



Fayette County Public Schools

Executive Summary Fayette County Public Schools Board Meeting Agenda Item

MEETING: Regular

DATE: 12/18/2025

TOPIC: Multi-Year Facility Recommendation for STEM Academies

PREPARED BY: Demetrus Liggins

Recommended Action on:

Action Item for Vote (REGULAR MEETING)

Superintendent Prior Approval: Yes

Recommendation/Motion: A motion is in order to approve the multi-year facility recommendation for Rise STEM Academy for Girls and George Washington Carver Academy for Boys.

Background/Rationale: Rise STEM Academy for Girls opened during the 2020-21 school year with an enrollment of 137 students in grades kindergarten through two, and a vision to add a grade each year until the program included girls in grades kindergarten through eight. Now in its sixth year, the program serves 242 scholars in grades K-5, following a decision in 2024 to pause expansion into the middle school grades.

The program is currently housed in the former Linlee Elementary, which is a 98-year-old building, while a permanent home for Rise STEM is under construction off Versailles Road. The program will move into its new, state-of-the art location in fall of 2026. Designed with a capacity of 900 students, the \$58.5 million building provides ample room to grow and expand into the middle school grades as was envisioned when the program began.

George Washington Carver STEM Academy for Boys opened in the 2021-22 school year with an enrollment of 99 boys in grades kindergarten through two. Now in its fifth year, the program serves 144 scholars in grades K-5.

The program is currently housed in the former Johnson Elementary, which is an 86-year-old building listed as a transitional structure on the District Facilities Plan. The construction of a new facility for George Washington Carver STEM Academy is listed as one of 13 capital construction priorities on the 2025 District Facilities Plan. Making the existing location suitable to continue serving students will cost roughly \$3 million in maintenance and renovation.

Across the district, recent and ongoing school construction will add capacity for roughly 2,000 additional students in rapidly growing neighborhoods while overall student FCPS enrollment remains relatively unchanged as the number of families moving into Lexington-Fayette County has slowed. With more schools and programs than school districts of comparable size, budgetary constraints, and rezoning on the horizon, Superintendent Liggins established the Right Size, Bright Future initiative to evaluate the maximization of resources at all schools and programs and identify potential efficiencies and economies of scale to be gained to ensure the highest possible return on investment.

As part of this effort, consideration was given to relocating the George Washington Carver STEM Academy for Boys into the new Rise STEM Academy for Girls building when it opens in the fall of 2026. Discussion included keeping the two programs separate and making changes to bathrooms, colors, and branding in one wing of the building to accommodate the boys. This scenario was brought forward as an initial consideration because time would be a factor in having those structural changes complete before school starts in August.

After review two equally important and not necessarily mutually exclusive priorities are clear:

- Actualizing the original vision for both programs.
- Ensuring both programs are housed in state-of-the-art facilities designed specifically to support rich, STEM-centered instruction.

The following multi-year recommendation would achieve both objectives:

2025-26:

- Complete construction of the Versailles Road property as planned, without modification.
- Halt plans for facility improvements to the current facility housing George Washington Carver STEM Academy for Boys.
- Continue the work of the Right Size, Bright Future initiative with eye toward identifying a possible location the LPC and Fayette County Board of Education could consider to become the future home of George Washington Carver STEM Academy for Boys.
- Maximize recruitment and enrollment efforts for both programs.

2026-27:

- Move Rise STEM Academy for Girls into its new building.
- Temporarily relocate George Washington Carver STEM Academy for Boys to a separate wing of the Rise building, while maintaining each school as a distinct program and ensuring all students feel welcomed and a strong sense of belonging.
- Identify permanent and suitable location for George Washington Carver STEM Academy for Boys.
- Continue maximized recruitment and enrollment efforts for both programs.

2027-28 or as soon as possible:

- House George Washington Carver STEM Academy for Boys in its new home.

Strategic Priority:

- ☒ Student Achievement ☒ Unity, Belonging & Student Efficacy
- ☐ Highly Effective, Culturally Responsive Workforce
- ☐ Outreach & Engagement ☒ Organizational Health & Effectiveness

Data Considerations: Enrollment numbers for each program, Student achievement data for both programs

Policy: 01.11 General Powers and Duties of the Board

Fiscal Impact: cost of renovations for new home of George Washington Carver

Attachments(s): none