****Guidelines for the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) 2021-2022****

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**The School Superintendent must certify electronically that the data is correct by May 15, 2021.**

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# ****The Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) - Guidelines for 2021-2022****

An investment in the early years of life is one of the best investments society can make. Quality early learning experiences are an essential element to preparing children to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. This return is life-long—children who experience effective early childhood programs are more likely to finish college, get high-paying jobs, and be healthier and happier later in life. Yet access does not equal quality and quality does not happen by chance. If the quality of early childhood education experiences is not high there will be little or no return on investment.

As Virginia recovers from COVID 19, quality preschool experiences are more important than ever. The impact of COVID 19 on Virginia’s youngest learners has been significant. In fall 2020, 45 percent of kindergartners started school without key literacy, math, and social-emotional skills needed to be successful – an increase from past years. Statewide results show a significant drop in kindergarten literacy, a reality that is having disproportionate effects on Black, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged, and Dual Language Learners. These data reveal the importance of expanding access to quality early learning to address these challenges.

The Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) provides high-quality preschool education for children that have been identified as at-risk. Through a focus on advancing effective interaction and instruction, VPI programs help ensure all Virginia children enter school fully prepared for success. VPI programs are called to make continuous quality improvements in 1) use of integrated, evidence-based curriculum, 2) assessing teacher-child interactions, and 3) providing individualized professional development.

The following guidelines outline the expectations for meeting the goals for VPI programs, as provided in the state budget approved by the General Assembly. The guidelines outline the minimum expectations for divisions offering the VPI program in 2021-2022.

## Scope of Services for VPI Programs

The purpose of the program is to reduce disparities among young children entering kindergarten and to reduce or eliminate risk factors that lead to early academic failure.

To obtain state funding, localities must develop and submit a written local plan for programs that includes:

1. Provision of a quality preschool education that helps prepare children for school;
2. Working with the community to provide health services and facilitate comprehensive services;
3. Family engagement;
4. Equity for all children; and
5. Program operations and transportation.

Information regarding the minimum expectations, as well as additional expectations for programmatic operations, are included in this document.

# ****Section 1: Providing a Quality Preschool Education****

*To improve kindergarten readiness in Virginia, all publicly-funded children need access to high-quality classroom interactions and instruction. In VPI Programs, all teachers should:*

* *Be supported to use a vetted, evidence-based curriculum that is aligned with state standards.*
* *Use assessments to individualize their instruction to meet the needs of their students.*
* *Receive frequent feedback on the effectiveness of their interactions with children, based on observations using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS™) tool.*
* *Participate in professional development that is:*
1. *Individualized based on the classroom data (e.g. CLASS™ scores or children’s assessment data);*
2. *Focused on standards, curriculum and/or improving teacher-child interactions; and*
3. *Delivered with fidelity with the necessary leadership and organizational support.*

*Providing frequent feedback through CLASS™ observations is an essential element of the VPI program. CLASS™ observations provide critical guidance on creating a warm and welcoming learning environment that provides engaging learning opportunities for young children.*

*Through both local and external observations, pre-K classrooms are better prepared to support child learning and development.*

## Defining the Virginia Preschool Program

The legislative intent of the initiative is to establish a high-quality preschool education program for at-risk 3-year olds (pilot program) and 4-year-olds. For the purpose of this initiative, a qualifying program is one that is supported through local dollars and meets, or can meet, the criteria for a VPI preschool program for at-risk 3- and 4-year-old children in the 2021-2022 school year as described in these guidelines.

*Continuing for 2021-2022: All VPI programs are eligible to apply for the VPI Pilot for 3-Year-Olds. Localities must submit an application as a part of the annual VPI Spring Application in SSWS and receive approval to serve 3-year-olds with VPI funds, see Appendix A for more information.*

## Virginia’s Unified Measurement and Improvement System – Practice Year 1

The VDOE is implementing a Unified Measurement and Improvement System that will focus on the quality of all publicly-funded birth-five classrooms and support families to choose quality programming. Eventually, all publicly funded providers, including all VPI programs, will be required to participate in the new unified system. Over the next 3 years, VDOE will work with a variety of stakeholders to develop and scale the new system.

This will include two years of practice with the new system, with school year 2021-2022 being called “Practice Year 1”. All programs will have an opportunity to participate in at least one practice year. By fall 2023, all publicly-funded programs, including VPI programs, will be **required** to participate with ratings shared publicly in fall 2024.

* ***Which VPI Programs will participate in Practice Year 1 during school year 2021-2022?*** VPI Programs that are in communities with [Preschool Development Grant](http://smartbeginnings.org/federal-preschool-development-grant-b-5/) (PDG) Community Networks will be a part of Practice Year 1. This will include new communities or divisions that join PDG B5 Community Networks in summer 2021. Next year will be the first of two practice years for the Unified Measurement and Improvement System. VPI Programs that are not currently a part of a PDG Community Network will have the opportunity to participate in the second practice year (2022-2023).
* ***What will be measured in Practice Year 1?*** Virginia’s new Unified Measurement and Improvement System will measure the quality of infant, toddler and preschool teaching and learning based on two nationally-recognized quality indicators: 1) Teacher-Child Interactions based on local *CLASS* observations and, 2) Use of a quality curriculum.

***Where is the most up-to-date information on the Unified Measurement and Improvement System?*** For more information on the proposed *Uniform Measurement and Improvement System*, visit the [Building a Unified Early Childhood System website](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/build-unified-early-childhood-system/index.shtml) and see Appendix B.

***Two Years of Practice with All Programs Having an Opportunity to Participate***

***in At Least One Practice Year***

*New for 2021-2022: The Board of Education is directed to establish a quality rating and improvement system by July 1, 2021. PDG Pilot Communities, including VPI programs within these communities, will begin practice year 1 with the Uniform Measurement and Improvement System.*

*Coming in 2022-2023: Practice year 2 with the Uniform Measurement and Improvement System for all PDG Pilot Communities.*

*Coming in 2023-2024: By fall 2023, all publicly-funded programs, including VPI, will be required to participate with ratings shared publicly in fall 2024.*

## Integrated and Evidence-Based Curriculum

An evidenced-based and integrated curriculum, when fully implemented, makes it easier and more efficient for teachers to engage in sensitive, responsive, and cognitively stimulating teacher-child interactions. All participating divisions or communities must be using a vetted curriculum in all VPI classrooms.

As requested and submitted to the 2018 General Assembly, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) created A Plan to Ensure High-Quality Instruction in All Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) Classroom. In this plan, the VDOE committed to working with the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) at UVA to develop a process for curriculum vetting and a list of curriculums currently being used in VPI classrooms. An overview of the research-based, three-step vetting process is described in the plan.

* ***The curricula that have been vetted for use in VPI classrooms as of March 2021 include:*** Big Day for PreK (\**retired*), Creative Curriculum, Frog Street, HighScope, InvestiGator Club, Kindercare, Opening the World of Learning (OWL retired\*), STREAMin3, Tools of the Mind, LaPetite Academy Early Innovators, Childtime Empowered Child, Fairfax County Public Schools Pre-K curriculum, Blueprint, Learn Every Day, Three Cheers for Pre-K and Virginia Beach Locally Developed PreK Curriculum.

*\*A grace period to replace an already vetted, yet retired curriculum is extended to impacted programs/school divisions through at least fall 2025 (proposed date). Important Note: Access to curriculum materials, resources, and professional development is critical to effective implementation. Programs/divisions should consider whether they have the internal capacity to train and provide support in implementing a retired curriculum in their planning and decision making process for investing in a new, VDOE approved curriculum choice.*

As part of the Unified Measurement and Improvement System, the VDOE will be revising the curriculum review process. Currently approved curricula will remain approved. The revised review process will follow similar protocols and guidelines, and will be fully coordinated by the VDOE. Programs/school divisions may contact Dr. Tamilah Richardson (Tamilah.Richardson@doe.virginia.gov) and request a vetting of a curriculum.

