



COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP LABORATORY SCHOOLS
STANDING COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION REPORT
College Partnership Laboratory School Application For:

Old Dominion University – Newport News

April 2024
VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION 2

BACKGROUND OF THE COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP LABORATORY SCHOOL FUND. 2

PURPOSE OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE 2

SUMMARY OF APPLICATION ELEMENTS TO BE REVIEWED 3

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT 4

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS..... 5

 ELEMENT 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... 5

 ELEMENT 2: MISSION AND VISION 7

 ELEMENT 3: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM 9

 ELEMENT 4: GOVERNANCE 11

 ELEMENT 5: MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE..... 13

 ELEMENT 6: FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONS INFORMATION..... 14

 ELEMENT 7: PLACEMENT PLAN 15

 ELEMENT 8: OTHER ASSURANCES AND REQUIREMENTS..... 16

CONCLUDING REPORT COMMENTS 16

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.

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

Old Dominion University (“ODU”) is partnering with Newport News Public Schools (“NNPS”) to design and open a laboratory school called the Maritime Engineering and Environmental Studies Academy (“MEESA”). Old Dominion University will serve as the fiscal agent.

MEESA will use experiential learning strategies to prepare students for traditional and emerging careers in the maritime industry. A focus will be given to preparing students for college programs designed to produce graduates ready for STEM careers in the maritime field and preparing students to promote innovation in coastal communities.

MEESA and its underlying practices are grounded in regional employment demand and scholarly research. Regarding regional employment demand, Hampton Roads is home to a transportation ecosystem bringing together the Chesapeake Bay, ports, two Class 1 railways, a highway system, barge services, and two airports. The maritime sector is critical to this ecosystem.

A 2019 Hampton Roads Workforce Development study found severe shortages of local graduates for transportation/logistics careers requiring either a high school education or bachelor’s degree. This high reliance on maritime trade and the shortage of talent led Reinvent Hampton Roads, a group of prominent regional business leaders, to identify maritime as one of the clusters that will diversify the coastal Virginia economy in the future. The group conceptualized maritime as “industries related to the water–port, shipping, logistics, shipbuilding, and ship repair.” The foundational principle of the Student-Centered Maritime and Environmental Studies Academy is this—schools and employers must work together to change how we educate high school students in order to develop the future maritime workforce.

With solid academic curriculum theory proposed and aligned with education, research, and innovation efforts, the Standing Committee highly recommends the Old Dominion University – Newport News Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application received numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

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 MEESA is to inspire students as future leaders in maritime engineering and environmental sciences; provide a dynamic teaching laboratory for educators through innovative education, hands-on experiences; and collaborate around research to build and share knowledge of transformative practices.

The vision of MEESA includes empowering students and educators alike, our vision is to be a beacon of excellence, cultivating stewards of the seas, guardians of the environment, and preparing students for a world of digital engineering, as the Maritime Engineering and Environmental Studies Academy pioneers’ transformative education, research, and hands-on exploration for a brighter, more resilient future.

MEESA’s business and industry partners include the following organizations:

- Tidewater Chapter of the American Society of Naval Engineers (ASNG-TW)
- City of Newport News-Office of City Manager
- Newport News Shipbuilding-A Division of Huntington Ingalls
- The Port of Virginia
- Nauticus
- Department of Development, City of Newport News
- Youth Sailing Virginia
- Virginia Maritime Association
- Virginia Digital Maritime Center
- The Mariner’s Museum & Park
- Virginia Ship Repair Association
- Hampton Roads Workforce Council

The Applicant’s mission and vision clearly outlines the level of innovation anticipated and the targeted student. With completed planning and proposed programs and processes in place, the Standing Committee highly recommends the MEESA Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application received numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

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:

MEESA will establish primary goals and objectives rooted in academic excellence, experiential learning, and innovation. Our focus will be on equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and hands-on experiences to excel in maritime, engineering, and environmental studies, while ensuring they meet or exceed the Virginia Board of Education's Standards of Learning (SOL).

MEESA will offer a dynamic academic program designed to align with state standards and surpass them by fostering interdisciplinary learning, sustainability education, and innovative pedagogy. Our program, inclusive of experiential learning, will leverage well established educational theories and practices.

MEESA's foundation will be rooted in constructivist educational theory, emphasizing learning through active participation, collaboration, and real-world experiences. Students participating in the MEESA will have the opportunity to:

- Earn up to six college credits with Old Dominion University
- Engage with the ODU School of Maritime Initiatives
- Participate in a work-based learning experience.
- Develop an electronic portfolio.
- Gain job experience Network with future employers.
- Earn industry certifications in maritime-related fields.

MEESA offers a program of study designed to connect students to post-secondary success through employment or continuing education in Maritime-focused industries to fill the employment gaps across Hampton Roads. MEESA also offers teacher preparation and development by building the next generation of future STEM and CTE teachers through Virginia Teachers for Tomorrow.

