Unifying Early Childhood In Virginia

Presentation to Joint Subcommittee on VPI
December 5, 2019

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What would it take to ensure that every Virginia child has the opportunity to enter school ready?

Define the Opportunity

All Virginia children, regardless of background or zip code, are capable of and deserve to enter kindergarten ready.

Yet 40% of Virginia children do not enter school fully ready with the literacy, math, self-regulation and social skills needed to thrive.

- Most concerning is that **half of children** from economically disadvantaged families are not fully ready.
- Virginia ranks **33rd nationally** in preschool funding.
- **75%** of Virginia's early childhood programs that receive **public funding do not** participate in the state's voluntary quality measurement system; vulnerable families as well as policymakers, practitioners and community leaders do not have **uniform information on quality**.
- Virginia ranks **37th nationally** in **early childhood governance.**

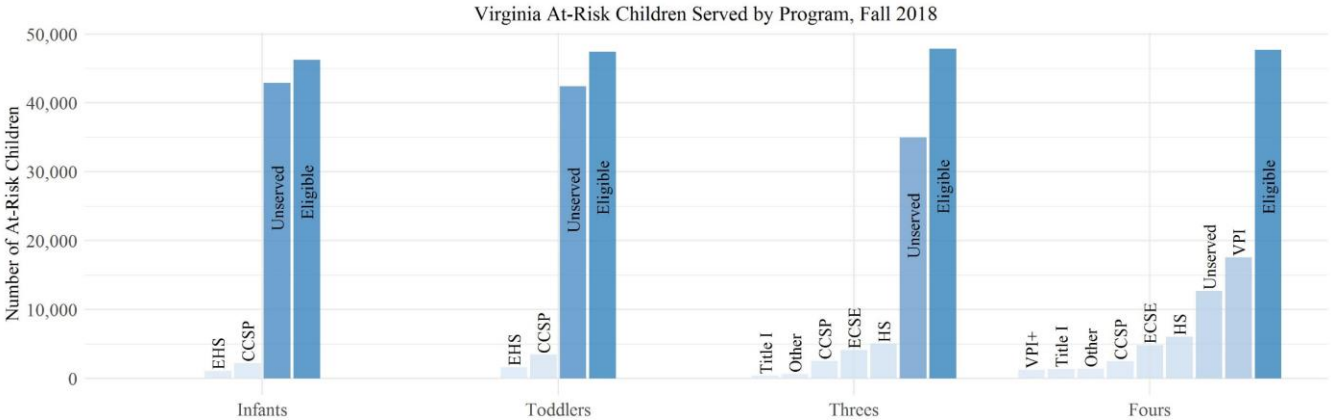
Equity in Access

Disparities in access and quality lead to inequitable outcomes.

- Infant child care is 107% of tuition/fees at a 4-yr Virginia college.
- Child care subsidy only covers of 70% of the market rate and Virginia only spends 77% of national average per student for preK.
- Families of color, rural families and families with infants and toddlers have a harder time finding child care.
- Children of color are more likely to suspended or expelled.
- While school-based teachers are paid on par with other teachers, child care teachers in Virginia start on average at $12/hour with no or little benefits; nearly two-thirds of child care teachers receive some form of public assistance. Family day home teachers typically start at less than $10/hour.

Access by Age

Even with multiple federal and state funding sources, at least 70% of at-risk birth to five children do not access public funds for early care and education.