While securing a curriculum is essential, simply providing the materials is not enough to support their implementation. Teachers and their leaders need training and ongoing support to implement all of the components of a curriculum with high fidelity. For example,

* Teachers need access to all curriculum materials and introductory trainings,
* Program leaders should be fully versed in the curriculum, and
* Divisions need curriculum experts who can provide ongoing training and support.

*Continuing for 2021-2022: All school divisions must implement a vetted and evidence-based curriculum, and describe their plan for providing curriculum aligned training and professional development for teachers.*

## Assessing Teacher-Child Interactions with CLASS™ Observations

*CLASS™* observations provide essential feedback to teachers and site leaders on the quality of the teacher-child interactions taking place within a classroom. These observations provide insights that can inform professional development plans. Through both local and external observations, pre-K classrooms are better prepared to support child learning and development.

**All VPI Programs must provide two local CLASS observations in 2021-2022.**

* Local *CLASS™* observations are coordinated, scheduled, and recorded by the local community or school division. Observers from the local community (such as principals, directors, early childhood coordinators) often conduct local observations. Some communities may select to secure *CLASS™* observation services with an organization outside of their program to conduct local observations (e.g., Teachstone®, VA Quality). Local observations follow the full protocol for a *CLASS™* observation (must be four cycles long with a certified observer).
* For VPI classrooms, local observations must take place twice a year (once in the fall and once in the spring). All local observations should include feedback and debrief for teachers based on their scores and areas for improvement. All divisions’ local *CLASS™* observations must keep a record of the observations completed.
* **For VPI Programs participating in Practice Year 1 of the Unified Measurement and Improvement System:** The two CLASS observations conducted for the Unified Measurement and Improvement System (coordinated through PDG B5 Community Networks) satisfy the requirement for local CLASS observations for VPI Classrooms.

Providing local observations results in frequent feedback for teachers, which ultimately leads to improved learning experiences for children. Having site and division leaders trained in the *CLASS™* tool enables them to bring the *CLASS™* lens to every aspect of their work, reinforcing the important feedback and goals teachers will receive as a result of their observations. The VDOE has developed a [Guidebook for Local CLASS Observations](https://aeiionline.org/advancing-effective-interactions-and-instruction-2/tools-resources/for-observing-interactions-instruction/) to assist programs in building their capacity.

Divisions participating in the Preschool Development Grant Birth-5 (PDG B5) may use the local *CLASS™* observations completed as a part of that grant to count for the local VPI observations and support further teacher development. The data from *CLASS™* observations will be shared with the VDOE. More information about *CLASS™* observations in Virginia can be found on the [Advancing Effective Interactions & Instruction (AEII) website](https://aeiionline.org/advancing-effective-interactions-and-instruction-2/tools-resources/for-observing-interactions-instruction/).

**Some VPI Programs will receive External CLASS observations in 2021-2022.**

* During 2021-2022, CASTL will expand their external CLASS observations to include publicly-funded birth to five programs across the state and focus on the following:
	+ Coordinating, scheduling and recording of external observations to gather information about the accuracy and consistency of local observations.
	+ External CLASS observations will no longer be required for VPI classrooms on a bi-annual basis. Instead external observations will be randomized across a larger sample of birth to five programs, including VPI.
* External observations are in addition to local CLASS observations, and help provide insight into the accuracy of the CLASS tool.

Divisions should plan professional development for teachers related to the *CLASS™* tool, as described in the professional development section below.

***Continuing for 2021-2022:*** *All school divisions must provide local CLASS™ observations twice a year (fall and spring) for all VPI classrooms. Each observation must result in feedback that is provided to teachers/assistants.*

***Changing for 2021-2022:*** *External CLASS observations will no longer be required for all VPI classrooms on a bi-annual basis. Instead, external observations will be randomized each year.*

## Providing Individualized Professional Development

Teachers and instructional assistants must attend at least 15 clock hours per year of professional development (PD) that supports their knowledge, skills, and practice to facilitate effective teacher-child interactions and instruction that promotes children’s learning and development towards kindergarten readiness. Documentation of teachers and instructional assistants annual participation in professional development must be kept on file and available for monitoring purposes.

Professional development should:

1. Be individualized based on the classroom data (e.g. *CLASS™* scores or children’s assessment data).
2. Focus on: 1) curriculum, 2) assessment, 3) teacher-child interactions, and 4) supporting equity for all students while meeting their individualized needs.
3. Be delivered with fidelity with the necessary leadership and organizational support.

When planning PD, divisions should seek to develop a plan that includes the following key features (outlined in the [PD Rubric](https://curry.virginia.edu/sites/default/files/CASTL-Projects/CLASS-PD/PD%20Rubric_2.26.20.pdf)):

1. A **Data-driven** approach to PD planning ensures that the content is relevant, amount is sufficient, and ultimately that the PD is effective.
2. **Specific, articulated objectives** delineate the precise knowledge and skills teachers will gain, limited to a few key areas of ongoing focus.
3. **Practice-focused PD** formats intentionally build teachers’ skills (e.g., coaching or professional learning communities with video review).
4. **Feedback and analysis loops** provide teachers opportunities to implement a new practice, receive feedback on their practice, and analyze their practice with a colleague.
5. **Coherence** involves an intentional approach to integrating curricula (what teachers teach), assessments (e.g., child outcomes), and classroom observation (e.g., CLASS™ scores) with the PD that teachers receive.
6. **Access** refers to the extent to which PD is provided to all full-time teachers (teachers and teaching assistants) acros**s** early childhood settings.

**Professional Development Support**

Through the [Advancing Effective Interactions & Instruction (AEII) initiative](https://aeiionline.org/), UVA-CASTL provides professional development resources for school leaders and early childhood educators through the [Early Childhood Educators Resource Hub](https://ecevirginia.org/early-childhood-education/ece-resource-hub/) and other differentiated supports based on CLASS observation scores (e.g., professional development planning tools, consultations). Professional development assistance is designed to support quality teacher-child interactions and research-based curriculum implementation in early childhood programs.

## Virginia’s Birth-to-Five Early Learning and Development Standards

*Virginia’s Birth-to-Five Early Learning and Development Standards* approved by the Virginia Board of Education in March 2021 replace the Foundation Blocks for Learning and the Virginia Department of Social Service (VDSS) document *Virginia Milestones of Early Childhood Development*.

*Virginia’s Birth-to-Five Early Learning and Development Standards* describe behavior indicators across six areas of development, *Approaches to Play and Learning*, S*ocial and Emotional Development*, *Communication, Language and Literacy Development*, *Health and Physical Development,* and *Cognitive Development*, including science, social science, mathematics and fine arts. For each domain of learning, these guidelines reflect typical development patterns for young children across six overlapping age bands. While not intended to be used in place of a curriculum, early learning guidelines are a critical tool for teachers in child care, family day homes, and preschool programs to support progression across the critical skills outlined in this document.

***Beginning in 2021-2022****: All VPI programs must implement the use of the Birth-Five ELD Standards.*

## Child Assessment with VKRP & PALS-PreK

A child’s readiness for school includes both academic and social-emotional skills developed at home, school, and in their community. Currently all kindergarten students are assessed in both academic and social-emotional areas using the [Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP)](https://vkrponline.org/virginia-kindergarten-readiness-program-2/about-vkrp/) each fall and spring. Results of the assessment provides a more comprehensive understanding of each child’s readiness for school.

Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year VKRP will be available and required for use by all VPI programs. The VKRP is aligned with the new *Early Learning and Development Standards* assess preschoolers’ school readiness skills in mathematics, self-regulation, social skills, and literacy. Preschool VKRP includes PALS-PreK for the literacy portion of the assessment. See Appendix C for more information on preschool VKRP, including PALS-PreK.

4-year-old students are required to be evaluated in the fall and in the spring using preschool VKRP by each participating school division. The division must certify that the VPI program follows the established *Birth-to-Five Early Learning and Development Standards* in order to receive funding for quality preschool education.

***Beginning in 2021-2022****: All VPI programs must assess VPI students using VKRP each fall and spring. VKRP includes PALS-PreK as the assessment for literacy.*

# ****Section 2: Working with the Community to Provide Health Services and Facilitate****

# ****Comprehensive Services****

*VPI serves as many children's first entry into the school system. It is critical that children receive health services that evaluate the needs of all students that enter into the VPI program in close consultation with families.*

*To support the facilitation of comprehensive services and connections to community resources, a steering committee should be formed and convened regularly to support the VPI program.*

## Health Services and Facilitation of Comprehensive Services

VPI programs work to meet children’s needs across all domains of development that support school readiness including health, mental health, and nutrition. Staff works with families to build bridges to resources and community-based services by facilitating linkages for obtaining needed resources for children.

At a minimum, all children need a physical, hearing screening, vision screening, and current immunizations (see below). Behavioral and mental health screenings should be coordinated if needed.

* See the [*Code of Virginia 12VAC5-110-80*](https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title12/agency5/chapter110/section80/) regarding exemptions from immunizations requirements.
* The [Virginia Department of Health](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/immunization/requirements/) provides the requirements for school and day care minimum immunization

### Toilet Training

Some VPI students may not be fully toilet trained when they start attending VPI in the fall. Toilet training is like any other self-care skill that children need to learn. Divisions should consider how they may schedule toilet training into the day and give the child the opportunity to practice and become more independent with the task. As an example, provide children who are learning to become toilet trained with frequent opportunities to visit the bathroom individually and in small groups and teach them a step-by-step process. Place visuals in the bathroom as reminders for children.

Children who are not toilet trained should not be excluded from VPI enrollment. Divisions may not add a requirement that eligible children be toilet trained prior to entrance into a VPI program.

For guidance on appropriate diapering and handwashing procedures, please refer to the local county health department. This [*Changing Diapers the Safe Way*](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/54/2017/05/ChangingDiapersTheSafeWayICT10-5-2017.pdf) ([Spanish version also available](https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/content/uploads/sites/54/2020/06/Changing-the-Diaper-the-Safe-Way-Spanish-2020.pdf)) graphic from the Virginia Department of Health also provides helpful guidance.

Additional resources related to toilet training:

* [*General toilet training guidance*](https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/practicing-safety/Pages/Toilet-Training.aspx) *and* [*toilet training guidelines for day care providers*](https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/103/Supplement_3/1367) from the American Academy of Pediatrics.
* [*Tips for creating a safe environment for preschoolers, including diapering and toileting*](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/safety-practices/article/tips-keeping-children-safe-developmental-guide-preschoolers)
* [*Tips for Toilet Training*](https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/266-potty-training-learning-to-the-use-the-toilet) for families to support toilet training at home.

## Local VPI Steering Committee

A local VPI Steering Committee must be established to ensure the following:

1. Broad stakeholder support for the implementation of the VPI program within the community;
2. Coordination of services and resources to provide available comprehensive services to children and their families; and
3. Federal and state funds are maximized to preserve existing slots for 3- and 4-year olds already being implemented in the community (supplementing not supplanting existing slots – increase access for more at-risk children).

### Required Members

Members of the VPI Steering Committee must include representatives from the school division, child care providers, local social services agency, Head Start, local health department, and other groups identified by the lead agency.

The VPI Steering Committee is encouraged to meet at least quarterly, with the minutes of meeting events and decisions kept on file.

### Guiding Questions for the VPI Steering Committee

* How will VPI program leaders maximize federal and state funds to preserve existing 3- and 4-year-old slots?
* How will Steering Committee Members collaborate among each other and programs accepting childcare subsidy payments, private childcare, and early childhood special education and early intervention programs?
* How can we engage the community, including families and other early childhood providers, to understand the approach that will best support 3- and 4-year-old access?
* How can we all coordinate across local partners, such as child care, Head Start, family day homes, to ensure our enrollment practices are supportive of other ongoing initiatives?
* How will we avoid the VPI funding and program being used to supplant Head Start federal funds provided for local early education programs, and not be used until the Head Start grantee certifies that all local Head Start slots are filled?
* How can we accurately measure the need for 3- and 4-year-olds that are not currently being served through other publicly-funded programs in our community?
* How can we include the vital expertise and knowledge from each of these key partners to build a strong 3- and 4-year-old program?
* What can we do to ensure the coordination of comprehensive services for all children within our community?

# ****Section 3: Family Engagement****

*Families of VPI students should be included in every step of their child’s school experience. A plan for intentional family engagement should include building relationships between school personnel and family members early in the year, maintaining communication in the months following, and conclude with clear communication regarding a plan for transition to kindergarten.*

## Family Engagement

VPI programs should have an intentional plan for implementing meaningful parental involvement and family engagement strategies in the areas of 1) building a community of respect that considers the various cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds of parents and caregivers, 2) promoting parenting skills and coaching parents as their children’s first teacher, and 3) listening to parents feedback and building partnerships with them.

At minimum, VPI programs should seek to schedule parent-teacher conferences at least twice a year, as well as consider strategies for ongoing routine communication, such as newsletters, family engagement apps, or recurring family-school activities. A set of resources highlighting [best practices for family engagement](https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/family-engagement) in early learning programs has been compiled by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

## Transition Strategies

Transition to kindergarten is a process that is most successful when it is carefully planned out well in advance. VPI programs should implement transition strategies that include a selection of the following strategies:

* Collaborative meetings between preschool and kindergarten teachers to discuss students’ progress in meeting standards for learning and school-wide results on the VKRP assessment. These collaborations present opportunities to include families.
* Student visits to kindergarten classrooms, parent meetings to communicate kindergarten expectations.
* Transitioning to kindergarten toolkits for parents in their primary language.
* Providing engaging kindergarten registration/orientation meetings for parents taking into consideration their cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds.

A set of helpful resources to help families gain an [understanding of the kindergarten transition](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/transitions-resources-families) process has been compiled by Head Start.

#

# ****Section 4: Equity for all Learners****

*All children must be provided the same high-quality learning experience regardless of background, home cultures, language, or abilities and skills. VPI programs must focus on equity by ensuring practices and policies encourage inclusion and advancement of all children who qualify for the program. Instituting best practices of inclusion has been shown to have benefits for all children enrolled in preschool education programs, their families, and the community.*

## Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

VPI program leaders must focus on equity by ensuring practices and policies encourage inclusion and advancement of all children who are eligible for the program. State funding to support VPI programs is intended for all at-risk 3- and 4-year-old children, including those who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or those who may later be identified as a child with a disability requiring special education and related services. Beginning in 2021-2022 an inclusion target has been established by the General Assembly for all VPI programs:

* *A target inclusion rate of 10% for all children (4s & 3s) enrolled in local VPI programs are children with* I*ndividualized Education Programs. VPI programs falling below 10% will provide reasons target was not achieved and actions to meet or exceed the target in the next school year.*

All children (4s and 3s) within a VPI classroom and assigned any of the VPI funding codes in SRC are considered a part of the local VPI program (see the FAQ Increasing School Readiness by Increasing Access to Preschool Webinars for additional details). The March 1, 2022 Spring Student Record Collection (SRC) data reported by each school division will be used to calculate the VPI inclusion percentage for the 2021-2022 school year. A VPI Inclusion Target Report in SSWS will be created and available to school divisions and the VDOE in May 2022 to inform divisions on their progress in meeting this target. School divisions not meeting the 10% inclusion rate for VPI will be required to provide an action plan in the 2022 Fall VPI Verification Report.

