



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: J

Date: April 25, 2024

Title: First and Final Review of College Partnership Laboratory School Application from Emory & Henry College (SWVA-HEALS)

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 December 15, 2023, Emory & Henry College (“E&H”) submitted a college partnership laboratory school (“lab school” or “E&H lab school”) application for E&H’s Lab School (“E&H application”) for consideration by the Board of Education (“Board”). E&H’s Lab School is formally named Southwest Virginia Healthcare Excellence Academy (“SWVA-HEALS”). 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 April 11, 2024.

The Standing Committee received the E&H application and completeness and compliance report, and it also asked questions of representatives from E&H after a detailed presentation from the E&H applicants including Dr. Lou Fincher, Senior Vice President of Emory and Henry College. Dr. Andy Armstrong, on behalf of the VDOE, provided the Standing Committee with an overview of the objectives of the SWVA HEALS lab school, the VDOE Expert team completion and compliance process, as well as their compliance coaching and review of additional

application materials received from SWVA HEALS since their initial submission in February of 2024. The SWVA HEALS applicants were present at the meeting and answered questions posed by the Standing Committee at final review. The Standing Committee unanimously approved First and Final Review of the SWVA HEALS application to be forwarded for consideration by the Virginia Board of Education contingent upon responsiveness by SWVA HEALS to the provision of the following:

- Additional detail related to the SWVA HEALS lab school being open to all students.
- Additional detail related to supports proposed for students engaged in the rigorous academic program of SWVA HEALS.

The Standing Committee approved First and Final Review of the SWVA HEALS application and VDOE staff posted the SWVA HEALS application for the 10-day public comment period on April 11, and it remained available until April 25. Eight (8) comments were received in support of SWVA HEALS.

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, and presented to the Standing Committee on March 4, 2024, for review. Responsive to Standing Committee feedback at the March 4, 2024, meeting, technical assistance calls were held with the Emory and Henry team on March 6 and March 25, 2024.

The application proposes for Emory and Henry to begin a lab school in collaboration and partnership with A. Linwood Holton Governor's School, Virginia Highlands Community College, Wytheville Community College, Smyth County Schools, Washington County Schools, Wythe County Schools, and City of Bristol Schools. The proposed lab school named "SWVA-HEALS" is an innovative interdisciplinary lab school model that focuses on providing career exposure to students through real-world problem solving in collaboration with higher education professionals, pre-service college students, and industry experts. Students remain enrolled in their home school division and attend Health Science courses at one of the two SWVA-HEALS

campus locations, the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center or the Emory and Henry College of Health Science Campus for one-half of the school day. The curriculum consists of dual enrollment credit courses in Health Sciences. The lab school would address multiple desirable outcomes for students, future teachers, and regional schools with hiring needs, including the following:

- Students will engage in high-level application of real-world problem-solving while working closely with a team of experts from both industry and the higher education partners.
- E&H's Lab School will provide a space for innovation where educators, industry, and pre-service professionals can explore best practices in teaching and learning.
- Students will engage in coursework aligned with personal interest and regional market demand industry and business, streamlining the pipeline for high-wage, high-skill, high-demand employment in the region served by the Lab School.

The Lab School statutes favor control by the institute of Higher Education. The governance structure of the SWVA HEALS lab school meets those criteria. VDOE SME team will continue to advise SWVA HEALS on meeting statutory compliance within the Applicant's constitution, governance, and bylaws.

The approval of lab schools aligns with Priority 4 of the Board's *Comprehensive Plan 2024–2029*: to create innovative pathways for every learner.

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 Emory and Henry SWVA HEALS lab school application for a five-year contract period 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 Emory and Henry SWVA HEALS, including awarding start-up funds and up to \$3,850,000 in per-pupil funding from the College Partnership Laboratory School Fund in accordance with [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 SWVA HEALS lab school proposal partners with 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 to provide a comprehensive education as a healthcare focused career academy for students in grades 10-12. Additionally, the proposal has undergone a thorough review process by the Standing Committee. Approval at the April 25, 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 SWVA HEALS application has undergone review by the Board’s Standing Committee:

Date: April 11, 2024

Action: First and Final Review of College Partnership Laboratory School Application from Emory & Henry College.

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 eight public meetings in 2023 and four in 2024. After each meeting, the Standing Committee has provided a report on progress to the Board. In its meetings, the Standing Committee has set up 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 E&H lab school application on December 15, 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
- Ms. Shawna LeBlond, Director, Office of Teacher Licensure
- Mr. Edward Lanza, Director of Budgeting
- Mr. Jason Ellis, Office of Student Performance and Support
- Ms. Rebecca Askew, Director of Policy
- Ms. Claire Bremner, Coordinator of Innovation
- 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 and final review on April 11, 2024.

At review, the SWVA HEALS 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, with emphasis on supports to students engaging in the rigorous curriculum and recruitment of all students to the lab school. The SWVA HEALS applicants responded to all questions, and the Standing Committee approved first and final review and cleared the SWVA HEALS application for the 10-day public comment posting period. The Standing Committee recommended the SWVA HEALS application to advance to Board consideration for approval at the April 25, 2024, Board meeting.

At the Standing Committee meeting in April, Dr. Andy Armstrong stated the SWVA HEALS Lab School is compliant and ready to implement and recommended to the Committee that the SWVA HEALS Lab School be forwarded to the Virginia Board of Education for their consideration for approval at the April 25, 2024, meeting. The SWVA HEALS applicants were present at the

meeting to answer any questions posed by the Standing Committee at standing committee review. Satisfied with all 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 E&H 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 the [Virginia Education Update #2024-15](#).

The SWVA HEALS 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. John Wells, President, Emory and Henry College
- Dr. Adam Hutchinson, President, Virginia Highlands Community College
- Dr. Dean Sprinkle, President, Wytheville Community College
- Mr. David Matlock, Executive Director and Head, SWVA Higher Education Center
- Dr. Michael Robinson, Director, A. Linwood Holton Governor's School
- Ms. Peggy Wagy, School Board Chair, Wythe County Public Schools
- Ms. Susan Williams, Board Chair, Smyth County Schools
- Ms. Breanne Forbes Hubbard, School Board Chair, City of Bristol
- Ms. Jenny Nichols, School Board Chair, Washington County Public Schools
- Dr. David Scott, Superintendent, Bristol City Schools
- Dr. Dennis Carter, Superintendent, Smyth County Public Schools
- Dr. Keith Perrigan, Superintendent, Washington County Public Schools
- Dr. G. Wesley Poole, Superintendent, Wythe County Public Schools
- Dr. Matthew Loos, Chief Academic Officer, Ballad Health
- Ms. Sarah Gillespie, Executive Director, Smyth County Chamber of Commerce

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 Emory and Henry College 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, Emory & Henry College, and participating school divisions.

Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources

This item will not impact resources at VDOE.