

# State of the State Early Childhood in Virginia

*May 27, 2020*

# Objectives and Agenda

*This webinar will provide an overview of key accomplishments, challenges, lessons learned and what's ahead for early childhood in the Commonwealth.*

## Agenda:

- Virginia's Challenge: Kindergarten Readiness for All
- Accomplishments of 2019-2020
- Challenges
- Lessons Learned
- Aspirations for 2020-2021
- Question and Answer

# Virginia's Challenge

# Virginia's Challenge

***All Virginia children are capable of and deserve to enter school ready. Yet more than 37,000 children entered Virginia kindergarten not ready to fulfill their potential.***

- According to the 2019 Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP), 44% of Virginia children started school without the key literacy, math, and social-emotional skills needed.
- Most concerning is that 55% of children from economically disadvantaged families and 66% of children with special needs did not enter school fully prepared.
- Virginia ranks 33<sup>rd</sup> nationally in preschool funding; 1 in 3 at-risk four-year-olds and 3 out of 4 at-risk three-year-olds lack access to quality preschool (~47,000 Virginia children annually).
- 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 37<sup>th</sup> nationally in early childhood governance and lacks a uniform oversight and regulatory framework, making it difficult for communities to strengthen their local systems.

# 2019-2020 Accomplishments

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## *Virginia has made great progress in the 2019-2020 year. Specifically we:*

- Conducted listening sessions and produced recommendations to improve school readiness for Governor Northam's Executive Directive 4;
- Passed groundbreaking legislation to unify oversight and establish a uniform measurement and improvement system for birth-five programs that take public funds;
- Secured \$85 million\* in new early childhood funding to serve 11,000 more preschoolers in public and private settings, including three year olds;
- Reduced child care subsidy waitlists, resulting in ~25,000 children participating in the program;
- Completed first Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five (PDG B-5) grant and won a three-year, \$33.5M renewal to increase local capacity, build the measurement and improvement system, coordinate enrollment and deepen family engagement and continue an educator incentive; and
- Conducted 3,200+ CLASS Observations, invested \$15 million in quality improvement and worked collaboratively to draft birth-five early learning standards.

# PDG B-5 Pilot Accomplishments

## ***In the first year of the PDG B-5, Virginia, led by its 10 community pilots:***

- Completed a needs assessment and strategic plan
- 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
- Collected more than 2,800 survey responses from families
- Conducted enrollment self-assessments and produced plans to better coordinate enrollment;
- Completed 1,727 CLASS observations, representing 96% of public classrooms
- Designed, built and launched a new data portal (LinkB5) with information entered by 90% of publicly-funded sites; and
- Distributed more than \$3 million in funds via 2,700+ checks, to 2,004 teachers and 497 sites.

***Pilots are strengthening their systems and building models for other communities.***

# Challenges



# COVID 19: Global Pandemic

***Although these historic accomplishments have been challenged by COVID 19, partners have collaborated to support the early childhood sector throughout the crisis. We have:***

- Collaborated to support continuity of learning, ensured child care for essential workers and helped launch emergency child care where needed;
- Communicated frequently with the field through new and varied approaches (e.g., webinars, FAQs, Cups and Conversations) as well as shifted to virtual professional development and technical assistance events;
- Used new federal funding such as the CARES Act Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds to support the field, especially open child care programs; and
- Ensured that early childhood is represented on all task forces, commissions and recommendations and guidance related to COVID-19 and reopening.

# Current Situation in the Commonwealth

## ***As Virginia begins to recover, challenges remain:***

- All public school preschool and early childhood special education programs are closed for the school year.
- Nearly all Head Start programs are closed; some Early Head Start programs are operating.
- Altogether, ~2,600 child care programs are temporarily closed - a loss in capacity of ~200,000 seats. 365 programs have indicated that they have a reopening date.
  - More than 60% of child care centers and faith-based preschools are closed.
  - One in five family day homes are closed.
- Child care is allowed to be open and child care educators are essential personnel.
- VDSS has approved 1,900+ providers for the CARES Act direct assistance program but financial losses experienced far exceed new federal funding available.

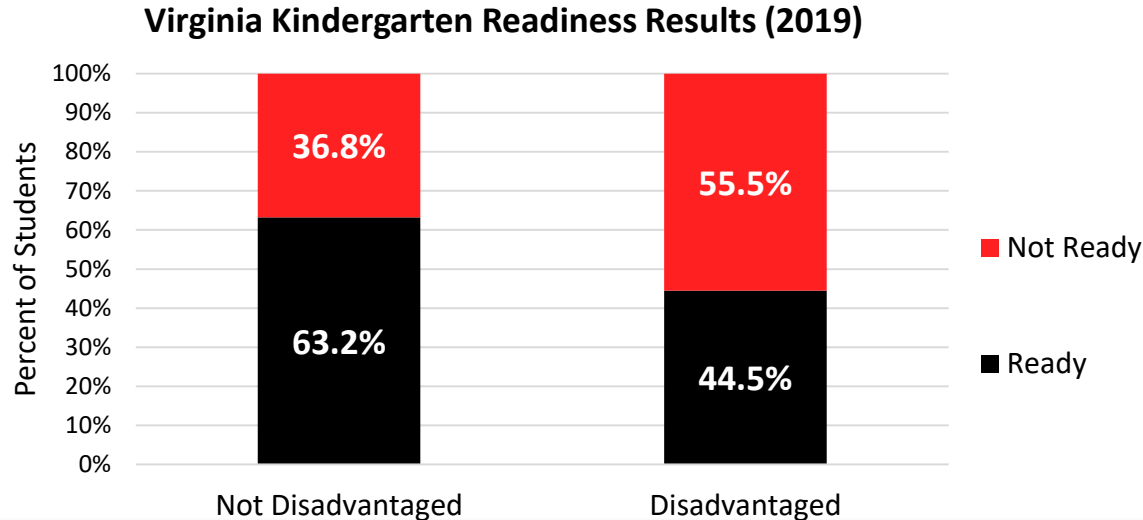
***State agencies are developing reopening guidance and support for each phase.***