Children with IEPs may be eligible for a VPI program in one of two ways:

1. The child with an IEP meets the state’s eligibility criteria for VPI (family income is at or below 350 percent of federal poverty level, homelessness, or parent/guardian is a high school dropout).
2. Up to 15 percent of a division’s slots may be filled based on locally established criteria so as to meet the unique needs of at-risk children in the community and having a disability is considered a locally established criteria. Divisions may submit a VPI Waiver Application to increase use of local eligibility above 15%.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require that all early childhood programs make reasonable accommodations to provide access for children with disabilities or developmental delays. Research indicates that inclusion supports children with disabilities in reaching their full potential and benefits all children, regardless of disability status, as well as families, and communities.

Inclusion involves holding high expectations and promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations and using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development, friendships with peers, and sense of belonging. A child with a disability is considered attending a VPI classroom if he or she is a member of the program. If there is intentional teacher (either direct or embedded instruction) and promotion of the child’s interaction with children without disabilities, the time may be counted as time attending a VPI classroom. This will include the provision of special education and related services in accordance with the child’s IEP or accommodations, supports, or services in the child’s 504 plan. VPI staff work closely with the special education and related service providers to successfully include the child with a disability. For more information on including young children with disabilities, please see the [Virginia Early Childhood Inclusion Guidance Document](http://doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/curriculum/inclusion/) which is designed to assist Virginia’s school divisions and early childhood communities in identifying, developing, and sustaining inclusive opportunities within high-quality early childhood programs for children with disabilities.

***Beginning in 2021-2022****:* *A target inclusion rate of 10% for all children (4s & 3s) enrolled in local VPI programs are children with* I*ndividualized Education Programs. VPI programs falling below 10% will provide reasons target was not achieved and actions to meet or exceed the target in the next school year.*

## Support for Dual Language Learners

Children who are Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are between the ages of 2.5 and 5.5 and are learning two (or more) languages at the same time, or learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language. Children who are DLLs come from homes where a language other than English is spoken. For some, both a language other than English *and* English may be spoken at home.It should be noted that formal assessment of DLL qualification may not take place in preschool in each division. However, divisions are encouraged to provide DLL support to students who have demonstrated a need for additional English language support.

Early childhood programs must be prepared to optimize the early experiences of DLLs by holding high expectations, capitalizing on their strengths- including cultural and linguistic strengths - and providing them with the individualized developmental and learning supports necessary to succeed in school.

Further information on how to support the language development of DLLs can be found in thewithin the [English Language Development Standards](https://wida.wisc.edu/resources/early-english-language-development-standards-2014-edition). Specifically, on pages 10 and 11, you can find the Performance Definitions organized by age ranges. These explicitly describe the language trajectory students can experience through modeling and instruction. In addition, practitioners can use the [WIDA Early Years Can Do Descriptors](https://wida.wisc.edu/resources/can-do-descriptors-early-years) for ideas for specific kinds of activities DLLs can do at various stages of language development.

## Services for Preschoolers Experiencing Homelessness

Divisions must provide required services for VPI children experiencing homelessness according to the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program of Title IX, in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act.

School divisions must identify children experiencing homelessness through outreach and coordination activities with outside agencies. This includes the option to remain in the school of origin with transportation if it is in the best interest of the student when the family moves during a period of homelessness or to the end of the academic year in which permanent housing is obtained. For additional information visit the [Project Hope-Virginia website](https://education.wm.edu/centers/hope/) at or contact homeless@wm.edu.

## Exclusionary Discipline/Suspension/Expulsion

Suspensions and expulsions of young children deprive them of enriching learning experiences and have a negative impact that extends into grade school and beyond. Yet, recent data indicate that suspension and expulsion occurs regularly in early childhood settings serving children birth to age five.

The Virginia Board of Education’s approved [Virginia Guidelines for the Prevention of Suspension and Expulsion of Young Children: Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviors in Early Childhood Settings](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/professional-dev/index.shtml) serve as the guide for VPI programs on preventing suspension and expulsion of young children. The document provides guidance regarding policies and best practices in implementing developmentally appropriate experiences for children in early care and education programs (0-5 years), that can prevent suspension and expulsion. Recommended research-based practices promote collaboration between family and professionals, as well as focus on effective classroom management and social-emotional skill development to support young children’s healthy development. Recommendations are for teachers and administrators supporting children in early care, and education programs.

# ****Section 5: Program Operations and Transportation****

*A successful VPI Program relies on designing effective program operations that meet the requirements from the state. This includes providing a manageable class size, following instructional time regulations, monitoring student attendance and securing a plan for student transportation.*

## Student Eligibility

The VDOE has posted[*Guidelines for Using Family Income Criteria in Determining Student Eligibility for the State-funded VPI and Best Practices for Implementing a Local Eligibility Process*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/preschool/vpi/index.shtml)*.* This document provides assistance with implementing and meeting the income-based and locally established at-risk student eligibility criteria and reporting requirements for the state-funded VPI program by:

1. Providing General Assembly Appropriation Act language related to student eligibility for VPI;
2. Establishing a poverty level of income with which to apply the income eligibility criteria;
3. Establishing a definition of family income and what to include as family income;
4. Establishing processes for verification of family income based on source documents in qualifying students to attend state-funded VPI programs;
5. Using locally determined at-risk criteria; and
6. Providing best practices for implementing an eligibility process for VPI.

## Age Eligibility

Eligible VPI children are 4-years-of-age on or before September 30 and are not eligible to attend kindergarten (children who are 5-years-of-age on or before September 30). Eligible children for the VPI Pilot for 3-Year-Olds are 3-years-of-age on or before September 30 and are not eligible to attend VPI (4-years-of-age on or before September 30).

***State Waiver for 2021-2022****:* *The VDOE has been provided a state waiver to permit children who turn 5 by September 30, 2021 to be enrolled in VPI. This is a one-year waiver limited to only the 2021-2022 school year. Final placement decisions remain at the discretion of the local VPI program and parents.*

VPI students must be from a family that meets the following requirements: (i) family income at or below 200 percent of poverty, (ii) homelessness, (iii) student's parents or guardians are school dropouts, or (iv) family income is less than 350 percent of federal poverty guidelines in the case of students with special needs or disabilities.

Up to 15 percent of a division's slots may be filled based on locally established eligibility criteria so as to meet the unique needs of at-risk children in the community. Localities that can demonstrate more than 15 percent of slots are needed to meet the needs of at-risk children in their community may apply for a waiver to increase local eligibility criteria. More information on this is in Appendix D.

When verifying eligibility of children for VPI programs based on the families’ income levels or locally established at-risk criteria, it is critical to establish a clear systematic process, guide families through completion of the process, and annually train local staff to determine eligibility consistently. The[*Guidelines for Using Family Income Criteria in Determining Student Eligibility for the State-funded VPI and Best Practices for Implementing a Local Eligibility Process*](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/preschool/vpi/index.shtml) provides best practices for implementing a local eligibility process.