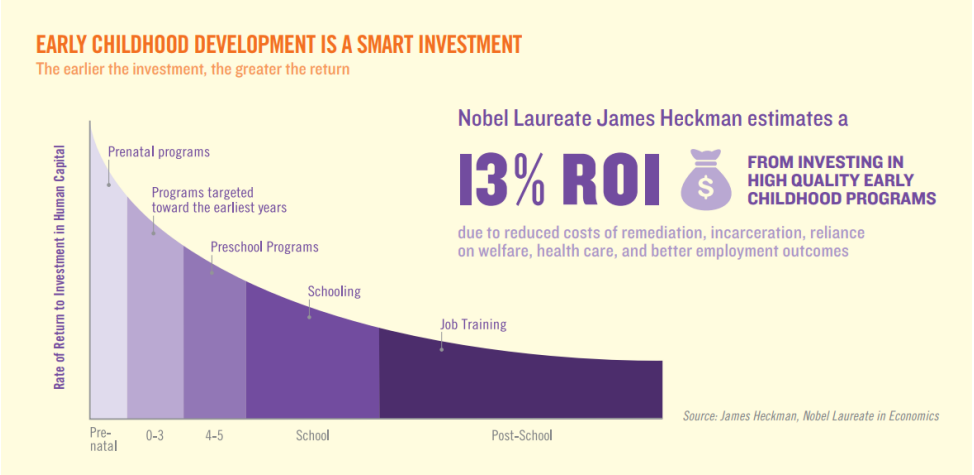


EHS = Early Head Start; HS = Head Start; CCSP = Child Care Subsidy Program; ECSE = Early Childhood Special Education; VPI = Virginia Preschool Initiative; VPI+ = Preschool Expansion Grant for VPI.

Return on Investment

Early childhood enables the workforce of today and powers the workforce of tomorrow.

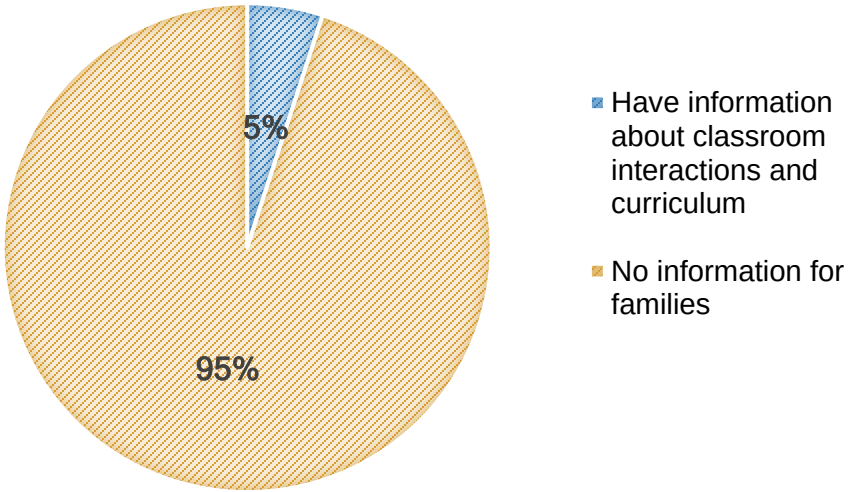
- The U.S. economy loses an astounding $57 billion per year in revenue, wages, and productivity due to child care problems.
- 90% of brain development occurs before age 5; early childhood programs have a lasting impact on tomorrow's workforce.



What if we aspired to strengthen care and instruction in every infant, toddler and preschool classroom?

Measuring and Improving Quality across Settings

The most important aspects of quality in preschool education are stimulating and supportive interactions between educators and children and effective use of curricula. Yet Virginia only measures and provides this information for 5% of publicly-funded programs.*

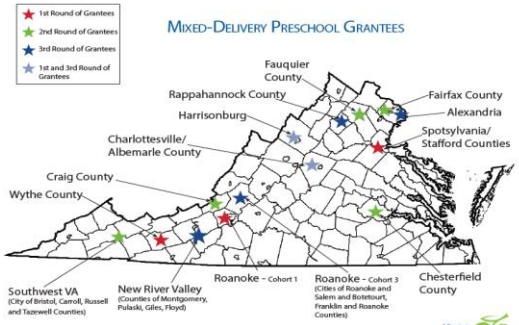


*Note: 5% represents programs at levels 4 and 5 of Virginia Quality. Levels 1-3 do not require both. As of 2018, Virginia now requires both for all VPI programs but information is not available for families.

Preschool Development Grant – Birth to Five (PDG B-5)

Virginia is using $9.9 million in new federal funds to unify and strengthen early childhood care and education with communities leading the way.

1. **A statewide vision, needs assessment and strategic plan**
2. **Community models ready to scale**
   Ten pilots will demonstrate proof of concept with $6 million in funding and support, including $4 million for teachers.
3. **A stronger foundation at the state level**
   The Commonwealth will be well positioned to scale the efforts statewide with the necessary capacity and infrastructure.



Key Action Areas

Community pilots are strengthening their local systems and leading the way for the state.

