory Schools Standing Committee (Standing Committee) is appointed by the Board. The purpose of the Standing Committee is to assist the Board in its approval process of College Partnership Laboratory School Applications (Application) submitted by Eligible Entities (Applicant).

Once received from the Applicant, the Application is reviewed for completeness and compliance by the Virginia Department of Education (Department), who may also secure technical assistance and/or coaching as needed for the Applicant. The Standing Committee receives the complete and compliant Application from the Department, meets with the Applicant(s), provides opportunity for public comment on the Application, and delivers a report on its recommendation to the Board for their decision.

The recommendation report to the Board provides an objective review and assessment of the Applicant's ability to achieve quality student performance through evidence of organizational effectiveness that supports a visionary educational process which promotes a culture of continuous, sustainable learning.

SUMMARY OF APPLICATION ELEMENTS TO BE REVIEWED

The Standing Committee's review and consideration of Applications includes evaluation of the information found in eight elements of the Application, summarized as follows:

1. **Executive Summary:** Does the Applicant provide the summary and address the need for the Lab School, its goals, and objectives?
2. **Mission and Vision:** Does the Applicant clearly communicate a mission and vision, including identification of the targeted student population, for the proposed Lab School to succeed?
3. **Educational Program:** Does the curriculum, instructional design, and assessment practices guide ensure teacher effectiveness and student learning?
4. **Governance:** Do the organizational structure and the roles and responsibilities enumerated for the governing board demonstrate clear leadership for the successful management and support of the proposed Lab School?
5. **Management Structure:** Does the Applicant address recruiting, staffing, leadership, licensure, employment policies, and performance evaluations sufficiently to demonstrate success for proposed Lab School? In addition, how does the Applicant address parent and community involvement; student recruitment plan, open enrollment and waiting list; student conduct; start-up plan with tasks, timelines, and responsible individuals; co-curricular and extracurricular programs, and partnerships with school divisions?
6. **Financial Operations Information:** Has the Applicant provided and addressed financial assumptions, start-up and five-year budgets, anticipated fundraising contributions, insurance coverage, a sound facilities plan, transportation services, including for students with disabilities, and food service operations to successfully start and maintain operations?
7. **Placement Plan:** Does the Applicant provide a plan for effective communication and placement of school students, teachers, and employees in the event of termination or revocation of the contract, including a plan for student records, student transfers, assistance to employees, and a close-out plan related to financial obligations and audits?
8. **Other Assurances and Requirement:** Does the Applicant demonstrate processes in place to implement and monitor federal and state compliance with regulations and waivers, including compliance with the federal *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*, records retention schedules, and the *Virginia Freedom of Information Act*? Does the Applicant document collaborative partnerships with public school divisions and address conflicts of interest?

Public Comment: In addition to the elements found in the Application, the Standing Committee reviews and considers any public comments received when developing its recommendation and report for the Board.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The Standing Committee’s recommendation report to the Board includes the Report Elements criteria outlined below for the Board’s consideration and decision whether to approve a Lab School Application.

- I. **Overall Element Assessment:** The overall recommendation of the Standing Committee for this Element of the Application.
- II. **Element Rubric Rating:** The Standing Committee’s recommendation of the degree the Element defines areas of strength and/or opportunities for improvement.

	Not Evident	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
	Emerging/Partial detail	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
	Operational/ Ready to implement	Indicates practices and procedures fully described and ready to implement

- III. **Public Comment Assessment:** The Standing Committee assessment of public comments received on the Application.
- IV. **Areas Requiring VDOE Reinforcement:** The Standing Committee’s recommendation for VDOE operational expertise that may be required by the Applicant in various areas of the Lab School’s operations.

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

ELEMENT 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERALL ELEMENT ASSESSMENT:

James Madison University (“JMU”) to begin a lab school in collaboration and partnership with, Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC), and Rockingham County Public Schools (RCPS) (“Applicant”) named the Lab School for Innovation and Career Exploration (“JMU Lab School”).