***Local Criteria Waiver Continuing for 2021-2022****: Localities that can demonstrate that more than 15 percent of slots are needed to meet the needs of at-risk children in their community may apply for a waiver from the Superintendent of Public Instruction to use a larger percentage of their slots, see Appendix D for more information.*

***Late Enrollment of VPI Students Continuing for 2021-2022****: Prorated funding for empty slots filled between October 2, 2021 and January 7, 2022 may be requested by school divisions through the fall VPI Verification Report process. If the request is approved, the division could receive prorated funding for slots filled for the first time during this late enrollment period.*

## Staffing Ratio

The program will comply with the staffing standards required by the *Code of Virginia*.

There are different staffing ratio requirements permitted for programs that exceed benchmarks set by the Board of Education. No VPI program is required to operate at the maximum staffing ratio, operating below the maximum ratio allowable is always permitted.

For 2021-2022, all programs that are meeting the requirements for the 2021-2022 VPI Guidelines will be considered to be meeting and exceeding the benchmarks set by the Board of Education.

VPI classrooms that exceed benchmarks set by the Board of Education are should be staffed as follows:

* At least one teacher must be provided for any classroom with 10 or fewer students
* If average class size is greater than 10 students (but does not exceed 20) there must be at least one full-time teacher’s aide assigned to the classroom
* No class size can exceed 20 students

VPI classrooms that do NOT exceed the benchmarks set by the Board of Education should be staffed as follows:

* At least one teacher must be provided for any classroom with 9 or fewer students
* If average class size is greater than 9 students (but does not exceed 18) there must be at least one full-time teacher’s aide assigned to the classroom

No class size can exceed 18 students

***Continuing for 2021-2022****:* *VPI programs that are meeting and exceeding the requirements described in the VPI Guidelines may choose to increase their ratio but does not exceed 18 students, a full-time teacher's aide shall be assigned to such classroom; and (iii) the maximum classroom size shall be 18 students.*

## Teacher Qualifications

The state Appropriation Act language does not specify requirements for teacher licensure for VPI classrooms in community-provider settings. However, the Code of Virginia (22.1-299) requires that all teachers paid with public funds must have a teacher’s license issued by the Board of Education. VPI state funds cannot be used to pay a teacher who does not hold a teaching license. Compensation for non-licensed VPI teachers can be paid from private funding sources.

An appropriate endorsement on a teaching license issued by the Virginia Board of Education for a VPI teacher includes any of the following:

* preK-3
* preK-6
* Special Education Early Childhood AND the Early Childhood for 3- and 4-year-olds (add-on endorsement).

## Instructional Time and Unstructured Recreational Time

As stated in the Appropriation Acts bill, VPI programs may include unstructured recreational time that is intended to develop teamwork, social skills, and overall physical fitness in any calculation of total instructional time, provided that such unstructured recreational time does not exceed 15 percent of total instructional time or teaching hours.

## Operating as a Full or Half-Day Program

Programs must provide full-day or half-day and at least school-year services (180 days or 990 hours). Programs must operate on a full-day or half-day basis for the entire school year to receive the full state allocation. Full-day programs shall operate for a minimum of five and one-half instructional hours, excluding breaks for meals, and half-day programs shall operate for a minimum of three hours of classroom instructional time per day, excluding breaks for lunch. For a new program, including VPI Pilot for 3-Year-Olds, in the first year of implementation, a program operating less than a full school year will receive state funds on a fractional basis determined by the prorated portion of a school year program provided.

## Student Attendance

Students in regular attendance in high-quality early education programs will have an opportunity to benefit from the services offered. By collecting VPI attendance data, developing strategies for improving attendance, and reaching out to VPI students and their families, VPI leaders and teachers have the ability to improve student attendance at your VPI programs. Clear attendance and communication policies along with collaboration with families, are crucial to improving VPI student attendance and increasing outcomes for students.

Every eligible 3- or 4-year-old enrolled and funded by the VPI program in a public or private setting must have a State Testing Identification (STI) number and be reported in three VDOE Student Record Collection (SRC) reporting cycles: fall, spring and end of the year.

For additional information and resources, please see the [Virginia Department of Education’s Attendance and Truancy Webpage](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/prevention/attendance-truancy/index.shtml).

## Transportation

VPI programs must have a plan for ensuring that VPI eligible students have access to a safe method of transportation to and from the home setting and the VPI program site. Transportation must never be a barrier for recruiting eligible children for the VPI and for providing full VPI services to eligible children and their families.

### Best Practices for Transporting Preschoolers

When preschool age children are transported in a school bus, the [National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA)](https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/buses/busseatbelt/index.html) recommends that pre-school age children should be transported in a Child Safety Restraint System (CSRS) suitable for the child's weight and age and meets applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS). Each child should be properly secured in the CSRS and the CSRS should be properly secured to the school bus seat, using anchorages that meet FMVSS specifications. A written plan on evacuating pre-school age children and other passengers in CSRSs in the event of an emergency must be developed. This written plan should be provided to drivers, monitors, and emergency response personnel. The plan should explicitly state how children (both in and out of the CSRS) should be evacuated from the school bus. CSRSs should not be placed in school bus seats adjacent to emergency exits.

For questions regarding transporting preschool children, please contact the Virginia Department of Education’s Office of Support Services at 804-225-2037

# ****Section 6: Submitting the VPI Application****

*Divisions must submit an application and develop a plan for funding to offer the VPI program each year.*

## Submitting the VPI Application with Local VPI Plan

Access to the application for school division personnel should be requested through the school division’s SSWS account manager. In order to submit this application, divisions must meet the application requirements, outlined in the following section and provide answers to the following questions as evidence of their local plan for VPI:

1. Describe how the program ensures the *Virginia’s Birth-to-Five Early Learning and Development Standards* will be implemented and how the five areas will be assessed (Approaches to Play & Learning; Social & Emotional Development; Communication, Language, & Literacy; Health & Physical Development; and Cognitive Development).
2. Describe the intentional plan for implementing meaningful parental involvement and family engagement strategies throughout the school year.
3. Describe how teachers and teaching assistants are provided with ongoing training and professional development to implement the vetted curriculum.
4. Each VPI program is working in collaboration with UVA/CASTL on a VPI Professional Development Plan. Please provide any significant revisions or updates to professional development for VPI teachers and assistants (at least 15 hours in early childhood topics) for the upcoming school year.
5. Provide information on who will serve as certified, local CLASS observers. Describe how teachers and teacher assistants will be supported in improving practice as a result of scores from observations completed.
6. Describe how the program will facilitate linkages to obtain comprehensive services and resources for children and families (i.e., health physical, hearing and vision screenings, and behavioral and mental health screenings).
7. Describe the VPI Steering Committee. Explain how often the team will meet and who will be recruited to participate. List organizations.
8. List all members of the VPI Steering Committee by their titles and organizations they represent. Describe how members are consulted to ensure federal funds are preserved and maximized for serving preschoolers.
9. Describe how leaders representing VPI and Early Childhood Special Education programs work together as a team to support inclusive practices of children with special needs in VPI classrooms.
10. All VPI programs are expected to be inclusive of children with disabilities and shall meet or exceed a target inclusion rate, such that 10 percent of all children participating in VPI are children with disabilities, defined as those with IEPs. Describe what steps you are taking to ensure this target is met or exceeded for next school year?
11. Describe the transportation plan that is in place to ensure eligible VPI children have access to a safe method of transportation to and from the home setting and the VPI program site. Describe how the program will ensure that transportation does not prevent a barrier for providing full services to eligible children and their families.