Over the last nine months, Virginia's Community Pilots have:

- Recruited new partners and built new relationships in all pilots
- Registered more than 575 sites and 2,500 teachers across family day home, child care, Head Start and schools in 27 jurisdictions
- Collected more than 2,000 survey responses from teachers
- Conducted self-assessments in all pilots to determine how families learn about, apply and enroll in early childhood programs
- Distributed more than $684,000 in funds via 1,368 checks
- Collaborated to design, build and launch a new data portal (LinkB5) including 85% of publicly-funded sites so far

Participating educators are eligible for up to $1500 in an incentive to encourage retention and increase compensation.

In Their Own Words

Providers were asked to describe "What would you want families to know about your site?"

PDG Moving Forward

With an additional three years of up to $37.5 million in PDG B-5 funding, Virginia proposes to expand current efforts to reach all communities in the Commonwealth teachers.

Year 1: Building

- Convene and coordinate
- Measure access
- Measure quality
- Engage families

Year 2: Expanding

- Expand relationships
- Plan for and test new approaches to improve access, strengthen quality and deepen family engagement

Year 3: Sustaining

- Establish more lasting governance
- Measure impact
- Sustain access, quality and family engagement efforts

Executive Directive 4

Governor Northam issued Executive Directive 4 to explore how to increase access and strengthen quality in advance of the 2020 General Assembly.

In response, the state agency team:

1. Conducted listening sessions with 300+ stakeholders;
2. Called for increasing access by restructuring VPI and expanding Mixed Delivery to serve more at-risk 3s and 4s in public and private settings while preserving key federal funds (e.g., Head Start, child care subsidy) to preserve access, especially for infants and toddlers;
3. Recommended building a uniform quality measurement and improvement system for all early childhood care and education programs that accept public funds; and
4. Encouraged legislation to consolidate state oversight and administration for early care and education programs.

For full summary, please see https://bit.ly/2qOwWTm

Summary of Recommendations from Executive Directive 4

Maximize Access for At-Risk 3s and 4s	Build a Uniform Measurement and Improvement System	Consolidate Oversight and Administration
1. Preserve and maximize all available federal funding, specifically Early Head Start, Head Start, Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). 2. Enhance VPI in four ways to ensure all families of at-risk 4s have an option. 3. Expand two existing state programs – VPI and Mixed Delivery – to include at-risk 3s on a pilot basis in both public and private settings.	1. Require measurement to improve child outcomes. 2. Build pathways to improvement that address the diverse educator needs and align with new measurement system. 3. Support families to choose quality. 4. Build on current quality efforts and better track child outcomes. 5. Align expectations, measure cost impact and incent private providers. 6. Phase in system over three years to avoid jeopardizing access for infants and toddlers.	1. Establish one board and one agency as responsible for child care and early learning to create a single point of accountability for school readiness. 2. Transition Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start Collaboration to VDOE. 3. Ensure continuity and preserve match by having VDOE contract with VDSS for child care background checks and child care subsidy program so families can easily apply online or be supported at local Social Services offices. 4. Task VDOE and VDSS to collaboratively design and build a new licensing platform prior to transition.

2020 General Assembly

Recommendations would require both legislation and new state funding. The Executive Leadership Team recommends that:

The Administration puts forth legislation to:

- Establish and require publicly-funded programs to participate in uniform measurement and improvement system
- Transition functions and regulations related to child care and early learning out of the home – oversight of CCDBG, child care subsidy, child care licensing and Head Start Collaboration – to Board of Education and VDOE

The Administration's Biennial Budget seeks to:

- Increase funding for and/or reduce non-participation rate and revise several aspects of VPI
- Enable more flexibility with VPI ratios and group size
- Expand VPI eligibility to include at-risk 3s on a pilot basis provided additional conditions are met
- Increase funding for Mixed Delivery and expand eligibility to include at-risk 3s on a pilot basis
- Cover costs resulting from transition of CCDBG functions to VDOE

How It All Fits Together

Virginia is building the foundation for a more unified system by incorporating similar tools, practices and measures into all these efforts.

Across the efforts discussed today, Virginia is:

- Involving both public and private partners that serve infants, toddlers and preschoolers;
- Working towards a shared measure of kindergarten readiness as all children are assessed when they enter kindergarten using VKRP;
- Using the *CLASS* tool to measure teacher-child interactions across infant, toddler and preschool classrooms;
- Gathering other important data about classroom and teacher quality;
- Aligning professional development to meet the individualized needs of teachers and children; and
- Using data to inform decisions and drive impact.

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