



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: B

Date: March 4, 2024

Title: University of Virginia Innovation Hub at Charlottesville Middle School – VDOE Documentation of Complete and Compliant Application

Presenter: Dr. Andy Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Innovation

Purpose of Presentation

Review of documentation of complete and compliant Laboratory School Application for University of Virginia Innovation Hub at Charlottesville Middle School, a laboratory school proposal from a collaboration between the University of Virginia and Charlottesville City Public Schools.

Executive Summary

The laboratory school application entitled University of Virginia Innovation Hub at Charlottesville Middle School (“UVA Application”) was received from the University of Virginia and Charlottesville City Public Schools (“Applicants”) on November 8, 2023. In accordance with the Laboratory School Application Process, the UVA Application was reviewed for completion and compliance by the Application Review Technical Expert Committee, a team of Virginia Department of Education Subject Matter Experts (“VDOE SME”). The goal of the Application Review Technical Expert Committee is to document the needed technical expertise and provide counseling to the Applicants to identify and correct any potential deficiencies in the planning and implementation of the proposed College Partnership Laboratory School, determine compliance with state law or regulation, highlight potential problems or red flags with information contained in the UVA Application, and to identify aspects of the proposal that are especially exciting or unique.

Dr. Andy Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Innovation, coordinated the efforts of the VDOE SME team who reviewed the UVA Application for completeness and compliance. The VDOE SME team is comprised of the following VDOE staff:

- Dr. Andrew Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent
- Robert Gilstrap (Office of Licensure and School Leadership)
- Jason Ellis (Office of Accountability)
- Rebecca Askew (Office of Policy)
- Edward Lanza (Office of Budgeting)
- Erin Madden (Office of Policy)
- Melissa Velasquez (Department of Policy and Communications)
- Dr. Samantha Hollins (Department of Special Education and Student Services)
- Dr. Dave Myers (Office of Data, Research and Technology)

Each VDOE SME was provided with the Laboratory School Criteria Checklist Worksheet. Areas of expertise were assigned to various staff subject to their education expertise at the VDOE. A compilation of these comments is included in the Excel spreadsheet entitled VDOE Completeness and Compliance Report (Attachment 2).

The first round of counseling from VDOE SME review was provided to the Applicants the week of November 27, 2023, via written documentation from the VDOE SME's. A technical assistance call was held on December 11, 2023, to provide additional detail related to the SME feedback. The Applicants analyzed the feedback constructively and provided an updated UVA application on December 21, 2023. The VDOE SME review team provided feedback on the December 21, 2023 UVA application revision during the week of December 18, 2023 and UVA was provided with the results of the VDOE SME review team feedback on December 27, 2023. UVA provided a revised application for first standing committee review and consideration on January 22, 2024 and provided a final application revision responsive to VDOE and standing committee feedback on February 22, 2024 for review and consideration by the standing committee at their March 4, 2024 meeting.

On February 15, 2024, VDOE staff opened a public comment forum on the Application through [Virginia Education Update #2024-07](#). The public comment forum closed on March 1, 2024 and one comment was received: "A laboratory school for our city's middle schoolers would be an incredible opportunity for our children and community! My son (current 3rd grader) would be so thrilled and excited to attend a school devoted to his passion. Please make this a reality in Charlottesville!!"

The Virginia Laboratory School Initiative is in alignment with [Board of Education Goals from the 2018-2023 Comprehensive Plan](#).

Action Requested

This application is being submitted to the Standing Committee for final review. VDOE staff requests that the Standing Committee endorse the application for approval and refer to the Board of Education for review.

VDOE Recommendation

The concept of a lab school designed to establish the UVA innovation hub within Charlottesville Middle School where all students grade 6 through 8 will be exposed to diverse interests, unique technical skills, real-world problem solving, and subsequent interdisciplinary and capstone projects related to associated practical and industry-related applications of learning, is an innovative and desirable laboratory school program. With the students remaining enrolled in their local school division at their home middle school, it appears UVA Innovation Hub functions more as a program than a standalone Lab School. This is an acceptable approach to meeting the intent of the lab school concept.

The Applicants responded very well to initial feedback and coaching provided by the VDOE SME team, and provided the additional information requested. The Applicants have unique options for students, meaningful connections to the UVA School of Education and Human Development on behalf of pre-service and CCPS teachers, and a sustainable governance structure, including a sustainable financial model for the operation of the lab school program.

Overall, the VDOE recommends the University of Virginia Charlottesville Middle School Innovation Hub is operational and ready to implement.

Previous Review or Action

No previous review or action by the Standing Committee.

Background Information and Statutory Authority:

Subsection A of § [22.1-349.6](#) of the Code of Virginia states, in part, that “[t]he Board shall 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. . . . The Board’s review procedures shall establish a review committee that may include experts with the operation of similar schools located in other states.”