Divisions must upload a copy of the Local VPI Income Eligibility Verification Form (includes staff/parent signature and lists documents used for income verification)

## Application Requirements

Authorizing legislation requires the chief administrator (city manager or county administrator), in conjunction with the school division superintendent, to identify a lead agency within the locality prior to submitting a proposal application.

Applicants must:

1. Demonstrate willingness to provide a quality preschool education program that conforms to the guidelines and criteria outlined in Appendices A-F
2. Demonstrate collaboration and coordination with community agencies and groups identified by the lead agency as necessary for the successful delivery of comprehensive services to the children and their families
3. Develop and utilize selection criteria based on the definition of at-risk. (Appendix C provides information on risk factors)
4. Complete a grant application and submit it to the Department of Education.

## Funding a Qualifying Program

Funds will be disbursed by the Department of Education to localities to:

1. Establish or expand quality, comprehensive preschool programs in public schools or community-provider sites;
2. Purchase quality preschool education programs and services for at-risk 3- and 4-year-old children from existing providers;
3. Expand existing quality programs to serve more children; and
4. Upgrade existing programs to meet criteria for comprehensive, quality preschool programs to include new, unserved children.

State dollars may be used to:

1. Upgrade, complement, or expand an existing locally funded program to meet quality criteria;
2. Complement or expand a Title I or Head Start program to serve additional children; or
3. Establish a new program to serve additional children.

Programs must provide full-day or half-day and at least school year services. Full-day programs shall operate for a minimum of five and one-half instructional hours, excluding breaks for meals, and half-day programs shall operate for a minimum of three hours of classroom instructional time per day, excluding breaks for lunch. First year programs operating less than a full school year will receive state funds on a fractional basis determined by the pro-rata portion of a school year program provided.

The Appropriation Act states that a local match of funds, based on the composite index of local ability-to-pay, is required to receive state funds for this program. In FY 2016, the composite index value was capped at 0.5000 for purposes of calculating the estimated local match requirement for the VPI match.

The school division or local government shall retain all financial and programmatic records relative to the VPI grant funding ultimately provided for five (5) years after final payment by VDOE, or until audited by the Commonwealth of Virginia, whichever is sooner. The agency, its authorized agents, and/or state auditors shall have full access to and the right to examine any of said records during said period.

## Local Funds

A local match, based on the composite index of local ability-to-pay is required.

***Continuing for 2021-2022****: Up to 50% of the local match will be cash and 50% can be made up of in-kind contributions.*

***Cash Contributions***

Cash contributions are defined as local dollars that are:

1. In a program that meets, or can meet the criteria for a quality preschool program for at-risk 3- or 4-year-old children in school year 2021-2022;
2. Benefits the program but are not directly charged to the program; and/or
3. New local dollars, which are used to implement a program in the 2021-2022 school year that meets the criteria for a quality preschool program for at-risk 4-year-old children.

State funds and local matching funds cannot be used be used for capital outlay.

***In-Kind Contributions***

In-kind contributions are defined as cash outlays that are made by the locality that benefit the program, but are not directly charged to the program. The value of fixed assets cannot be considered as an in-kind contribution. Local matching funds cannot be used for any expenditure that would be classified as a capital expenditure. In-kind contributions are:

1. Limited to no more than 50 percent of the total local match requirement;
2. Justified in the program plan as necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient implementation of the program;
3. Verifiable from the recipient's records;
4. Not included as contributions for any other federally-assisted or state-assisted project or program; and
5. Not paid by the federal government or state government under another award.

For additional information on local and in-kind matching requirements, see Appendix E.

***Coordination of Funds***

Localities should coordinate other funding sources in planning programs for 3- and 4-year-old children. Some sources of funds include federal funds for Title I, Head Start programs, and child-care subsidy programs.

Local plans must provide clear methods of service coordination for the purpose of reducing the cost per child for the service, increasing the number of at-risk children served and/or extending services for the entire year. Examples of these include, but are not limited to:

1. **Wraparound services** combine funds such as child-care subsidy dollars, administered by local social service agencies, with dollars for quality preschool education programs.
2. **Wrapout services** use grant funds to provide health, social services, and transportation within a setting that currently provides quality preschool education (e.g., child-care settings or schools).
3. **Expansion of services** uses grant funds to purchase placements within existing programs, such as Head Start, which provide comprehensive services to at-risk 3- and 4-year-old children.

***Community-Provider Settings***

Mixed delivery means that school-based preschool program, Head Start programs, licensed child care programs, and community-provider settings are eligible to partner and work together to provide services. VPI classrooms can be supported in community-provider settings in both public and private sectors.

VPI slots in community provider settings follow the same rules and expectations as slots in traditional school settings as outlined in the [VPI Guidelines](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/preschool/vpi/index.shtml). Localities receive the funding for VPI slots offered in community-provider settings as part of their overall VPI electronic payments from the VDOE. Again this year, localities will be eligible to receive additional community provider add-on funds for each slot served in a community-provider setting.

Localities that are looking to increase access for at-risk 3- and 4-year olds should consider collaborating with community providers to maximize impact. See Appendix F for more information on community-providers as VPI partners.

***Continuing for 2021-2022****: Community-provider add-on funds for VPI slots offered in community-provider settings may be available for 2021-2022. The amount of the add-on grants will vary by region with rates of either $3,500, $2,500, or $1,500 per child, if available. See Appendix E for more information on the Community Provider Add-on*

***Mixed Delivery Grants***

Mixed Delivery Grants are offered as a partnership between the VDOE and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF). Localities and regions are able to apply to deliver quality preschool services for at risk 3- and 4-year-olds in community provider settings. For more information about Mixed Delivery Grants see Appendix G.

# ****Section 7: Appendices A-G to VPI Guidelines****

Appendices A-G refers to information regarding the requirements of a quality preschool program and the Virginia Preschool Initiative.

**Appendix A:**

*Pilot for 3-Year-Olds*

**Appendix B:**

*Virginia’s Unified Measurement and Improvement System*

**Appendix C:**

*Preschool VKRP & PALS-PreK*

**Appendix D:**

*Student Eligibility Criteria*

**Appendix E:**

*Local In-Kind Match*

**Appendix F:**

*Community Provider Add-On*

**Appendix G**:

*Mixed Delivery Grants*

# ****Appendix A - VPI Pilot for Serving 3-Year-Olds****

## The Appropriation Act includes a VPI Pilot for serving 3-Year-Olds.

All VPI programs are eligible to apply for the VPI Pilot for Serving 3-Year-Olds. Localities must submit an application as a part of the annual VPI Spring Application in SSWS and receive approval to serve 3-year-olds with VPI funds.

Children are eligible for services through the VPI Pilot for 3-Year-Olds if they are residents of Virginia, unserved by Head Start, turn 3-years-old by September 30 of the school year and meet either at-risk local eligibility criteria determined or state VPI eligibility criteria

## Funding and Reporting for the VPI 3-Year-Olds Pilot:

* This is a pilot program. 3-year-olds will **not** be added to the VPI state allocation formula.
* Available funds may be distributed to selected pilot school divisions based on an allocation formula providing the state share of a VPI slot for each 3-year-old. If available, 3-year-old slots will be funded at the same rate as typical VPI.
* A local match, based on the composite index of local ability-to-pay, will be required. VPI rules related to local match will apply.
* 3-year-olds served by the pilot will be reported in the fall Student Record Collection (SRC) in the same manner as 4-year-olds.
* Available, state funds for VPI slots for 3-year-olds will be distributed via electronic payments to school divisions on a recurring basis.

