



COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP LABORATORY SCHOOLS  
STANDING COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION REPORT  
College Partnership Laboratory School Application For:  
Mountain Gateway Community College

March 2024  
VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

# Lab School Application for Mountain Gateway Community College

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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.

	<b>Not Evident</b>	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
	<b>Emerging/Partial detail</b>	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
	<b>Operational/ Ready to implement</b>	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:

Mountain Gateway Technical Lab School (“MG-TEC”) is a collaborative partnership between Mountain Gateway Community College (“MGCC”), and Alleghany High School, Bath County High School, Rockbridge County High School, Parry McCluer High School, and James River High School (“Applicants”). The goals of MG-TEC include the following:

1. Providing high school students with a comprehensive education in information technology, including cybersecurity, AWS cloud computing, and IT support;
2. Preparing students for IT careers by offering courses that lead to career studies certificates;
3. Providing a springboard to an associate degree in IT; and
4. Providing knowledge and skills necessary to obtain industry-leading certifications by providing hands-on, project-based learning opportunities that will allow students to develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the field.

These objectives respond to the local need to provide support to students served by MG-TEC to establish exposure and earn credentials leading to high-wage, high-skill, high-demand jobs in the IT and cybersecurity industry that would potentially allow students to remain in the region served by MGCC, a region that hopes to improve the overall workforce retention and economic growth in the area.

With solid academic curriculum theory proposed and engaged business and community partnerships, the Standing Committee highly recommends the MC-TEC Laboratory School to the Board.

#### ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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

#### PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application received one public comment and numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

#### AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

## Lab School Application for Mountain Gateway Community College

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:

The mission of the MG-TEC Laboratory School is to provide high school students with a comprehensive education in information technology, including cybersecurity, AWS cloud computing, and IT support. Their goal is to prepare students for IT careers by offering courses that lead to career studies certificates, provide a springboard to an associate degree in IT, and provide knowledge and skills necessary to obtain industry-leading certifications by providing hands-on, project-based learning opportunities that will allow students to develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the field.

The vision of the MG-TEC Laboratory School is to create a pipeline of talented and qualified IT professionals who are ready to enter the workforce and contribute to the growth and development of the IT industry. The objective is to build a diverse and inclusive workforce in the IT industry and to promote diversity and inclusion within our program and the industry as a whole.

The MG-TEC Laboratory School is consistent with the Virginia Standards of Quality (SOQ), the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL), and the Virginia Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (SOA). The program will align with the Virginia Standards of Learning for Information Technology, which provide a framework for teaching and learning in this field. The program will also align with the Virginia Standards of Quality for Career and Technical Education, which outline the knowledge and skills that students need to succeed in their chosen career pathways.

The Applicant’s mission and vision clearly outlines the level of innovation anticipated, the targeted student population, and the predicted educational and career outcomes. With completed planning and proposed programs and processes in place, the Standing Committee highly recommends the MC-TEC Laboratory School to the Board.

### ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

	<b>Not Evident</b>	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
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<b>X</b>	<b>Operational/ Ready to implement</b>	Indicates practices and procedures fully described and ready to implement

### PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application received one public comment and numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

### AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:



## Lab School Application for Mountain Gateway Community College

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 MG-TEC Laboratory School's academic program is meticulously structured to align seamlessly with Virginia state standards, ensuring students receive a comprehensive education that meets and exceeds the benchmarks set by the state. The curriculum unfolds over three dynamic years, each building upon the previous, to create a scaffolded learning experience which is purely based on the goals of the Computer Science Standards of Learning.

- Year 1 - Students will delve into Python programming, a fundamental language extensively used in the IT sector. Concurrently, they will engage in Intro to Digital Literacy and Computer Applications, cultivating essential digital skills that will serve as a cornerstone for subsequent years. (Algorithms & Programming) (Computing Systems)
- Year 2 - Introduces specialized modules focusing on networking, PC hardware, and OS architecture. These modules provide hands-on encounters with the hardware and software backbone of contemporary information technology tailored to meet the demands of the ever-evolving IT landscape. (Networking and the Internet) (Data and Analysis) (Computing Systems)
- Year 3 - Students have the unique opportunity to select a concentration: cybersecurity, IT support, or AWS cloud computing. Each concentration encompasses a meticulously designed suite of courses, culminating in industry-recognized certifications. (Cybersecurity) (Impacts of Computing) (Data and Analysis)

The MG-TEC program intertwines a meticulously designed curriculum with Virginia state standards, ensuring students not only thrive in the IT industry but also adhere to the educational benchmarks set forth by the state. This holistic approach primes students for triumphs in the IT realm while establishing a resilient foundation for higher education and ongoing professional growth. With the required credentials for curriculum development and assessment in place, the Standing Committee highly recommends the MG-TEC Laboratory School to the Board.

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:**

The application received one public comment and numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

**AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:**

The Applicant has proposed a practical IT curriculum and instructional approach whose outcomes lead to industry certification. VDOE can provide guidance on any statutory requirements related to expeditionary learning, internships, etc.

