



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: A

Date: June 10, 2024

Title: Norfolk State University Young Scholars Academy 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 NSU Young Scholars Academy, a laboratory school proposal from a collaboration between Norfolk State University and the school divisions of Portsmouth Public Schools and Norfolk Public Schools.

Executive Summary

The laboratory school application entitled **Norfolk State University (NSU) Young Scholars Academy Lab School** (“NSU’s Young Scholars Academy Application”) was received from Norfolk State University (“Applicants”) on May 15, 2024. In accordance with the Laboratory School Application Process, the NSU Young Scholars 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 NSU Young Scholars 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 NSU Young Scholars Academy Application for completeness and compliance. The VDOE SME team responsible for reviewing the NSU Young Scholars Academy application was comprised of the following VDOE staff:

- Dr. Andrew Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent

- Claire Bremner, Coordinator of Innovation
- Sofia McDaniel (Department of Strategic Innovation)
- Dr. Michelle Wallace (Department of Instruction)
- Shawna LeBlond (Office of Licensure and School Leadership)
- Jason Ellis (Office of Accountability)
- 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 NSU Young Scholars 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 NSU Young Scholars Academy team on March 18, 2024 and April 19, 2024. The first round of counseling from VDOE SME review was provided to the Applicants the week of May 24. A revised application was submitted to the VDOE on May 29, 2024 responsive to suggested revisions 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 NSU Young Scholars Academy Application and recommendations on the ability for the NSU Young Scholars 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 NSU Young Scholars Academy application.

VDOE Recommendation

The concept of a lab school designed collaboratively with local school divisions with a strong emphasis on project-based learning and hands-on approaches to cultivate computational thinking, problem-solving, critical thinking abilities, and other essential skills crucial for success for young learners by Norfolk State University is an innovative and desirable laboratory school program. With the students remaining enrolled in their local school divisions, it appears NSU

Young Scholars Academy functions more as a program than a standalone Lab School; however, this is a point to be clarified by the Standing Committee with the NSU team.

The Applicants responded to initial feedback and coaching provided by the VDOE SME team, and provided the additional information requested. The Applicants have two options for students including a pathway for prekindergarten 3- and 4-year-olds and another pathway for kindergarten through 2nd grade, with a sustainable governance structure, including a sustainable financial model for the operation of the lab school program.

Overall, the VDOE recommends that **NSU Young Scholars Academy Lab School** 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.”