

LAB SCHOOL

For Innovation and Career Exploration

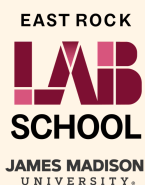
JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

JMU LAB SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

2026

Our Partnership



FALLing into Routine

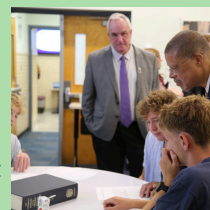
As the weather starts to get cooler, LAB School is heating up as the energy and excitement continue to flourish within the classroom. From interactive projects and student-led presentations to engaging, place-based field experiences, our students are engaged in learning beyond the traditional classroom. Across all of our satellite classrooms, students are exploring new ideas, building meaningful connections, and embracing hands-on opportunities that make learning both fun and impactful.

Community Updates

As we wrapped up the first nine-weeks of the school year, our LAB School students had an exciting opportunity to meet some of the incredible leaders who help make their unique learning experiences possible!

Our 11th-grade LAB School cohort was thrilled to welcome **Virginia Secretary of Education Dr. Jeffrey Smith, JMU President Dr. James Schmidt, and JMU College of Education Dean Dr. Mark L'Esperance** for a special visit to their classroom. These distinguished guests got a firsthand look at the amazing learning happening every day and the innovative opportunities that make the LAB School experience so special!

We are proud of our students and grateful for the continued support of the leaders who champion innovative education and help create meaningful opportunities for our LAB School community.



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Upcoming Events Calendar

LAB School

November

2nd - Parent/Teacher Open House at Lab School
(12:00-5:00PM)

6th - Spotswood 9th grade Ropes Course visit

13th - Turner Ashby 10th grade Ropes Course visit

Important RCPS Dates

November

2nd - No School/Parent Conference Day

3rd - No School/Parent Conference Day

25th thru 27th - No School/Thanksgiving Break



◆ Faculty Shoutout ◆ **Jamie Calcagno-Roach**

We're excited to highlight our growing partnership with JMU X-Labs, an innovation hub at James Madison University that fosters creativity, collaboration, and experiential learning among students and faculty!

We would also like to recognize and celebrate **Jamie Calcagno-Roach** for her dedication and contributions to this partnership. Serving as the faculty liaison for our 11th-grade students in their Design Thinking course this year, Jamie and her team are helping to foster innovative thinking, hands-on learning, and meaningful opportunities for students to explore creative problem-solving.

Each Friday, our Lab School students have the opportunity of working with Jamie at the X-Labs facility as they work towards obtaining their Design Thinking Certificate. We are grateful for Jamie's commitment and look forward to seeing how this exciting partnership continues to inspire innovation and enrich our students' learning experiences.

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10th Grade Highlights

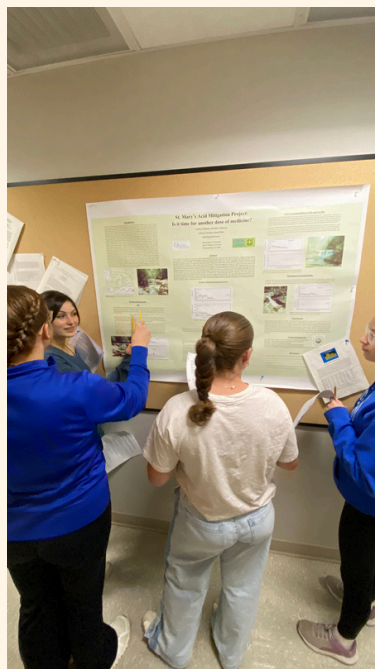
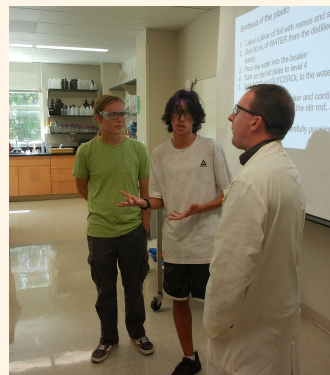
Working towards the Inquiry Expo

Sophomore year brings new challenges, exciting experiences, and opportunities for discovery in LAB School! This fall, our 10th-grade students began developing their science inquiry-based research projects, exploring questions, generating ideas, and discovering new possibilities through hands-on learning.

As students brainstorm and refine their research ideas alongside their teachers, each 10th-grade cohort has had the opportunity to learn from and collaborate with **Dr. Chris Berndsen**, a professor in James Madison University's Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

Dr. Berndsen first visited each classroom to share his professional journey to becoming a chemistry professor and introduce students to the diverse career pathways connected to his field. Building on these classroom conversations, each cohort then visited JMU's campus to participate in hands-on experiments in Dr. Berndsen's lab, exploring the creation and development of bioplastics.

These experiences are providing students with valuable opportunities to connect classroom learning with real-world scientific research, engage with university faculty, and explore the possibilities of future careers in science. We're excited to see how these experiences inspire our students as they continue their inquiry journey!



9th Grade Highlights

Building Community

Building a strong sense of community is a foundational element of the LAB School experience. As students and teachers navigate new learning environments and experiences, fostering a sense of belonging, connection, and unity within each cohort is essential to creating a supportive and collaborative learning community.

Through the partnership between **Rockingham County Public Schools (RCPS)**, **James Madison University (JMU)**, and **Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC)** each school year begins with team-building workshops facilitated by **JMU University Recreation staff**. These interactive experiences provide students and teachers with opportunities to connect, build relationships, and establish a strong foundation for collaboration.

Throughout the workshops, each cohort participates in a variety of team-building activities designed to strengthen communication, encourage creative problem-solving, and promote teamwork. These experiences help students and teachers recognize the value of diverse perspectives, incorporate new ideas, and ensure every voice is heard as they work toward a common goal in order to help create an environment where students and teachers feel connected, supported, and empowered to learn and grow together. We are grateful to our JMU partners for helping make these meaningful experiences possible!



LAB School Shoutout

Highlighting the amazing work of our BHS 9th Grade LAB School team!

While **Ms. Putney** has been away welcoming a new addition to her family, **Mr. Erney**, **Ms. Moxley**, and **Mr. Hindley** have stepped up in an extraordinary way to ensure our students continue to receive the support and guidance they need to thrive. Their teamwork, flexibility, and unwavering commitment to student success have been invaluable, and we are incredibly grateful for their dedication and willingness to go above and beyond!

We would also like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to **Ms. Putney** and her family on their newest addition! We are so happy for them and look forward to welcoming her back to our LAB School community in November. Thank you to our entire team for demonstrating the collaboration, compassion, and dedication that make the LAB School such a special place to learn and grow!