**ELEMENT 4: GOVERNANCE**

**OVERALL ELEMENT ASSESSMENT:**

MG-TEC Laboratory School Governing Board will consist of representatives from each participating school division, the local business and industry community, and MGCC. This diverse composition guarantees a comprehensive perspective on matters pertaining to education, industry alignment, and community engagement. The Board's jurisdiction encompasses crucial areas including:

- Selection of courses and course sequencing used by MG-TEC
- Admission and selection policies for MG-TEC
- Providing progress metrics based on student performance.
- Counseling of students based on their performance in lab school vs. their core HS courses.

In addition to the Governing Board, MG-TEC will feature a dynamic and experienced school leadership and management team. This team will include a Principal, Assistant Principals, and Department Heads who possess a profound understanding of both education and the IT industry. They will collectively shape the school's day-to-day operations, ensuring that the academic program is meticulously executed, and that students' needs are met comprehensively.

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 MG-TEC Laboratory School to the Board.

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:**

The application received one public comment and numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

**AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:**

MG-TEC has provided organizational charts as well as a detailed description of governance processes. 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. MG-TEC faculty will be hired by and employed by MGCC. Faculty will report to the MGCC Program Head for Information Systems Technology.

MGCC has a proven track record of hiring and staffing technology courses offered by the college. Current faculty include IT professionals in business and industry and from dual instructors teaching in local high schools. Human resources functions, salary, and benefits administration will be administered by MGCC.

MG-TEC will be open to 10th, 11th and 12th grades students. Recruitment will begin with 9th grade students who show an interest in computer and information technology. MGCC also operates a cybersecurity summer camp, the AFA CyberPatriot Summer Camp. This summer camp will be used for recruiting purposes.

Students will be placed into the academy based on the admission process of MGCC; at-risk attributes and referral processes will be considered when determining admission. Any additional application stipulations will be designated by the governing board. MGCC will work with MG-TEC to adjust the capacity of the program and staff to accommodate the number of students interested in the academy. MGCC currently has lab space and resources available to accommodate additional program growth of MG-TEC.

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 MG-TEC Laboratory School to the Board.

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:**

The application received one public comment and numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

**AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:**

## Lab School Application for Mountain Gateway Community College

MG-TEC, unlike other lab school applicants, is employing dedicated faculty to teach the MG-TEC dual enrollment coursework. While this is common and acceptable throughout dual enrollment programs all over the Commonwealth, the College Laboratory School statute requires a Laboratory School teacher to be employed by the IHE and hold a valid K-12 Virginia teacher license. Administrative code, in its definitions of Virginia teacher licenses, does include a “dual enrollment or CTE license” that would appear to satisfy this statutory requirement on behalf of MG-TEC and any lab school with a similar model. The VDOE will work with MGCC prior to BOE approval to resolve this with more formalized notice.

**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 \$2.7 million in operational per-pupil funding support over a four-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 finance principals, controls, audits and insurance requirements of the Virginia Community College policies and procedures already in place.

The Applicant is currently working to build educational, financial and business partnerships with the technology organizations and local businesses including Amazon Web Services, Cengage Group, Test Out, CompTIA, Carilion Hospital, Lexington, VA, Computer Dr. LLC, Fairfield, VA, Augusta Health, Lexington and Fishersville locations, and Aurora Security, LLC, Lexington, VA. The goal of these partnerships is to develop a positive relationship with those organizations, build fundraising opportunities and prepare for future internship opportunities for our students.

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 MG-TEC Laboratory School to the Board.

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:**

The application received one public comment and numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

**AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:**

None at this time

**ELEMENT 7: PLACEMENT PLAN**

**OVERALL ELEMENT ASSESSMENT:**

The Applicant’s Lab School placement plan includes a detailed communication plan for notifying parents/guardians of students attending MG-TEC in the event of contract termination or revocation. The process is designed to ensure prompt and transparent information dissemination and is outlined in detail in the Application.

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 MG-TEC Laboratory School to the Board.

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

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

**PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:**

The application received one public comment and 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 MG-TEC Laboratory School to the Board.

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

	<b>Not Evident</b>	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
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<b>X</b>	<b>Operational/ Ready to implement</b>	Indicates practices and procedures fully described and ready to implement

**PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:**

The application received one public comment and numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

**AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:**

None at this time.

## **CONCLUDING REPORT COMMENTS**

The goals of MG-TEC, which include 1)providing high school students with a comprehensive education in information technology, including cybersecurity, AWS cloud computing, and IT support 2) preparing students for IT careers by offering courses that lead to career studies certificates 3)providing a springboard to an associate degree in IT, 4)providing knowledge and skills necessary to obtain industry-leading certifications by providing hands-on, project-based learning opportunities that will allow students to develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the field. are responsive to the local need to provide support to students served by MG-TEC to establish exposure and earn credentials leading to high-wage, high-skill, high-demand jobs in the IT and cybersecurity industry that would potentially allow students to remain in the region served by MGCC, a region that hopes to improve the overall workforce demand and retention conditions.

With an innovative IT academic curriculum providing the ability to obtain highly regarded industry IT certifications for successful graduates, the Standing Committee highly recommends the MGCC Laboratory School to the Board.

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 MG-TEC Laboratory School to the Board.