The intent of the JMU Lab School is to provide high school students with opportunities to explore a wide variety of careers, leveraging the strengths of JMU and BRCC, where programs, in partnership with industry in the community, will push into the high schools. Students will work with instructional teams that include licensed RCPS teachers, JMU/BRCC professors, industry experts, and paraprofessionals. This partnership in teaching and learning will be highly engaging, hands-on, and include relevant problem-solving of real-world community needs, blending content areas together that push beyond the traditional siloed model of school. As an additional value added to the instructional teams, pre-service teachers and other pre-professional students from JMU will be placed in the schools (as in-kind) to not only support the instructional teams but to learn about innovative teaching and learning through this interdisciplinary approach.

The solid plan to create a space for innovation, where educators, industry, and pre-service professionals can learn about best practices in teaching and learning as well as a space for students to engage in high-level application of real-world problem solving while working closely with professors, college students, and industry experts to provide pathways for college and career readiness, the Standing Committee highly recommends the James Madison University Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

	Not Evident	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
	Emerging/Partial detail	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
X	Operational/ Ready to implement	Indicates practices and procedures fully described and ready to implement

PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application did not receive any public comment and did receive numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

VDOE will support the applicant through the development of the contract with the Board and will provide technical assistance as needed as the school begins operations.

ELEMENT 2: MISSION AND VISION

OVERALL ELEMENT ASSESSMENT:

James Madison University Lab School for Innovation & Career Exploration (JMU Lab School) will provide an innovative approach to teaching and learning, pushing boundaries beyond siloed content areas. The JMU Lab School concept will deeply engage students in solving community needs by applying high-level academic skills with community and industry experts while leveraging the strengths of BRCC experts and JMU experts from multiple disciplines that include education, health professions, social services, government/public administration, aviation maintenance, automotive technology, business management, and information technology.

The vision of the Lab School is to become an innovation hub for career exploration and workforce development through interdisciplinary, problem-focused application of solving community needs, leading to college and career readiness.

JMU Lab School has developed an innovative program within the confines of the SOQ and SOA, to determine student achievement on the SOL assessment. The needs of all students are met through partnership with JMU, interdisciplinary approach to course content and delivery and personalized learning methodologies. The school is open to all students from multiple backgrounds in Rockingham County Public Schools.

The Applicant’s mission and vision clearly outlines the level of innovation anticipated and the targeted student. With completed planning and proposed programs and processes in place, the Standing Committee highly recommends the JMU Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

	Not Evident	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
	Emerging/Partial detail	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
X	Operational/ Ready to implement	Indicates practices and procedures fully described and ready to implement

PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application did not receive any public comment and did receive numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

VDOE will support the applicant through the development of the contract with the Board and will provide technical assistance as needed as the school begins operations.

**ELEMENT 3: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
OVERALL ELEMENT ASSESSMENT:**

The Lab School will have an instructional team of licensed RCPS teachers from different content areas work closely with JMU and BRCC professors, along with industry experts, supported by paraprofessionals and pre-service professionals, to offer the academic program from a holistic approach to teaching and learning. This team of professionals will work together with students in fluid and flexible groupings that allow for project-based, hands-on learning.

The content areas ultimately identified for the school will be generated by community problems of practice, in partnership between JMU, BRCC, and industry. With career exploration as the spirit of the Lab School, the following careers are anticipated to be the specialized areas of focus, based on the strengths of JMU and BRCC connections to the work:

- education professions (teaching and education-related fields)
- health professions (nursing, nutrition, occupational therapy, physical therapy)
- social services (social work, human services, etc.)
- government/public administration
- aviation maintenance

The JMU Lab School programming is half-day, and the time students spend in the Lab School will fulfill multiple content areas and standards during one interdisciplinary course. The academic program for the Lab School will align with the Virginia Standards of Learning, as well as industry credentials associated with Virginia’s Career and Technical Education programs. All students will meet and exceed the minimum requirements for the Advanced Studies Diploma.

