# Agenda Item: A

## Date: July 7, 2023

## Title: VCU X Code RVA Lab School – VDOE Documentation of Complete and Compliant Application

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## Presenter: Dr. Jeremy Raley, Chief of Staff of the Virginia Department of Education

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## Purpose of Presentation

Review of documentation of complete and compliant Laboratory School Application for VCU x Code RVA Lab School, a laboratory school proposal from a collaboration between Virginia Commonwealth University (“VCU”) and Code RVA Regional High School.

## Executive Summary

The laboratory school application entitled VCU x Code RVA Lab School (“Code RVA Application”) was received from VCU (“Applicant”) on May 26, 2023. In accordance with the Laboratory School Application Process, the Code RVA 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 Applicant 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 application, and to identify aspects of the proposal that are especially exciting or unique.

Dr. Jeremy Raley, Chief of Staff of the Virginia Department of Education, coordinated the efforts of the VDOE SME team who reviewed the Code RVA Application for completeness and compliance. The VDOE SME team is comprised of the following VDOE staff:

* Dr. Jeremy Raley, Chief of Staff
* Mr. Kent Dickey, Deputy Director of Budget, Finance and Operations
* Dr. Samantha Hollins, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services
* Ms. Melissa Vasquez, Assistant Superintendent of Policy and Communications
* Dr. Brendon Albon, Director of STEM and Innovation
* Mr. Jim Chapman, Director of Board Relations
* Ms. Maggie Clemmons, Director of Licensure and School Leadership
* Mr. Edward Lanza, Director of Budgeting
* Ms. Amy Siepka, Director of Accountability
* Ms. Susan Williams, Director of Data Services
* Ms. Rebecca Askew, Senior Policy Analyst

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 VCU x CodeRVA VDOE Completeness and Compliance Report (Attachment 2).

The VDOE SME review concluded the Code RVA Application information was complete and compliant and no additional to the Applicant was required.

The Virginia Laboratory School Initiative is in alignment with [Board of Education Goals from the 2018-2023 Comprehensive Plan](https://doe.virginia.gov/boe/plan/index.shtml): provide high-quality, effective learning environments for all students.

Since first review, VDOE staff has received additional letters of support and public comment regarding the Code RVA Application. This material is included in Attachment 3.

## Action Requested

The Code RVA Application is being submitted to the College Partnership Laboratory Schools Standing Committee (“Standing Committee”) for final review. VDOE staff requests that the Standing Committee endorse the Code RVA Application for approval and refer to the Board of Education for review.

## VDOE Recommendation

The CodeRVA Application is a strong, well written application that provided a thorough level of detail in all the required application elements. CodeRVA is an established innovative school that has been operating successfully since the 2017-2018 school year and has consistently met the SOQ, SOL, and SOA state requirements. VCU is an established institute of higher learning with great resources.

Personalized instruction is a unique facet of CodeRVA curriculum. With the partnership of VCU’s resources including the Teacher Residency program, the Applicant’s laboratory school proposal marries two existing, successful educational institutes that will be ready to operate beginning with the 2023/2024 school year. The combined entities have proposed an innovative laboratory school philosophy that addresses multiple desirable outcomes for students, future teachers, and corporate hiring needs including:

* Students will be gain valuable workforce readiness skills in computer science;
* Students have opportunities for dual enrollment for college degrees;
* Future/student teachers will be mentored in unique educator preparation programs and become mentors themselves, making lessons available to others across the state; and
* Virginia companies will have access to computer/technology trained candidates.

CodeRVA is classified as a Regional Center and has an existing board of directors, operational procedures regarding school administration, student records administration, and financial planning and budgeting. There was an expansive level of detail on budget line items, as well as a strong governance structure. The Applicant’s addition of the VCU staff to the CodeRVA board of directors’ works to balance board control. Nevertheless, the Lab School statutes favor control by the institute of Higher Education. VDOE SME team will work with the Applicant to develop a mechanism to transition CodeRVA from a Regional Center to a Laboratory School meeting statutory compliance within the Applicant’s constitution, governance, and bylaws.

Additional consideration from the VDOE SME team included modifications to the CodeRVA school name to indicate change from a Regional Center to a partnership laboratory school.

The Laboratory School Application requires a full accounting of operational funds (including grants, lab school funds, tuition payments, etc.) and personnel funding over five (5) years relative to the full cost of operations. VDOE SME team will work with the Applicant to obtain this information in more detail.

VDOE SME team will also work with the Applicant to identify the methodology for including the fiscal agent status change between CodeRVA, Henrico County Public Schools (the named fiscal agent) and VCU in either the governing by-laws or a Memorandum of Understanding between the parties.

Overall, the VDOE recommends the VCU x Code RVA SVCA Program is operational and ready to implement.

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## Previous Review or Action

No previous review or action by the Laboratory School Committee.

**Background Information and Statutory Authority:**

Subsection A of § [22.1-349.6](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter19.1/section22.1-349.6/) 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.”