

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
BOARD OF EDUCATION
COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP LABORATORY SCHOOLS COMMITTEE
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA**

Minutes

February 28, 2013

The Virginia Board of Education College Partnership Laboratory Schools Committee met at the James Monroe State Office Building, Jefferson Conference Room 22nd Floor, Richmond, Virginia, with the following members present: Mrs. Winsome E. Sears, chair, Ms. Diane T. Atkinson, Dr. Oktay Baysal, Dr. Stephen Smith, Dr. William C. Bosher, Jr., and Ms. Patricia E. Diebold. Ms. Joan E. Wodiska was not present. Also present were Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Patricia Wright; Board of Education President, Mr. David M. Foster, and Board members, Mrs. Betsy D. Beamer and Mr. Christian N. Braunlich.

Mrs. Winsome E. Sears called the meeting to order at 3 p.m.

After opening remarks and introductions of Committee and Board members, Mrs. Sears introduced the applicant for the Mason's Patriot Innovation Academy. Dr. Mark Ginsberg, dean at George Mason University, and Ms. Susan Quinn, assistant superintendent and chief financial officer from Fairfax County Public Schools, joined the meeting by teleconference. Dr. Jack Dale, superintendent, Fairfax County Schools, introduced the following presenters from the team: Dr. Libby Hall, principal investigator, College Partnership Laboratory School Initiative, George Mason University; Ms. Aimee Holleb, director, Cluster 6, Fairfax County Public Schools; Ms. Anne Horak, educational specialist, Fairfax County Schools; and Dr. Laura Horvath, project manager, College Partnership Laboratory School Initiative, George Mason University.

The Committee offered a public comment period; however, no one requested to speak. No written comment was received.

Mrs. Sears made note of the materials submitted by the applicant, and Committee members concurred that the applicant information was complete; the executive summary provided an overview of the proposed college partnership laboratory school; and the assurances were signed. Dr. Wright mentioned that even though the assurances were signed, the Committee will need to address the assurances involving timelines that George Mason University (GMU) cannot fulfill. George Mason University was in contact with the Board President, and the Committee may make a recommendation to the Board of Education regarding possible adjustments in the following timelines:

- The applicant will take all actions necessary to enter into a contract with the Virginia Board of Education no later than nine (9) months prior to the opening date of the college partnership laboratory school.
- The school leadership of the college partnership laboratory school will be retained on contract no later than six (6) months prior to the opening date of the school.

Mrs. Sears gave Dr. Ginsberg, Dr. Dale, and their teams the opportunity to address critical areas in the application. The applicant provided an overview of the main points of the application's components grouped into the following areas: Executive Summary, Mission and Vision, Education Program, Governance, Management Structure, Financial and Operations Information, Placement Plan, and Assurances and Other Requirements. Mason's Patriot Innovation Academy is proposed as a George Mason University college partnership laboratory school for seventh- and eighth-grade students in partnership and contract with Fairfax County Public Schools. After the applicant addressed each area, the Committee had the opportunity to ask questions.

The Committee discussed the Board's criteria and whether the applicant meets the requirements. In the presentation, the applicant stated that GMU would seek waivers for seat hours by core content, class size, and staffing. The applicant was advised that the *Code of Virginia* does not allow the Board of Education to waive "class size." Concern was expressed by the Committee about staffing, class size, and teacher load – how the small number of teachers assigned to the school will provide instruction to 200 students. The applicant proposed to employ six teachers with dual endorsements for 200 students (with contracted services from Fairfax County Public Schools); documentation of teacher loads needs to be provided.

The Committee advised the applicant that the Board of Education will want an assurance that the Standards of Learning will be taught in the self-regulated Problem-Based Learning units, as well as documentation on where the primary instruction is taking place in the units. Additional information needs to be provided on how the applicant will assess student learning in this interdisciplinary teaching approach. A challenge is to have a balance between the disciplines and the interdisciplinary instructional model.