The Applicant’s model of multiple content areas/content fusion is an example of how more than one content can be taught together for innovation in Lab School programming. With the required credentials for curriculum development and assessment in place, the Standing Committee highly recommends the JMU Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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	Emerging/Partial detail	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
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PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application did not receive any public comment and did receive numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

The Applicant has proposed a solid, theoretical curriculum/instructional approach. VDOE can provide guidance on any statutory requirements related to expeditionary learning, internships, etc.

ELEMENT 4: GOVERNANCE

OVERALL ELEMENT ASSESSMENT:

The Applicant has identified a multi-tiered governance structure, with a governing board members include a representative from each committed school division. The governing board will also include key stakeholders from James Madison University to include the President or designee, as well as key stakeholders from Rockingham County Public Schools and Blue Ridge Community College.

Supporting the development and on-going refinement of the school will be the Dean of the College of Education at James Madison University. This position will provide oversight of the instructional aspects of the Lab School, including supervision of the Lab School Director. The Dean will serve as liaison between the JMU College of Education, Superintendent of Rockingham County Public Schools, and Blue Ridge Community College President. The Dean will secure university resources and facilitate partnerships with other university colleges/divisions. The Dean will report progress/updates to the Lab School governing board. Overall, each entity with a vested interest in the school will be actively involved in the governance of this proposed Lab School.

The Applicant’s proposed organizational structure and the roles and responsibilities enumerated for the governing board demonstrate clear leadership for the successful management and support of the Lab School. The Standing Committee highly recommends the JMU Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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	Emerging/Partial detail	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
X	Operational/ Ready to implement	Indicates practices and procedures fully described and ready to implement

PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application did not receive any public comment and did receive numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

JMU Lab School has provided organizational charts as well as a draft document for governance. VDOE can provide guidance on any requirements related to the confines of the state statute that may be required.

ELEMENT 5: MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

OVERALL ELEMENT ASSESSMENT:

The Applicant has addressed all requested areas of management structure. JMU is working closely with RCPS and BRCC in the recruitment and development of school leadership and staff. At present, a search committee which includes stakeholders from JMU, RCPS, and BRCC are recruiting for the Executive Director for the JMU Lab School. Utmost care will be given to hire educators who have experience and or aptitude of interdisciplinary approaches, working with a wide range of student abilities, and are willing to work collaboratively with higher education peers who will be on-site. All teachers will be fully licensed and endorsed in a minimum of one subject area, although most possess two or more endorsements to enable them to teach a variety of subjects.

Teachers hired for the Lab School will teach 50% in RCPS and 50% for the JMU Lab School, with 100% of salary/benefits paid by RCPS. Teachers will earn an additional adjunct salary for the extra work required for the Lab School that includes planning, professional development, and community outreach that is above and beyond the normal contract hours of a RCPS teacher. JMU/BRCC faculty are part of the staffing plan, as they will receive compensation via overload payment. Industry experts will receive an adjunct contract.

The JMU Lab School will utilize the Rockingham County Public Schools student conduct guidelines and policies addressing student behavior, discipline, and participation in school activities. The Applicant will use the Lab School Standing Committee’s Best Practices on Administration of Lotteries for College Partnership Laboratory Schools to develop a fully operational lottery process.

The Applicant provided detailed information on overall school management including personnel management that sufficiently demonstrates success for the proposed Lab School. The Standing Committee highly recommends the JMU Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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	Emerging/Partial detail	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
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PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application did not receive any public comment and did receive numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

VDOE may need to provide guidance on the proposed school lottery process.

ELEMENT 6: FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONS INFORMATION

OVERALL ELEMENT ASSESSMENT:

The Applicant has provided and addressed financial assumptions, start-up, and five-year budgets. The Applicant is requesting a total of \$11,344,000 in funding support over a five-year period. The budget indicates the annual funding amount requested decreases each year as other funding sources are secured and the Lab School becomes self-sustaining, thereby maximizing the return on investment of public funds.