## Serving 3-Year-Olds in VPI Classrooms:

* 3-year-olds in the pilot may be served in single-age (3-year-old only) or mixed-age (3- and 4-year-old) classrooms.
* The VPI Pilot 3-year-old slots will follow the same rules and expectations as slots in traditional school settings as outlined in the [VPI Guidelines](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/preschool/vpi/2019-2020-vpi-guidelines.docx).
	+ Quality expectations for classroom observation, curriculum and professional development must be met.
	+ Programmatic expectations such as ratio, teacher certification, and transportation must also be met.
* 3-year-old slots may be in a school-based or community provider setting.
* Similar to typical VPI, localities will be expected to track outcomes over time for participating children, and share that data with the VDOE. No specific assessment for 3-year-olds served in VPI classrooms has been determined for 2021-2022.
* Localities should use the new *Virginia’s Birth-to-Five Early Learning and Development Standards* determine learning standards for three-year-olds.

## Requirements for Interested Applicants for the VPI Pilot for 3-Year-Olds:

Localities participating in the VPI Pilot for 3-Year-Olds are required to:

1. Demonstrate broad stakeholder support
2. Track outcomes for participating children
3. Demonstrate how they will maximize federal and state funds to preserve existing birth through five slots
4. Support inclusive practices of children with identified special needs
5. Collaborate among the school division, local department of social services, programs accepting child care subsidy payments, and providers for Head Start, private child care and early childhood special education and early intervention programs.

## Content of Pilot Application & Webinar

All interested school divisions are strongly encouraged to have the grant application contact review the content of the [VPI Pilot for 3-Year-Olds Application](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/preschool/vpi/vpi_application%20content_2021_22.docx) and the recorded [Increasing School Readiness by Increasing Access to Preschool Webinar](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDMwK9b6Yag) recorded on February 24, 2021.

# ****Appendix B – Virginia’s Unified Measurement and Improvement System****

Governor Northam signed legislation in July 2020, formalizing the call to move oversight for early childhood care and education to the VDOE, establish a new Early Childhood Advisory Committee, and create a Unified Measurement and Improvement System. The [Building a Unified Early Childhood System website](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/build-unified-early-childhood-system/index.shtml) provides information on transition oversight of child care and family day homes; launch of the new Early Childhood Advisory Committee, and creation of the Uniform Measurement and Improvement System.

This new unified early childhood system must ensure that **all** children have access to quality early experiences that meet their unique needs. Through the Unified Measurement and Improvement System, Virginia will:

* **UNIFY** around shared and equitable expectations for quality.
* **MEASURE** and strengthen teacher-child interactions and curriculum in all publicly funded birth-to-five programs.
* **IMPROVE** the quality supports for educators, prioritizing those who need it most.

The Board of Education is directed to establish such a quality measurement and improvement system by July 1, 2021. All publicly funded providers will be required to participate in the new unified measurement and improvement system starting in the fall of 2023.

According to the unification legislation, “Publicly funded provider” means any educational program provided by a school division or local government to children between birth and age five or child day program that receives state or federal funds in support of its operations that serves three or more unrelated children.

The definition is intended to capture funding sources that support direct early childhood care and educational services for young children. These funding sources include:

* Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI)
* Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE or IDEA Part B, Section 619 preschool)
* Title I Preschool
* Head Start/Early Head Start
* Virginia’s Child Care Subsidy Program
* Local child care assistance, such as Fairfax’s Child Care Assistance and Referral (CCAR) program
* Federal Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)
* Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) Mixed Delivery
* Federal Department of Defense military child care fee assistance

By fall 2023, all publicly-funded programs will be required to participate with ratings shared publicly in fall 2024. For an implementation, timeline see the [Overview & Timeline for Building Virginia’s Unified Quality Measurement and Improvement System](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/build-unified-early-childhood-system/quality-overview-2021.docx).

As the components of the Uniform Improvement Measurement System are developed and available, they will be posted on the VDOE’s [Building a Unified Early Childhood System website](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/build-unified-early-childhood-system/index.shtml). A draft proposal for the system will be available on this website in late spring 2021.

# ****Appendix C - Use of Preschool VKRP & PALS-PreK****

Early diagnostic assessments are a useful tool to ensure immediate intervention for children identified of being at-risk of reading failure. Beginning in the 2021-2022 school year VPI programs are required to assess 4-year-olds each fall and spring using the VKRP. VKRP is a set of coordinated assessments. Literacy (PALS-PreK), mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills are combined to provide early childhood educators with a more comprehensive picture of students’ skills at the beginning and end of the VPI year.

VKRP was developed in partnership with the University of Virginia (UVA). Additional information about the mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills components of the preschool VKRP is available on the [VKRP website](https://vkrponline.org/).

UVA also developed the PALS- PreK and established a website for preschool teachers that link the results of the assessment with suggested ideas for classroom activities and instruction. The PALS-PreK instrument assesses rhyme awareness, upper and lower case alphabet knowledge, beginning sound, verbal memory, print knowledge, concept of word, and name writing. Descriptions of each of the PALS-PreK tasks are available on the [PALS-PreK website](https://palsresource.info/pals-prek/).

# ****Appendix D - Student Eligibility Criteria (General Eligibility Criteria and Local Eligibility Criteria)****

Each year the General Assembly approves an annual Appropriation Act, which sets forth requirements for the VPI program. Localities can enroll students using general eligibility criteria or by using local eligibility criteria, which is typically capped at 15% of enrolled students. The Appropriation Act adds the ability for localities to submit a waiver to increase their local eligibility criteria to be greater than 15%.

## General Eligibility Criteria:

Local plans must indicate the number of at-risk 4-year-old children to be served, and the eligibility criteria for participation in this program shall be consistent with the economic and educational risk factors stated that are specific to:

* family income at or below 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines,
* (ii) homelessness,
* (iii) student's parents or guardians are school dropouts, or
* (iv) family income is above 200 percent but at or below 350 percent of federal poverty guidelines in the case of students with special needs or disabilities.

If a division is participating in the VPI Pilot for 3-Year-Olds, local plans must also indicate the number of at-risk 3-year-old children to be served using the same eligibility criteria listed above.

## Locally Established At-Risk Eligibility Criteria:

Up to 15 percent of a division's slots may be filled based on locally established eligibility criteria so as to meet the unique needs of at-risk children in the community.

Localities that can demonstrate that more than 15 percent of slots are needed to meet the needs of at-risk children in their community may apply for a waiver from the Superintendent of Public Instruction to use a larger percentage of their slots. Localities must demonstrate that increasing eligibility will enable the maximization of federal funds and will not have a negative impact on access for other individuals currently being served.

Divisions may apply for a waiver to serve more than 15 percent of slots through local at-risk criteria to meet the needs of more at-risk children in the community. The Office of Early Childhood will accept applications via SSWS during three submission window periods.

* Projection 1: April 1 – May 15
* Projection 2: July 1 – August 15
* Projection 3: September 1 – October 15

In the 2021 Fall Verification Report each school division must identify the total number of VPI slots used in each of the following criteria. If a student meets the requirements based on multiple criteria, select the one that made the student most eligible by General Assembly requirements first. If the student does not meet one of the four mandated General Assembly criteria, then select the local criteria that made the student most eligible.

