



*School Readiness in
Virginia*

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Education Subcommittee



Why is School Readiness So Important?

- ▶ Early experiences in first 5 years influence brain development
- ▶ Path to success in school begins before a child ever enters a classroom
- ▶ Families, communities and schools play critical roles in helping children get ready for school
- ▶ Recognition that early childhood is first step to a strong workforce

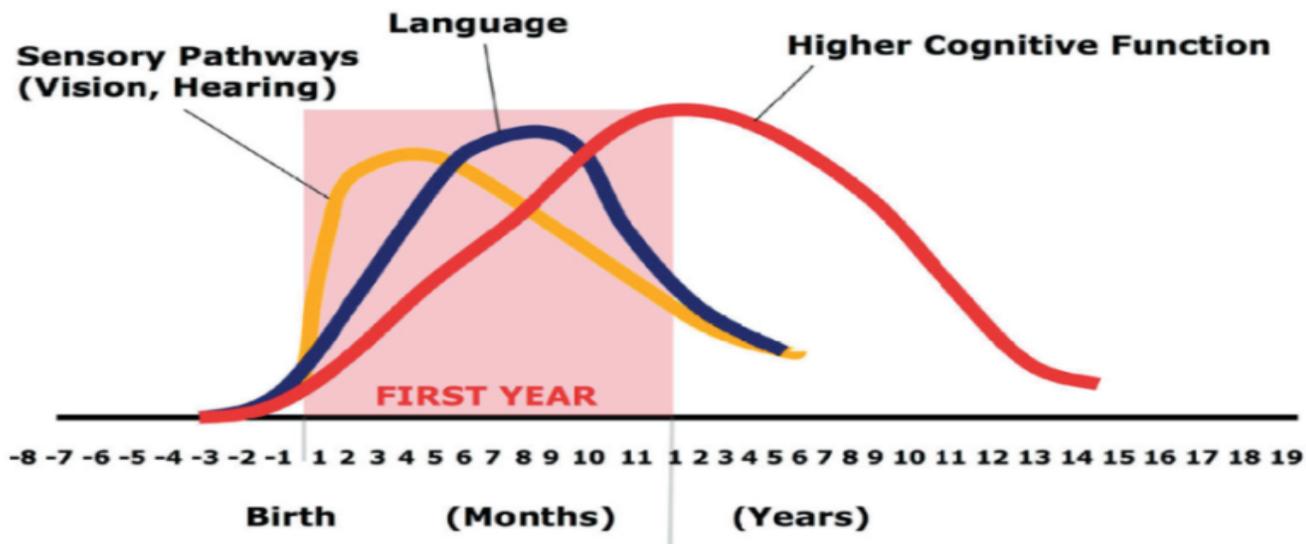
Early Investment, Great Return



Center on the Developing Child
HARVARD UNIVERSITY

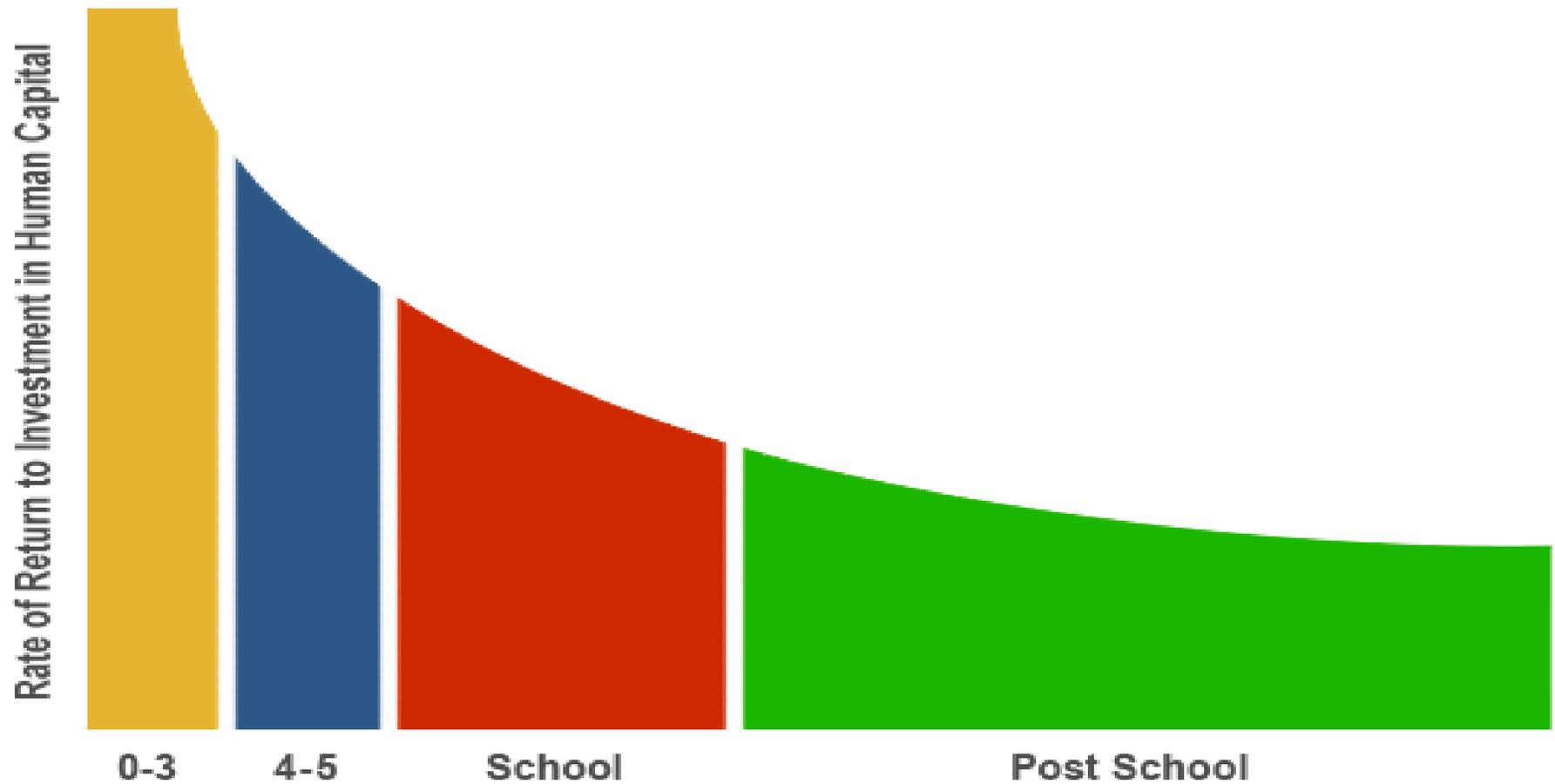
Human Brain Development

Neural Connections for Different Functions Develop Sequentially



Source: C. Nelson (2000)

Returns to a Unit Dollar Invested

