



# VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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# AGENDA ITEM

**Agenda Item:** B

**Date:** May 6, 2024

**Title:** Old Dominion University’s STEM Academy at Booker T. Washington Elementary School VDOE Documentation of Complete and Compliant Application

**Presenter:** Dr. Andy Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Innovation

## **Purpose of Presentation**

Review of documentation of complete and compliant Laboratory School Application for Old Dominion University’s STEM Academy at Booker T. Washington Elementary School, a laboratory school proposal from a collaboration between Old Dominion University and the school division of Suffolk Public Schools.

## **Executive Summary**

The laboratory school application entitled **Old Dominion University’s STEM Academy at Booker T. Washington Elementary School** (“ODU STEM Academy Application”) was received from Old Dominion University (“Applicants”) on February 1, 2024. In accordance with the Laboratory School Application Process, the ODU STEM Academy 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 ODU STEM Academy 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 ODU STEM Academy Application for completeness and compliance. The VDOE SME team responsible for reviewing the ODU STEM Academy 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 ODU STEM Academy team during the development stage prior to submission of their application and following submission in preparation for Standing Committee review. Prior to application submission, technical assistance calls were held between VDOE and the ODU STEM Academy team on September 11, 2023, December 4, 2023, and January 8, 2024. Following submission of the application, additional technical assistance calls were held on April 17, 2024. The first round of counseling from VDOE SME review was provided to the Applicants the week of March 12, 2024. A revised application was submitted to the VDOE on March 25, 2024. A revised application, budget, and sustainability addendum were provided to the VDOE on April 17, 2024 and a final application responsive to suggested revisions was received on April 24, 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 and Final Review of the ODU STEM Academy Application and recommendations on the ability for the ODU STEM Academy 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 ODU STEM Academy application.

### **VDOE Recommendation**

The concept of a lab school designed collaboratively with local school divisions to

incorporate hands-on STEM experiences into the elementary curriculum to enhance students' academic proficiency, promote the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills to foster a deeper understanding of core subjects, prepare students for real-world challenges, provide a rich environment for the utilization of innovative teaching methods, curriculum development, and educational theories in a practical, hands-on setting, and address the needs of at-risk students by emphasizing the importance of STEM exposure by Old Dominion University is an innovative and desirable laboratory school program. With the students remaining enrolled in their local school divisions, it appears ODU STEM Academy 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. 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 that **ODU's STEM Academy** is operational and ready to implement.

**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.”