



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: C

Date: March 4, 2024

Title: Southwest Virginia Healthcare Excellence Academy Lab School (SWVA-HEALS) VDOE Documentation of Complete and Compliant Application

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

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Purpose of Presentation

Review of documentation of complete and compliant Laboratory School Application for Southwest Virginia Healthcare Excellence Academy Lab School (SWVA-HEALS), a laboratory school proposal from a collaboration among Emory and Henry College, Smyth County Public Schools, Wythe County Public Schools, Washington County Public Schools, City of Bristol Public Schools, Virginia Highlands Community College, A. Linwood Holton Governor’s School, and the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center.

Executive Summary

The laboratory school application entitled Southwest Virginia Healthcare Excellence Academy Lab School (SWVA-HEALS) (“HEALS application”) was received from Emory and Henry College (“Applicants”) on December 15, 2023. In accordance with the Laboratory School Application Process, the HEALS 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 HEALS 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 HEALS Application for completeness and compliance. The VDOE SME team responsible for reviewing the HEALS application was 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).

VDOE staff provided technical assistance to the Emory and Henry College team during the development stage prior to submission of their application and following submission in preparation for Standing Committee review. Technical assistance calls were held between VDOE staff and the Emory and Henry College team on August 17, September 19, September 20, and December 11, 2023. An on-site technical assistance visit was held on October 24, 2023 at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center between VDOE staff and the Emory and Henry College team. Following submission of the application, the first round of counseling from VDOE SME review was provided to the Applicants the week of January 8, 2024. A technical assistance call was held on January 24, 2023 to discuss the SME feedback with the Emory and Henry College applicant team. A revised application was submitted to the VDOE on February 23, 2024 for completion of this report to the College Partnership Laboratory School Standing Committee (“Standing Committee”). Follow-up feedback has been provided to the Applicants.

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

Action Requested

The Standing Committee’s goal for this meeting is First Review of the HEALS Application and recommendations on the ability for the HEALS Application to be presented/recommended to the Virginia Board of Education at the next scheduled meeting. In addition, the School Committee can also provide recommendations for additional Subject Matter Experts or coaching to satisfy Laboratory School statutory requirements for the HEALS application.

VDOE Recommendation

The concept of a lab school designed collaboratively with multiple local school divisions to provide a comprehensive education as a healthcare focused career academy for students in grades 10-12 proposed by the HEALS application is an innovative and desirable laboratory school program. With the students remaining enrolled in their local school divisions, it appears the Southwest Virginia Healthcare Excellence Academy Lab School (SWVA-HEALS) 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 options for students including dual enrollment options with a sustainable governance structure, including a sustainable financial model for the operation of the lab school program.

Overall, the VDOE recommends the Southwest Virginia Healthcare Excellence Academy Lab School (SWVA-HEALS) is operational and ready to implement pending public comment and standing committee review.

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.”