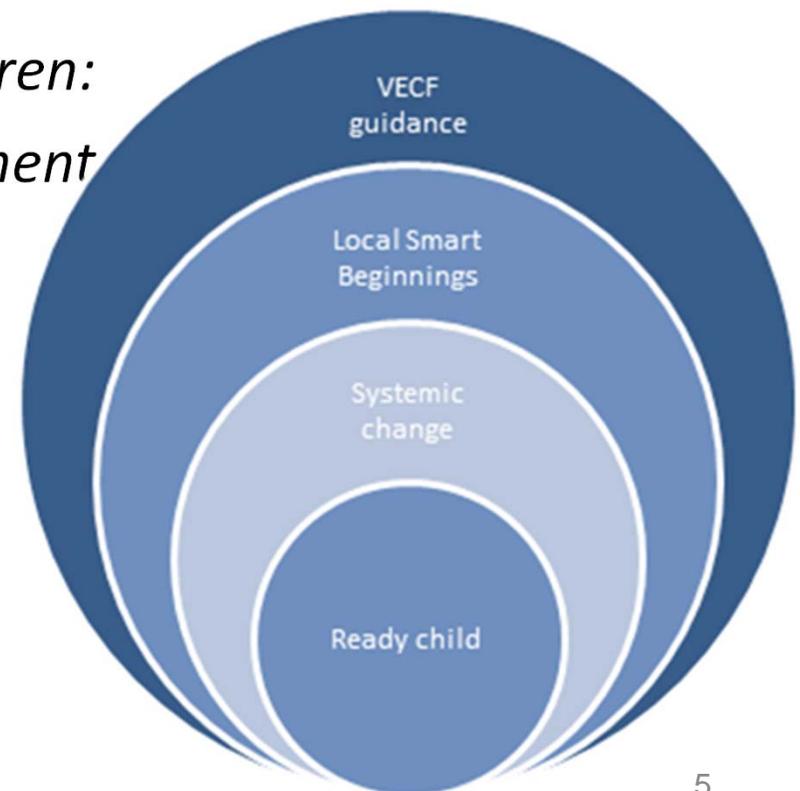


What does it take, Virginia?

What does it take to build healthy, educated individuals who perform well throughout school and become productive members of society and the workforce?

*It starts with **smart beginnings** for children:*

- A healthy birth and healthy development*
- Supported and supportive families*
- Enriching early learning experiences*





Virginia Early Childhood Foundation

- ▶ Public-private partnership founded in 2006.
- ▶ Receive state appropriation; leverage state dollars by 5:1.
- ▶ Smart Beginnings initiatives across the Commonwealth build communities' capacity to support the health and school readiness of young children.
- ▶ Our Vision: Every Virginia child is prepared for school, laying the foundation for school, workforce and life success.