The applicant said that they are not on schedule with the proposed timelines. The Web site posting and dates for seeking and registering students and recruiting an executive director set forth in the application were delayed pending response from the review process.

In the area of governance, the executive director will be dually appointed by Fairfax County Schools and George Mason University. Teachers will be employed by the school division and have affiliate faculty status (no compensation) at GMU; the University will contract with Fairfax for staffing services.

A concern was expressed about the initial funds and sustainability of funds for the executive director position. The applicant stated that there is a university commitment to fund the position even though the proposal references reliance of state funds for the position that have not been committed.

The applicant stated that they anticipate that Fairfax County Public Schools will charge tuition for students outside of the school division who first enroll in Fairfax County and, subsequently, attend Mason's Patriot Innovation Academy. Fairfax currently has a local school board adopted policy on charging tuition. Since the *Code of Virginia* does not allow a college partnership laboratory school to charge tuition, the Committee inquired about whether this prohibition also applies to the partnering school division. Counsel will need to be consulted related to this matter.

After the committee's discussion on the application components, the Committee discussed whether there was agreement whether the applicant met the criteria.

Required Application Components		Met the Criterion
I.	Executive Summary	Yes
II.	Mission and Vision	Yes
III.	Educational Program	¹
IV.	Governance	Yes ²
V.	Management Structure	Yes
VI.	Financial and Operations Information	³
VII.	Placement Plan	⁴
VIII.	Other Assurances and Requirements	No ⁵

¹ The concern about meeting the *Code of Virginia*'s class size requirement must be addressed. The applicant was advised that the *Code of Virginia* does not allow the Board of Education to waive "class size." Also, there needs to be a request with a rationale related to "seat time." Staffing resources need to be further clarified as the applicant proposed to employ six teachers with dual endorsements for 200 students. The Committee further advised the applicant that the Board of Education will want an assurance that the Standards of Learning will be taught in the self-regulated Problem-Based Learning units, as well as documenting where the primary instruction is taking place in the units. Additional information needs to be provided on how the applicant will assess student learning in this interdisciplinary teaching approach.

² Even though the proposal appears to be compliant, concern was expressed about how the bifurcated governance will actually operate.

³ Clarification is needed for out-of-division students (tuition charged by Fairfax County Public Schools to students outside of the school division). In addition, funds for the salary of the executive director must be identified. Concern was expressed about the reliance of state funds that have not been identified or appropriated for the salary and benefits of the executive director. The question that needs to be answered is whether the opening of the school is dependent on receiving state funding for the executive director.

⁴ There was discussion regarding the assurance of the plan for student placement if the school closes. The Committee inquired whether it would be feasible to include in the partnership that if the school closes it would be at the end of a semester or the end of a school year. George Mason University responded that this provision could be written into the agreement.

⁵ The Committee discussed the requests from the applicant for the following waivers of Board of Education timelines. Since the request for these waivers was submitted to the Board President after the review of the application commenced, the requests will need to be forwarded to the full Board of Education for review and action.

- The applicant will take all actions necessary to enter into a contract with the Virginia Board of Education no later than nine (9) months prior to the opening date of the college partnership laboratory school.
- The school leadership of the college partnership laboratory school will be retained on contract no later than six (6) months prior to the opening date of the school.

Dr. Boshier made a motion that the Committee recommends to the Board of Education the approval of the proposal with the stated potential amendments. Ms. Atkinson added a friendly amendment to the motion, accepted by Dr. Boshier, that the recommendation of the Committee is contingent upon the satisfaction of the responses to the Committee's questions/concerns by the Virginia Board of Education. The motion was passed unanimously.

Mrs. Sears explained that a consensus report will be prepared and provided to the applicant within ten business days. The report will be presented to the Board of Education for first review at the March 28, 2013, meeting. The meeting was adjourned by Mrs. Sears at 5:45 p.m.