1. At or below 200% of poverty
2. Homelessness
3. Student’s parents or guardians are school dropouts
4. Family income is above 200% but at or below 350% of federal poverty guidelines in the case of students with special needs or disabilities
5. Local criteria (sample list, divisions may have other criteria)
* Family member suffers abuse including all forms of trauma and/or adverse childhood experiences
* Single parent home
* Foster care/welfare
* Child is English Language Learner/Dual Language Learner
* Parent that is incarcerated
* Military deployment
* Student raised by relatives other than parents
* Child is a student with a disability
* Negative impacts of COVID-19
* Other than income or listed local criteria

## Eligibility Reporting Requirements for Divisions

The Department of Education is directed to compile from each school division the aggregated information as to the number of enrolled students whose families are (i) at or below 130 percent of poverty, (ii) above 130 percent but at or below 200 percent of poverty, (iii) above 200 percent but at or below 350 percent of poverty, and (iv) above 350 percent of poverty. This includes reporting income levels of families of VPI students found eligible using local criteria. The Department shall report this information annually, after the application and fall participation reports are submitted to the Department from the school divisions, to the Chairmen of House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees.

# ****Appendix E- Local In-Kind Match****

The Appropriation Act modifies the maximum amount of local match that may come from **in-kind** (vs. cash) resources from 25% to 50%, beginning in FY2021.

This modification provides flexibility to localities to achieve the local matching requirements with utilization of in-kind resources rather than cash.

In-kind contributions are defined as cash outlays that are made by the locality that benefit the program, but are not directly charged to the program. The value of fixed assets cannot be considered as an in-kind contribution. Local matching funds cannot be used for any expenditures that would be classified as a capital expenditure (e.g., purchase of a trailer).

**In-Kind Contributions are:**

1. Limited to no more than 50 percent of the total local match requirement;
2. Justified in the program plan as necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient implementation of the program and allocated to the program on a reasonable basis;
3. Verifiable from school division records;
4. Not included as contributions for any other federally-assisted or state-assisted project or program; and
5. Not paid by the federal government or state government under another award.

First priority should be using all funds, including the required local match, to meet the state standards and guidelines, such as the required staffing standards and provisions of your local plan. If all direct program requirements have been met first, then local match may be deemed to go to non-direct service components, such as custodial services or utilities. The overall emphasis on the use of state and local funds for VPI should be direct services to at-risk 3- and 4-year olds.

**Examples**

* An example might include a custodian whom is paid by the local school division and cleans three buildings. One of the buildings is a VPI preschool. This school division would be able to count 1/3 of the custodian’s salary and benefits toward the amount required for local match without using a time log or prorated situation.
* It is important to note, however, the *Code of Virginia* and Appropriation Act state that the intent of the state and local funds for VPI are for **direct** preschool services to at-risk 3- (proposed) and 4-year olds; the emphasis on use of funds should be there.

Private funds contributed for use in the program do qualify as local funds toward meeting the required local match. The applicant must certify the amount and source of any private funds. They must be appropriated in the school division budget.

Federal sources of preschool funding (Title I, Head Start, or ECSE) cannot be used to meet the local match requirement. Other state funds or local match from other programs may not be used as VPI local match.

# ****Appendix F – Community Provider Add-on****

School divisions are encouraged to partner with community providers to increase access to VPI services for at-risk children and their families.

The Community Provider Add-On encourages the placement of VPI slots in community-based settings.

* Add-on funds will minimize the difference between the VPI state allocation and the true cost of care in a community provider setting.
* Divisions are encouraged to use add-on slots to support inclusive practices for children with special needs.
* Localities that are a part of the VPI Pilot for 3-Year-Olds may place 3-year-olds in community provider settings, along with 4-year-olds

## General Guidelines for Offering Slots in a Community Provider Setting:

* VPI slots in community provider settings follow the same rules and expectations as slots in traditional school settings as outlined in the [VPI Guidelines](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/preschool/vpi/2019-2020-vpi-guidelines.docx).
* Community providers can be community-based or private provider options within your locality.
* Localities receive the funding for VPI slots offered in community-provider settings as part of their overall VPI electronic payments from the VDOE. Localities are fully responsible for handling the payment and coordination with the community provider.
* The entity receiving the VPI funds is fully responsible for meeting applicable procurement policies and compliance with VPI expectations.
* The lead governmental agency (e.g., school division, county government) is responsible for oversight of the partnership and the lead for state monitoring of the VPI program.
* Community providers must follow health and safety standards by the agency licensing the program (i.e., VDSS).
* Community providers participate in external and local CLASS™ observations.

## Funds for the Community-Provider Add-On:

* If the division requests and is approved, the add-on may provide additional funding per slot that is offered in a community provider setting:
	+ Localities **do not** pay a local match on the add-on.
	+ Localities **do** pay a local match on the base VPI slot funding, as with any other slot.
* There are various ways to coordinate and share resources with community providers that are offering VPI classrooms. Localities are strongly encouraged to use these funds to support pay parity for early educators in private settings.

Funds may be used to purchase items and services that benefit all children in the community provider. Funds may not be used for capital outlay. School divisions requesting and approved for add-on funds will receive per-pupil amounts based on the region where the school division is located ($3,500, $2,500, $1,500) depending on location. See [Superintendent’s Memo #048-21 Attachment A](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2021/048-21a.xlsx), posted on February 26, 2021 for specific add-on amounts for each school division.

# ****Appendix G - Mixed Delivery Grants****

The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) administers the Mixed Delivery Preschool Grants funded by the Virginia General Assembly. The grants support public-private preschool delivery and permit communities to field-test strategies that overcome barriers that have prevented all eligible children from participating in the VPI. To learn more visit [VECF’s Mixed Delivery Preschool Grant Program website](https://www.vecf.org/mixed-delivery-grant/).

Frequently asked questions about Mixed Delivery Grants include the following:

* *What is the difference between the Community Provider Add-On and the Mixed Delivery Grant?*
	+ The Community-Provider Add on provides additional funds for VPI slots based in community settings.
	+ The Mixed Delivery Grants are offered as a partnership between the VDOE and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF). Localities and regions are able to apply to deliver quality preschool services for at risk 3- and 4-year-olds in community provider settings.
	+ Communities in which school divisions are challenged by space/capacity limitations and/or local match requirements, or communities with working families needing or preferring a longer service day and year than provided by the VPI program may consider applying for Mixed Delivery grants. A locality’s fiscal agency for the grant may be a school division and or local education foundation, Smart Beginnings agency, United Way, etc.
* *May a school division place a state-funded VPI student in a pre-k classroom that also receives funding through VECF Mixed Delivery Grant?*
	+ Yes. The VPI program grantee, typically a school division, shares oversight for any classroom with Mixed Delivery kids, and is responsible for:
	+ Making sure that all VPI Program Guidelines are met.
	+ Making sure all VPI kids are reported in the Student Record Collection as a VPI student (using VPI funding code)
	+ VPI state funds cannot be used to pay for an non-degreed pre-k teacher
	+ For more information, please review the [Mixed Delivery Grant Funding Sources Chart.](https://www.vecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/MDG-Funding-Sources-Chart.pdf)
* *May a VPI slot in a Mixed Delivery Grant funded classroom also receive the Community Provider Add- On funds?*
	+ Yes, VPI slots are eligible for VPI funding AND the community provider add-on ($3,500, $2,500, or $1,500 additional per slot, depending on locality), with rates determined by VPI grantee arrangements
	+ Each funding source supports different children in the same classroom*.*
		- VECF Mixed Delivery funding supports some children in the same classroom; VPI funding supports other children in the same classroom.

**Or**

* + - *Each funding source supports different costs for children in the same classroom.* VECF Mixed Delivery funding supports some programmatic costs for all children in a classroom; VPI funding supports different programmatic costs for all children in the same classroom.

For more information, please review the [Mixed Delivery Grant Funding Sources Chart.](https://www.vecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/MDG-Funding-Sources-Chart.pdf)