



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: F

Date: March 28, 2024

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

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

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 November 8, 2023, the University of Virginia (“UVA”) submitted a college partnership laboratory school (“lab school”) application for the University of Virginia Innovation Hub at Charlottesville Middle School (“UVA application”) for consideration by the Board of Education (“Board”). In accordance with the Board’s [Guidelines for the Approval of College Partnership Laboratory Schools](#) and [the process](#) 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 February 5, 2024. The Standing Committee received the UVA application and completeness and compliance report, and it also asked questions of representatives from UVA after a detailed presentation from the UVA applicants including Dr. Stephanie Rowley, Dean of the University of Virginia School of Education and Human Development, Dr. Kim Wilkens, Education and Outreach Director, Dr. Tonya Coffey, Curriculum Coordinator, Charlottesville City Public Schools, Dr. Royal Gurley, Superintendent of Charlottesville City Public Schools, and Dr. Jennie Chiu, Associate Professor, University of Virginia School of Education and Human Development.

The Standing Committee approved First Review of the UVA application and VDOE staff posted the UVA application for the 10-day public comment period on February 15, and it remained available until March 1. The following 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!!"

On March 4, 2024, the UVA application returned to the Standing Committee for final review. Dr. Andy Armstrong provided the Standing Committee with an overview of the objectives of the UVA Innovation Hub at Charlottesville Middle School lab school, the VDOE Expert team completion and compliance process, as well as their compliance coaching and review of additional application materials received from UVA after first review. The UVA applicants were present at the meeting and answered questions posed by the Standing Committee at final review. The Standing Committee unanimously voted to endorse the UVA Innovation Hub at Charlottesville Middle School lab school application and refer to the Board for approval.

The application proposes for UVA to begin a lab school in collaboration and partnership with Charlottesville City Public Schools. Students enrolled in the Innovation Hub, which will be housed primarily at Charlottesville Middle School and includes all middle school students at CMS and in CCPS, will participate in the unique offerings of the UVA Innovation Hub. The Lab School acts as a dynamic center for experiential learning, where 6th grade students begin their middle school journey with a focus on exploring diverse interests and developing essential technical and real-world problem-solving skills. As students progress to the 7th grade, they undertake two comprehensive, interdisciplinary projects designed to provide practical experience and exposure to various industries, enhancing their understanding of real-world applications of their studies. The culmination of this integrative lab school experience is seen in the 8th grade, where students develop capstone projects. These projects represent a synthesis of their learning journey and prepare them for future academic and professional challenges.

The proposed lab school named "UVA Innovation Hub at Charlottesville Middle School" is an innovative middle school lab school that focuses on transforming school experiences in a way that elevates the developmental needs of young adolescents through student-driven, community- and design-based projects, and aims to elevate the voice and agency of middle school students in ways that align with research-based practices for positive youth development and asset-based pedagogy. The lab school would address multiple desirable outcomes for students, future teachers, and regional schools, including the following:

- Increasing student engagement in school and in Science;

- Professional development that helps teachers connect different content areas in a way that is relevant to and builds on the assets of their students; and
- Increasing student performance on state assessments.

The Lab School statutes favor control by the institute of Higher Education. The governance structure of the UVA Innovation Hub lab school meets those criteria. VDOE SME team will continue to advise UVA on 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 UVA Innovation Hub at Charlottesville Middle School for four years 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 UVA, including awarding start-up funds and up to \$7 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](#).

Rationale for Action

The University of Virginia Innovation Hub at Charlottesville Middle School proposal partners with Charlottesville City Public Schools to provide a unique and innovative experience for all middle school students of the City of Charlottesville. Additionally, the proposal has undergone a thorough review process by the Standing Committee. Approval at the March 28, 2024, meeting of the Board is critical to allowing the lab school to open for the 2024–2025 school year.

Previous Review or Action

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

Date: February 5, 2024

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

Date: March 4, 2024

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

Background Information and Statutory Authority

[Chapter 19.1](#) 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](#) 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](#), the Board has set the [Guidelines for the Approval of College Partnership Laboratory Schools](#). 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 three public meetings in 2024. 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 multiple applicants; and received public comment.

Upon receiving the UVA application on November 8, 2023, Dr. Andy Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Innovation 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. Andrew Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Innovation
- Dr. Samantha Hollins, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services

- Ms. Melissa Velazquez, Assistant Superintendent of Policy and Communications
- Mr. Robert Gilstrap, Assistant Superintendent for Education Preparation
- Mr. Edward Lanza, Director of Budgeting
- Mr. Jason Ellis, Office of Accountability
- Ms. Rebecca Askew, Director of Policy
- Ms. Erin Madden, Office of Policy

The lab school application was reviewed by members of the SME group for completeness and compliance according to their areas of expertise. The compliance report was then provided to the Standing Committee for first review on February 5, 2024.

At first review, the UVA 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. The UVA applicants responded to all questions, and the Standing Committee approved first review, and cleared the UVA application for the 10-day public comment posting period. The Standing Committee recommended the UVA application to advance to second review at the March 4, 2024, Standing Committee meeting.

At the Standing Committee meeting in March, Dr. Andy Armstrong stated the University of Virginia Innovation Hub at Charlottesville Middle School Lab School is compliant and ready to implement and recommended to the Committee that the UVA Innovation Hub be approved on second review to be forwarded to the Virginia Board of Education for their consideration for approval at the March 28, 2024 meeting. The UVA applicants were present at the meeting to answer any questions posed by the Standing Committee at final review. Satisfied with all UVA applicant responses 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 UVA 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 [Virginia Education Update #2024-07](#)

The UVA 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. Royal Gurley, Superintendent of Schools, Charlottesville City Public Schools

- Dr. Jillian McGraw, Ed.D, Director of Teacher Education, UVA
- Mr. Ben Allen, Executive Director, UVA Equity Center
- Mr. Tobias Dengel, President, WillowTree
- Ms. Kala Somerville, Executive Director, c4k
- Ms. Shannon Ferns, Director, Boys and Girls Club of Central Virginia
- Dr. Briana Morrison, Associate Professor and Director of the Computing Education Center at UVA
- Dr. Nancy Deutsch, Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, UVA School of Education and Human Development
- Mr. Ryan Novitski, Director of STEM Learning, ITEEA
- Ms. Tracey Greene, Executive Director, Charlottesville Business Innovation Council
- Ms. Lisa Larson-Torres, Chair, Charlottesville City School Board

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 UVA to establish the lab school within 90 days, in accordance with § [22.1-349.5](#) of the *Code of Virginia*, as well as §§ [22.1-349.3\(C\)](#) and [22.1-349.4](#).

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

Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources

This item will not impact resources at the VDOE.