# COVID-19 Impact on Young Learners

- **Young learners could start next year significantly behind.** Recent research projects school closures could result in major declines in student learning with math taking a bigger hit than reading; some students could return in the fall with less than 50% of typical learning gains.
- **Virtual learning is less effective.** Several studies show that virtual charter students achieved far fewer days of learning in math and in reading than students in traditional public schools. COVID-19 outcomes are likely to be worse due to the sudden, unexpected shift to virtual learning and disparities in internet/broadband access.
- **Lengthy school closures will likely follow children into adulthood.** Studies of summer reading loss show that fewer school days lead to less learning. Research on school closures in Argentina showed negative impacts on graduation rates, college attainment, employment and earnings.
- **Economic downturns hit families' and schools' budgets hard, affecting children, too.** Studies have found that school budget cuts lower test scores, particularly for students from families with low incomes. Studies show that parental job loss is associated with worse in-school behavior, lower test scores, and higher likelihood of being held back.

# Exacerbating Inequities in Early Childhood

*The disparate impact of COVID 19 on vulnerable communities will likely exacerbate inequities in early childhood access, quality and outcomes. Already the opportunity gap is greater at kindergarten entry than the third grade reading or math gaps.*



# Lessons Learned

# What We Have Learned in VPI/ECSE Classrooms

***Overall VPI classrooms provide warm, responsive interactions with clear routines and behavioral management. Instruction continues to be an area for growth.***

- CLASS scores align with national trends
  - Instructional Support is the area for growth
- Classrooms and divisions tend to score above 2 domain thresholds but significant needs remain
  - Only a third of classrooms and divisions met all 3 domain thresholds
- Local CLASS observations are underway
- Wide variety in amount and quality of professional development around the state
  - Practice-focused and data-driven professional development are areas of most need
  - Professional development is less than 50% practice-focused in nearly ¾ths of divisions
  - Many divisions report having/using no data tools when evaluating professional development
- Inclusion classrooms have also received CLASS observations; VDOE is working closely with Teachstone to effectively use CLASS in all early childhood special education classrooms

# What We Have Learned in PDG B-5 Classrooms

## Through PDG B-5, the 10 pilot communities, have led the way for the state.

- Surveys revealed that Virginia’s existing professional development may not fully meet the individual needs of birth-five educators.
- Virginia now has individual information on 1700+ Infant, Toddler, and PreK classrooms.
  - Nearly 100 family day homes and more than 500 infant and toddler classrooms were observed in addition to 1,000 preschool classrooms using CLASS.
  - Adding VPI and Virginia Quality data, Virginia has CLASS information on 4,000+ classrooms
- Quality of interactions varies across Infant, Toddler and PreK classrooms with bright spots and opportunities for improvement across all communities and sectors.
- Having classroom-level information enables PDG B-5 communities to better align efforts and individualize feedback and supports.
  - Teachers say individualized coaching is more helpful than “sit and get” training.
- LinkB5 enables Virginia to design a uniform quality measurement and improvement system.

# What We Have Learned from COVID-19

*Virginia is learning more each day as we cope with the COVID 19 pandemic.*

- Our early childhood system is highly inner-connected yet impact varies across sectors.
  - Child care has stayed open to meet the needs of families and children, including essential personnel, yet has experienced the most overall negative impact.
- High quality, in-person teacher-child interactions matter more than ever.
  - In addition to learning loss, children have been deeply emotionally impacted by the isolation, stress and trauma of the pandemic. Early childhood teachers will play a significant role in helping children recover.
- To best support the field, the state has shifted its focus. Leaders are deeply listening to and learning from the field, facilitating discussion on promising practices and offering flexibility where possible.



# Aspirations for 2020-2021

# Aspirations

**To improve kindergarten readiness outcomes in Virginia, we ask for your partnership as we work together towards three overarching goals for 2020-2021.**

1. Support the reopening of the early childhood system, including child care, Head Start and public preschool.
2. Transition Child Care, including oversight of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Head Start Collaboration functions from VDSS to VDOE by July 1, 2021.
3. Continue to strengthen all aspects of the birth-five system with a focus on the most vulnerable children and educators.