The Applicant’s current operations complies with all fiscal policies and procedures and JMU will serve as the fiduciary for the Lab School program. To ensure the JMU Lab School funding model is strong and sustainable, JMU intends to charge the Lab School fund a per pupil cost per year (approximately 50% of the value of the RCPS ADM on average). The JMU Lab School will operate under the office of the Associate Vice President for Finance.

The Applicants have planned for philanthropic and corporate partners support via the JMU College of Education fundraising capabilities. The Applicant’s goal is to work with those philanthropic and corporate partners to support fundraising/revenue generating options and work to replace the Lab School grant funding over the next five (5) years.

Evidence of liability, health, and property coverages will be provided by each respective organization involved in the Lab School (JMU Risk Management, BRCC Risk Management, RCPS Risk Management, and industry organizations).

The Applicant provided detailed budget and financial assumption information as well as its processes to provide successful operational requirements. The Standing Committee highly recommends the JMU Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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X	Operational/Ready to implement	Indicates practices and procedures fully described and ready to implement

PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application did not receive any public comment and did receive numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

The Applicant has proposed a solid financial plan. VDOE can provide guidance on any statutory requirements related to per pupil funding or other areas of finance.

ELEMENT 7: PLACEMENT PLAN

OVERALL ELEMENT ASSESSMENT:

The Applicant’s Lab School placement plan includes the current process for students to return to their home school division and/or move to another division out of state, etc. The JMU Lab School would activate a systematized notification process if the Lab School should close. After official notification to the Virginia Department of Education, a personal phone call will be made to each parent/guardian with a child enrolled in JMU Lab School. This phone call will be followed by an official letter from the Executive Director of the Lab School.

The Applicant’s proposed governing Board’s Constitution and Bylaws address the details of the close out plan related to financial obligations and audits by the partnering school boards. The Standing Committee highly recommends the JMU Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application did not receive any public comment and did receive numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

In the unlikely event the Lab School is terminated, VDOE may need to audit/identify unused funds requiring return to the State.

ELEMENT 8: OTHER ASSURANCES AND REQUIREMENTS

OVERALL ELEMENT ASSESSMENT:

The Applicant demonstrates and currently operates in accordance with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations, including the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. The Standing Committee highly recommends the JMU Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application did not receive any public comment and did receive numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

VDOE may need to assist with approving additional waivers or assisting with review of Memorandums of Understanding to guard against conflicts of interest if future participation of school divisions is expanded.

CONCLUDING REPORT COMMENTS

The JMU Lab School concept will create an innovation hub for career exploration and workforce development that engages students in interdisciplinary, problem-focused application of solving community needs and leads to college and career readiness. The JMU Lab School will leverage the strengths of BRCC experts and JMU experts from multiple disciplines. Career pathways will include education, health professions, social services, government/public administration, aviation maintenance, automotive technology, business management, and information technology.

- JMU Lab School plans to have JMU and BRCC professors on-site at the lab school and as an additional value added to the instructional teams, pre-service teachers and other pre-professional students from JMU will be placed in the schools (as in-kind) to not only support the instructional teams but to learn about innovative teaching and learning through this interdisciplinary approach.
- Leveraged with interdisciplinary approaches, providing students with project-based learning opportunities will enable students to apply their content knowledge, develop their durable skills, with opportunities for student internships and externships outside the classroom to apply their learning through various types of fieldwork.

With solid academic curriculum theory proposed and innovative learning spaces being renovated to sustain the Lab School, the Standing Committee highly recommends the James Madison University Laboratory School to the Board.

Lab School Application for James Madison University

As this College Laboratory School Application is in the operational development stages, the Standing Committee has noted the areas where the VDOE may be required to provide operational assistance as the Applicant's Lab School begins to fully develop and grow.

After completing an objective review and thorough assessment of the Applicant's ability to achieve quality student performance through evidence of organizational effectiveness that supports a visionary educational process which promotes a culture of continuous, sustainable learning, the Standing Committee highly recommends the JMU Laboratory School to the Board.