



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: G

Date: April 11, 2024

Title: Roanoke College Explore@RC Lab School 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 Explore @RC, a laboratory school proposal from a collaboration between Roanoke College and the school divisions of Salem City and Roanoke City Public Schools.

Executive Summary

The laboratory school application entitled Explore @RC (“Roanoke College Application”) was received from Roanoke College (“Applicants”) on February 2, 2023. In accordance with the Laboratory School Application Process, the Explore@RC 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 Explore @RC 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 Explore @RC Application for completeness and compliance. The VDOE SME team responsible for reviewing the Explore @RC application was comprised of the following VDOE staff:

- Dr. Andrew Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent
- Claire Bremner, Coordinator of Innovation
- Shawna LeBlond (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 Roanoke College team during the development stage prior to submission of their application and following submission in preparation for Standing Committee review. Following submission of the application, the first round of counseling from VDOE SME review was provided to the Applicants the week of February 19. A technical assistance call was held on February 26, 2024 to discuss the SME feedback with the Roanoke College applicant team. A revised application was submitted to the VDOE on March 8, 2024, and an additional round of SME feedback was provided on March 18, 2024. An additional technical assistance call was held on March 21, 2024. A revised application was provided to the VDOE on March 25, 2024, and responsive to additional feedback a final application and budget/sustainability addendum were provided by Roanoke College on March 27, 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 Explore @RC Application and recommendations on the ability for the Explore @RC Application to be presented/recommended to the Virginia Board of Education at the next scheduled meeting. In addition, the Standing Committee can also provide recommendations for additional Subject

Matter Experts or coaching to satisfy Laboratory School statutory requirements for the Explore @RC application.

VDOE Recommendation

The concept of a lab school designed collaboratively with local school divisions to provide purpose through project-based and inquiry-based learning and to develop resourceful, informed citizens ready to engage in education, STEM, healthcare, communications, government, and non-profit sectors by Roanoke College is an innovative and desirable laboratory school program. With the students remaining enrolled in their local school divisions, it appears Explore @RC 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. Additionally, the applicants have made specific revisions to their application responsive to Standing Committee feedback. 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 Roanoke College Explore @RC lab school is operational and ready to implement pending satisfactory responsiveness to the SME areas of compliance as indicated in the completeness and compliance rubric.

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.”

As a private institution of higher education in Virginia, Roanoke College is eligible to participate in the college partnership laboratory school program by the definition of “college partnership laboratory school” found in § [22.1-349.1](#):

a public, nonsectarian, nonreligious school in the Commonwealth established by a public institution of higher education; public higher education center, institute, or

authority; or an eligible institution as defined in §[23.1-628](#). Notwithstanding the provisions of § [22.1-349.5](#), a public institution of higher education; a public higher education center, institute, or authority; or an eligible institution as defined in § [23.1-628](#) may submit an application for formation of a college partnership laboratory school.

§ [23.1-628](#) defines an “eligible institution” as “a nonprofit private institution of higher education whose primary purpose is to provide collegiate, graduate, or professional education and not to provide religious training or theological education.”