



# VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

---

# AGENDA ITEM

**Agenda Item:** B

**Date:** January 8, 2024

**Title:** James Madison University Lab School for Innovation and Career Exploration – 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 James Madison University Lab School for Innovation and Career Exploration, a laboratory school proposal from a collaboration among James Madison University, Blue Ridge Community College and Rockingham County Public Schools.

## **Executive Summary**

The laboratory school application entitled James Madison University Lab School for Innovation and Career Exploration (“JMU Application”) was received from James Madison University, Blue Ridge Community College, and Rockingham County Public Schools (“Applicants”) on August 22, 2023. In accordance with the Laboratory School Application Process, the JMU 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 JMU 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 JMU Application for completeness and compliance.

The VDOE SME team responsible for reviewing the JMU application was comprised of the following VDOE staff:

- Dr. Andrew Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent
- Robert Gilstrap (Office of Licensure and School Leadership)
- Amy Siepka (Office of Accountability)
- Rebecca Askew (Office of Policy)
- Edward Lanza (Office of Budgeting)
- 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)
- Dr. John Hendron (Professional Development)

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).

The first round of counseling from VDOE SME review was provided to the Applicants the week of August 29, 2023, via phone call with VDOE staff. The Applicants analyzed the feedback constructively and provided an updated JMU application on September 4, 2023. On October 19, 2023, an on-site technical assistance visit was held on the JMU campus, and a further revised application was received on November 12, 2023. The VDOE SME review team provided feedback on the November 12 JMU application revision during the week of November 29, 2023 and JMU was provided with the results of the VDOE SME review team feedback on December 13, 2023. JMU provided a final revised application to the VDOE on December 15, 2023 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 Review of the JMU Application and recommendations on the ability for the JMU Application to be presented/recommended to the Virginia Board of Education at the next scheduled meeting. In addition, the School Committee can also provide recommendations for additional Subject Matter Experts or coaching to satisfy Laboratory School statutory requirements for the JMU application.

**VDOE Recommendation**

The concept of an interdisciplinary lab school model providing career exposure while engaging in real-world problem solving in collaboration with higher education professionals, college students, and industry experts proposed by the JMU application is an innovative and desirable laboratory school program. With the students remaining enrolled in their local school divisions, it appears the JMU Lab School for Innovation and Career Exploration 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 the JMU Lab School for Innovation and Career Exploration 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.”