What does it take, Virginia?

It requires local/community capacity and expertise:

- School readiness happens locally
- More than \$.5 billion in public financing that communities must knit efficiently
- Joint public/private responsibility
- Two-way communication state/local
- Data driven-decision making

What does it take, Virginia?

It requires consideration of the landscape in Virginia:

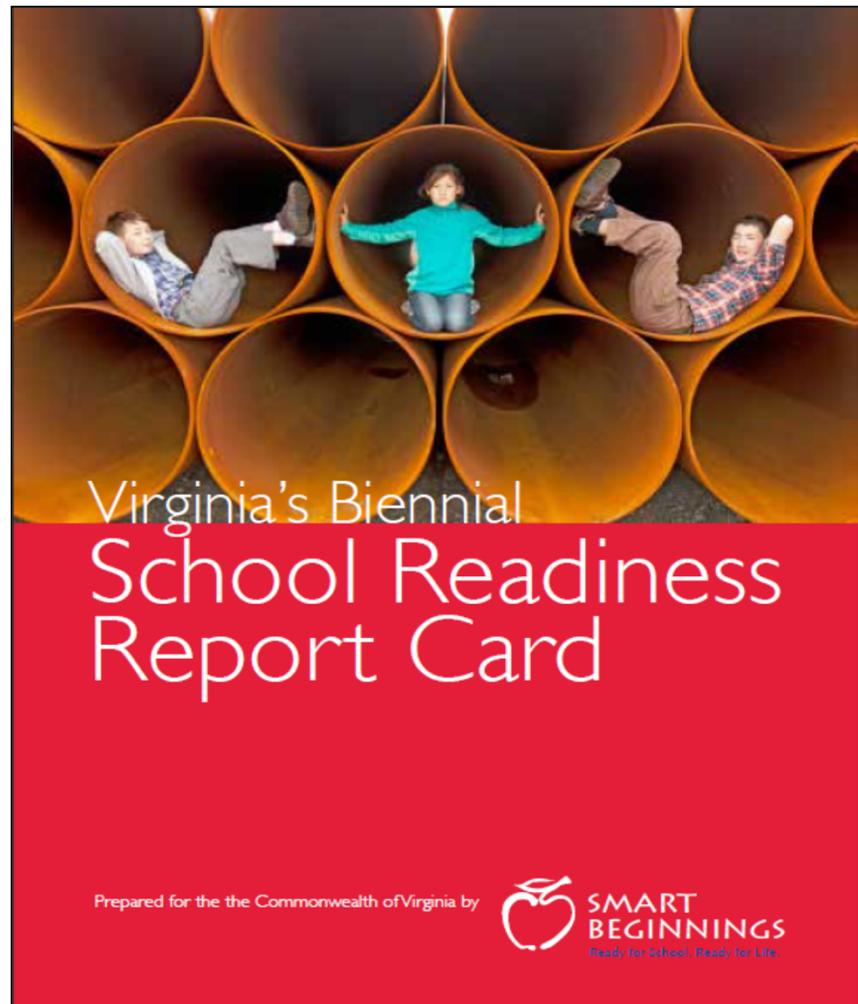
- Family-focused
- Local authority
- Pro business / anti-regulatory
- Gubernatorial term limits
- Public private solutions
- Regional variation and traditions

Smart Beginnings: state to local network

School Readiness Report Card

- ▶ Risk
- ▶ Reach
- ▶ Results
- ▶ Recommendations

- ▶ Narrative
- ▶ Commentary
- ▶ Data Tables



Risk

Risk factors are conditions that are associated with children having an increased chance of experiencing developmental or school problems. Importantly, the mere presence of a risk factor does not mean that a child is destined for school failure.

Reach

“Building a high-performance system is not an overnight endeavor. Public and private partners must join their efforts, holding each other accountable for developing and implementing effective financing and policy solutions.”

- Paul D. Koonce

CEO, Dominion Virginia Power
Member, VECF Board of Directors

Results

“States that adopt comprehensive and longitudinal approaches to measuring and describing school readiness will be able to invest wisely.”

- Robert C. Pianta, Ph.D.
Dean, Curry School of Education, UVA
Advisor, VECF Advisors Council

Recommendations

“If Virginia is to regain its competitiveness in the national economy, its homegrown workers need to be better prepared for school.”

- Stephen S. Fuller, Ph.D.
George Mason University

What do we do now, Virginia?

1. Build on assets:
 - Smart Beginnings network
2. Improve efficiency:
 - increase access for at-risk 4s to VPI
3. Emphasize accountability:
 - formative Kindergarten assessment

