



COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP LABORATORY SCHOOLS  
STANDING COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION REPORT  
College Partnership Laboratory School Application For:

Old Dominion University – Suffolk

May 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 ..... 8

    ELEMENT 4: GOVERNANCE ..... 9

    ELEMENT 5: MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE..... 11

    ELEMENT 6: FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONS INFORMATION..... 12

    ELEMENT 7: PLACEMENT PLAN ..... 13

    ELEMENT 8: OTHER ASSURANCES AND REQUIREMENTS ..... 14

CONCLUDING REPORT COMMENTS ..... 14

## **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.

	<b>Not Evident</b>	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
	<b>Emerging/Partial detail</b>	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
	<b>Operational/ Ready to implement</b>	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 Suffolk Public Schools (“SPS”) to design and open a STEM focused laboratory school called within the Booker T. Washington Elementary School (“The STEM Academy”). Old Dominion University will serve as the fiscal agent.

This partnership centers on a comprehensive integration of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education that will be incorporated into hands-on STEM experiences in the elementary curriculum to enhance students’ academic proficiency for access and exposure to cultivate a generation of productive citizens equipped with skills and knowledge needed in STEM-related careers. The STEM Academy goals are to: (1) design an innovative STEM learning environment for students, (2) a learning hub for educator preparation and development, and (3) research setting for both University faculty and K-12 educators.

Our objectives include: The proposed innovation for this program centers on a comprehensive integration of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education. The school will (1) incorporate hands-on STEM experiences into the elementary curriculum to enhance students’ academic proficiency; (2) promote the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills to fosters a deeper understanding of core subjects and prepares students for real-world challenges; (3) provide a rich environment for the utilization of innovative teaching methods, curriculum development, and educational theories in a practical, hands-on setting; and (4) address the needs of low socioeconomic populations by emphasizing the importance of STEM exposure.

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

#### ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:

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

## Lab School Application for Old Dominion University – Suffolk

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 vision of The STEM Academy vision is to foster deeper learning and the development of 5C skills (critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship) through the application of classroom content in authentic, real-world learning experiences. The mission of the STEM Academy is to support and promote (1) excellence in education, (2) student active agency and student voice in their learning, (3) experimentation with pedagogical approaches and experiential learning, (4) innovative approaches to professional learning and educator preparation, and the (5) integration of research and teaching. 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 STEM Academy seeks to reimagine the ways in which education takes place, including ensuring students engage in experiential learning and are supported by well-prepared educators. The STEM Academy will design community and field-based learning experiences focusing on addressing problems of practice. As part of this effort, the partners will focus on preparing teachers to create experiential and innovative learning environments integrated with STEM concepts, maximizing student engagement.

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 STEM Academy Laboratory School to the Board.

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

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

The STEM Academy students will engage in hands-on learning experiences, research projects, and interdisciplinary collaborations to explore the design, development, and implementation of STEM education. Students will gain practical experience through laboratory experiments, design projects, and research opportunities, enhancing their technical skills and problem-solving abilities. The concentration fosters interdisciplinary collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, preparing students to address complex real-world challenges.

The STEM Academy will ensure that students demonstrate mastery of Virginia’s Standards of Learning (SOLs) and skills across discipline and utilize performance-based assessments, such as projects, portfolios, and presentations, to measure students' mastery of competencies and skills.

The STEM Academy’s will emphasize cross-curricular, real-world approaches to enhance learning and application opportunities. STEM activities will be integrated into classrooms, transforming them into creative spaces within the school community.

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

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

	<b>Not Evident</b>	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
	<b>Emerging/Partial detail</b>	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
<b>X</b>	<b>Operational/ Ready to implement</b>	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 Suffolk 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
- Parents
- Curriculum
- Research
- Educator Preparation.
- Sustainability
- Marketing & Branding

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 STEM Academy Laboratory School to the Board.

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

	<b>Not Evident</b>	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
	<b>Emerging/Partial detail</b>	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
<b>X</b>	<b>Operational/ Ready to implement</b>	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 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 STEM Academy Lab School. The STEM 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 SPS in the recruitment and development of school leadership and staff.

All qualifications of The STEM Academy teachers and administrators will be consistent with Suffolk Public School’s policies and approved by ODU. For positions that require licensure and endorsement areas, staff will be monitored through the SPS Human Resources department and evaluated regularly by the program lead. Administrators will hold the required endorsements in alignment with SPS 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 STEM Academy Laboratory School to the Board.

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

	<b>Not Evident</b>	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
	<b>Emerging/Partial detail</b>	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
<b>X</b>	<b>Operational/ Ready to implement</b>	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 \$3.36 million in operational per-pupil funding support over a four-year period.

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 SPS in order to align with the SPS’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 STEM Academy Laboratory School to the Board.

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

	<b>Not Evident</b>	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
	<b>Emerging/Partial detail</b>	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
<b>X</b>	<b>Operational/Ready to implement</b>	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 STEM Academy Laboratory School to the Board.

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

	<b>Not Evident</b>	Little or no indication exists for implementation activities
	<b>Emerging/Partial detail</b>	Indicates preliminary stages of implementation for some practices and procedures
<b>X</b>	<b>Operational/ Ready to implement</b>	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 STEM Academy Laboratory School to the Board.

**ELEMENT RUBRIC RATING:**

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

Old Dominion University and Suffolk Public Schools propose establishing a STEM-focused Laboratory School within Booker T. Washington Elementary. The Lab School will serve 120 students in grades kindergarten through 5th grade and the goals are to: (1) design an innovative STEM learning environment for students, (2) a learning hub for educator preparation and development, and (3) research setting for both University faculty and K-12 educators.

The proposed innovation for this program centers on a comprehensive integration of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education. The school will (1) incorporate hands-on STEM experiences into the elementary curriculum to enhance students’ academic proficiency; (2) promote the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills to fosters a deeper understanding of core subjects and prepares students for real-world challenges; (3) provide a rich environment for the utilization of innovative teaching methods, curriculum development, and educational theories in a practical, hands-on setting; and (4) address the needs of low socioeconomic populations by emphasizing the importance of STEM exposure. By providing access to STEM resources and hands-on experiences, students from disadvantaged backgrounds will have the opportunity to explore a diverse range of career options as well as

## Lab School Application for Old Dominion University – Suffolk

acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for future success in their academic and professional lives. This exposure not only broadens their horizons, but also instills a sense of possibility and agency.

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