With the required credentials for curriculum development and assessment in place, the Standing Committee highly recommends the MEESA Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application received numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

The Applicant has proposed a solid, theoretical curriculum/instructional approach. VDOE can provide guidance on any statutory requirements related to expeditionary learning, internships, etc.

ELEMENT 4: GOVERNANCE

OVERALL ELEMENT ASSESSMENT:

The Applicant has identified a shared governance model will be in place, establishing policies that deviate from established university and school division policies. The Governing Board will be composed of leaders from Old Dominion University and Newport News Public Schools. The Board will seek recommendations from the Director for Design Thinking and Leadership Development, the Academy Director, and the Advisory committee when considering decisions regarding the Lab School functioning. The Board will meet quarterly, following the procedures in the Code of Virginia.

The Advisory Committee will be composed by the chairs of the following committees. Committees may be dissolved and created as the Lab School process evolves.

- Community Engagement - Community members will be on this committee, along with ODU faculty and administrators, Newport News Public Schools' personnel, and city representatives.
- Parents - This committee will be composed of parents, supported by a Lab School member.
- Curriculum - This committee will be composed of curriculum experts across Newport News Public Schools, the MEESA Academy Director, Old Dominion University, Virginia Digital Maritime Center, and maritime and other industry professionals.
- Research - Members will include ODU research faculty, ODU students, and NNPS representatives.
- Educator Preparation - This committee will be composed of educator preparation and development faculty at Old Dominion University, NNPS professional development, and led by an ODU faculty member.
- Maritime - Members will be a part of the maritime business and industry community.
- Partnerships and Sustainability - Members will include ODU philanthropic and corporate partnership development, NNPS development, the city of Newport News, and industry and business leaders.
- Marketing & Branding - This committee will be co-led by NNPS and ODU marketing and branding personnel.

Overall, each entity with a vested interest in the school will be actively involved in the governance of this proposed Lab School.

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 MEESA Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application received numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

MEESA has provided organizational charts as well as a draft document for governance. 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. The Director of the Institute for Design Thinking and Leadership Development is an existing ODU position, which will oversee the MEESA Lab School. The MEESA Academy Director will be hired within the first six months of receiving the grant. A job description will be developed by the committee that outlines the duties for the teachers and the program director for the Lab School. ODU will work closely with NNPS in the recruitment and development of school leadership and staff.

All qualifications of MEESA teachers and administrators will be consistent with Newport News Public School’s policies and approved by ODU. For positions that require licensure and endorsement areas, staff will be monitored through the NNPS Human Resources department and evaluated regularly by the program lead. Administrators will hold the required endorsements in alignment with NNPS policy and ODU approval.

The Applicant will use the Lab School Standing Committee’s Best Practices on Administration of Lotteries for College Partnership Laboratory Schools to develop a fully operational lottery process.

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 MEESA Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application received numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

VDOE may need to provide guidance memorandums between the school district and the Lab School as well as guidance on the proposed school lottery process.

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 \$2,205 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 fiscal policies and procedures through their fiscal agent, ODU. ODU will align our plans and policies with the city of NNPS in order to align with the NNPS’s MOU requirements.

The Applicant’s goal is to work with those philanthropic and corporate partners on the specific ways they can support fundraising/revenue generating options and work to provide federal, state, and private funding to replace the Lab School grant funding over the next five (5) years.

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 MEESA Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application numerous institutional endorsements that supported the application.

AREAS REQUIRING VDOE REINFORCEMENT:

VDOE may need to assist with ideas and support for longer term financial sustainability planning.

ELEMENT 7: PLACEMENT PLAN

OVERALL ELEMENT ASSESSMENT:

The Applicant’s Lab School placement plan includes the current process for students to return to their home school division and/or move to another division out of state, etc. would have their records transferred electronically using the secure VDOE Dropbox process or other secure Student Information Systems procedures.

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 MEESA Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT ASSESSMENT:

The application 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 MEESA Laboratory School to the Board.

ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

	Not Evident	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
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X	Operational/ Ready to implement	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:

VDOE may need to assist with approving additional waivers or assisting with review of Memorandums of Understanding to guard against conflicts of interest if future participation of school divisions is expanded.

CONCLUDING REPORT COMMENTS

The Applicant is proposing the Maritime Engineering and Environmental Studies Academy (“MEESA Application”). This lab school will focus heavily on student guided learning through STEM, Experiential Learning, Guided Inquiry, Design Thinking, Career and Technical Education, as well as internships and job shadowing opportunities. MEESA will align with education, research, and innovation efforts at Old Dominion University around Maritime, as well as with the Virginia Digital Maritime Center, an initiative designed to enhance the region’s maritime workforce, particularly through digital innovation. The concept is that through student choice and student-led inquiry, there will be an increase in engagement as participants connect real, local issues and jobs to classroom lessons and skills.

With solid academic curriculum theory proposed and learning facilities in place, the Standing Committee highly recommends the Old Dominion University – Newport News 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 MEESA Laboratory School to the Board.