# 1. Support Reopening

## ***Virginia will support the reopening and recovery of the birth-five early childhood system by:***

- Continuing to provide updated guidance, resources and technical assistance on reopening and recovery at each phase;
- Focusing on supporting child care recovery:
  - Tracking and monitoring child care supply and demand with Child Care Aware of Virginia;
  - Maintaining a new [map](#) to reflect the current state of available child care in Virginia in response to community needs;
- Using all available federal funding to support the diverse needs of the child care sector as well as implement VPI and Mixed Delivery Expansion and Enhancements to serve more vulnerable children in 2020-2021;
- Aligning supports to address educators' and children's needs as they return to classrooms; and
- Continuing to engage stakeholders through multiple formats.

# Support Reopening: What You Can Do

***Information continues to change so please check newsletter, websites and app for up-to-date guidance and resources.***

- VDSS posts all updated information on its [Child Care COVID 19 website](#).
- VDSS has launched a [COVID 19 Virginia Resources](#) website and COVID VA mobile app ([App Store](#) & Android/Google Play).
- VDOE posts all updated information on its [COVID 19 Website](#).
- Early childhood stakeholders should confirm that they are receiving the [Readiness Connections](#) monthly newsletters.
- Email questions, concerns or feedback to [earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov).

## 2. Transition Child Care and Head Start Collaboration

***Virginia recently passed legislation to establish a single and durable point of accountability for school readiness statewide.***

- Establishes the Virginia Board of Education (BOE) and VDOE as responsible for oversight and administration of early care and education out of the home, effective July 1, 2021;
- Creates an Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee to the BOE as required for federal grants to vet policies and regulations and advise the BOE;
- Moves existing child care licensing requirements to VDOE with BOE as the new authority;
- Transitions oversight of child care subsidy program but have VDSS continue to run the program using CommonHelp and local social service offices to minimize disruption;
- Establishes VDOE as the lead agency for the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) effective July 1, 2021; and
- Transitions the Head Start Collaboration Office as of July 1, 2020.

# Transition: What You Can Do

***To ensure a smooth transition, Virginia will build an integrated Office of Early Childhood and engage stakeholders each step in the process.***

- Virginia will begin transitioning the quality measurement and improvement staff and contracts along with the Head Start Collaboration Office on July 1, 2020.
- Building on lessons learned across VPI, Virginia Quality, Head Start and PDG B-5 Pilots, the interdisciplinary team will design the model for Virginia's first uniform and measurement system and share proposals with the field in 2020-2021.
- As required by law, VDOE will establish a transition workgroup to support these efforts.
- VDOE must provide a public update to the General Assembly in August and December.
- Email [earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov) if interested in participating in the transition workgroup.

# 3. Strengthen All Aspects of the System

***Virginia will continue to build capacity, observe classrooms, coordinate enrollment, support improvement and deepen family engagement across the birth-five system.***

- **PDG B-5 Cohort 2:** Virginia will expand pilot efforts, bringing on a second cohort of communities to increase capacity, measure quality, increase access and strengthen family engagement. Cohort 1 communities will receive funding to build on their success.
- **External CLASS™ Observations:** All school-based preschool classrooms (VPI, Title I, ECSE, local) will receive external CLASS observations once every two years.
- **Local CLASS™ Observations:** School divisions and PDG B-5 classrooms will conduct local CLASS™ observations in birth-five classrooms and ensure all teachers/assistants receive feedback and support.
- **Aligned Professional Development:** Office of Early Childhood will align and strengthen the \$15 million in quality investments across child care, Head Start and school-based settings, including revised early learning and development standards and mental health consultation.
- **Coordinated Enrollment and Family Engagement:** PDG B-5 pilots will work across sectors to engage families, improve enrollment processes and increase birth-five access.

# How It All Fits Together

## ***By 2023, more Virginia children will enter kindergarten ready because:***

- All families who rely on public funding have comparable information about the quality of their program;
- All providers who take public funding are supported to improve teacher-child interactions;
- All infant, toddler and preschool educators in publicly-funded programs receive feedback and individualized supports
  - Educators are supported to address the learning and socio-emotional needs of all kids;
  - Vulnerable educators receive financial incentives to stay in the classroom;
- All communities have infrastructure to measure and improve access, quality and family engagement while preserving key federal resources (e.g., Head Start); and
- Quality will be higher and turnover will be lower, thus enabling Virginia to maximize its return on its most important investments in children and families.



# Strengthen All Aspects of the System: What You Can Do

***There is no single provider or funding source that can serve all children birth-five. The ultimate success of these efforts to strengthen the early childhood system depends on all stakeholders.***

- Consider participating in or learning more about new initiatives such as [PDG B-5](#), [Mixed Delivery](#) through the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation or VPI Expansion;
- Learn more about the [CLASS Observation](#) system and consider participating in [Virginia Quality](#);
- Sign up for the [Readiness Connections](#) monthly newsletters;
- Attend or stream [School Readiness Committee](#) meetings; and
- Email questions, concerns or feedback to [earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov)

# Thank You

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