



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: O

Date: March 28, 2024

Title: Written Update on College Partnership Laboratory School and Charter School Applications

Presenter: Dr. Andrew R. Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Innovation

Purpose of Presentation

For information only: No action required.

Executive Summary

College Partnership Laboratory Schools Application Update

The College Partnership Laboratory Schools Standing Committee (“Standing Committee”) of the Virginia Board of Education (“Board”) met on March 4, 2024, at the University of Virginia.

The Standing Committee began First Review of the Laboratory School Application from Emory and Henry College and school divisions in Smyth, Wythe, and Washington counties, and the city of Bristol, and partnering institutions A. Linwood Holton Governor’s School, Virginia Highlands Community College, Wytheville Community College, and the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center. The applicant lab school, a health sciences academy (Southwest Virginia Healthcare Excellence Academy-SWVA HEALS), proposes to serve students with experiential learning on site at both the Emory and Henry Health Sciences Campus and Virginia Highlands Community College, where students will pursue high-demand health care credentials and dual enrollment coursework toward careers in the health sciences, fulfilling a regional workforce demand in southwest Virginia. The applicants provided detailed information and insight to the Standing Committee and were referred for additional technical assistance prior to further review.

The Standing Committee also considered the University of Virginia (“UVA”) Innovation Hub at Charlottesville Middle School Lab School and the Mountain Gateway Community College

Technology Education Center (“MG-TEC”) for final Standing Committee review. The UVA Innovation Hub is the first middle school lab school proposal and endeavors to provide a STEM-based interdisciplinary learning experience for all Charlottesville students grades 6-8. MG-TEC proposes to provide dual enrollment coursework and relevant experience in cybersecurity, IT, and programming toward high-demand, high-skill careers that could further allow graduates to remain in the region working remotely. Both the UVA Innovation Hub and MG-TEC were forwarded to the Board for consideration at their March 28, 2024, meeting.

As of March 5, 2024, 4 applications have been approved by the Board, with 2 applications pending approval on March 28, 2024. 11 additional applications have been submitted and are in the VDOE review process, and 3 planning grant recipients have yet to submit the lab school application. The Virginia Department of Education (“VDOE”) continues to work with applicants to provide technical assistance, weekly office hours, on-demand calls, and site visits as necessary to refine applications for consideration by the Standing Committee and the Board. Additionally, the Office of the Attorney General is coordinating with applicants on a regular basis to ensure efficiency in the contracting phase of lab school establishment.

VDOE is also providing monthly updates to the Standing Committee related to work to establish “innovation networks” in the Commonwealth to capture and inventory innovative and unique opportunities for students and create networks of learning among programs to further innovation in Virginia.

Charter School Application Update

In December of 2023, VDOE received two new applications to establish charter schools in the Commonwealth. One application, the Harbor School, proposes to establish a charter with City of Richmond Public Schools to operate a 6-8 school. The other, the Prince William County Montessori Success Academy, seeks to charter with Prince William County Public Schools and is a STEM themed proposal that begins with a 3–4-year-old early childhood program that seeks to grow to 3rd grade.

These applications represent the first received by the VDOE since 2013. In the intervening 11 years since the last consideration by the Board of a charter school application, a considerable volume of relevant legislation has been passed. VDOE has engaged in work to determine the most current process to consider the submitted applications.

Both the Harbor School and Prince William County Montessori Academy were notified that their applications were received. Moving forward, VDOE will conduct the required completion

evaluation of the applications and forward to the newly re-constituted Charter School Standing Committee for review, ideally in time for consideration by the Board at the April meeting.

Pending Board approval, the charter school applicants will then engage with the local school boards for ultimate approval and continued planning.

Action Requested

No action requested. For information purposes.

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.”