September 12, 2023

Virginia's K–12 Teacher Pipeline

Commission Briefing

Study resolution

- Identify K–12 teacher workforce trends

- Evaluate factors contributing to decline in traditional teacher preparation program enrollment

- Identify practices to increase enrollment in traditional teacher preparation programs

- Evaluate VDOE teacher licensure process

Commission study resolution approved November 7, 2022.

In brief

Latest available data shows continued statewide teacher shortage, though some divisions have no or few vacancies.

Individuals using "direct" pathways to full teacher licensure are generally better prepared to teach in the short term, but indirect pathways often cost less and are more flexible.

Virginia-specific assessment required for full licensure is outdated and may be unnecessary barrier to teaching.

Cost of traditional higher education preparation programs can be substantial barrier to program participation and completion.

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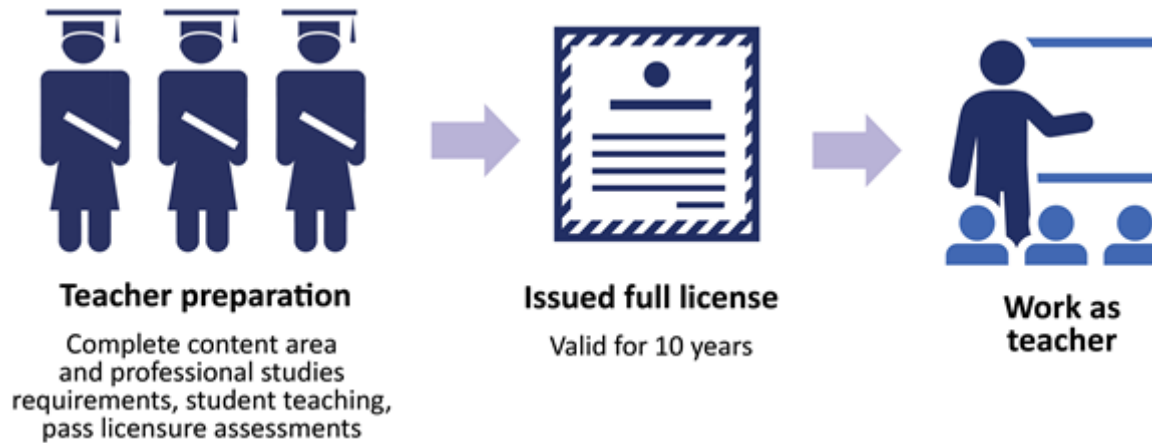
Background

Trends: Teacher vacancies & licensure

Teacher preparation pathways
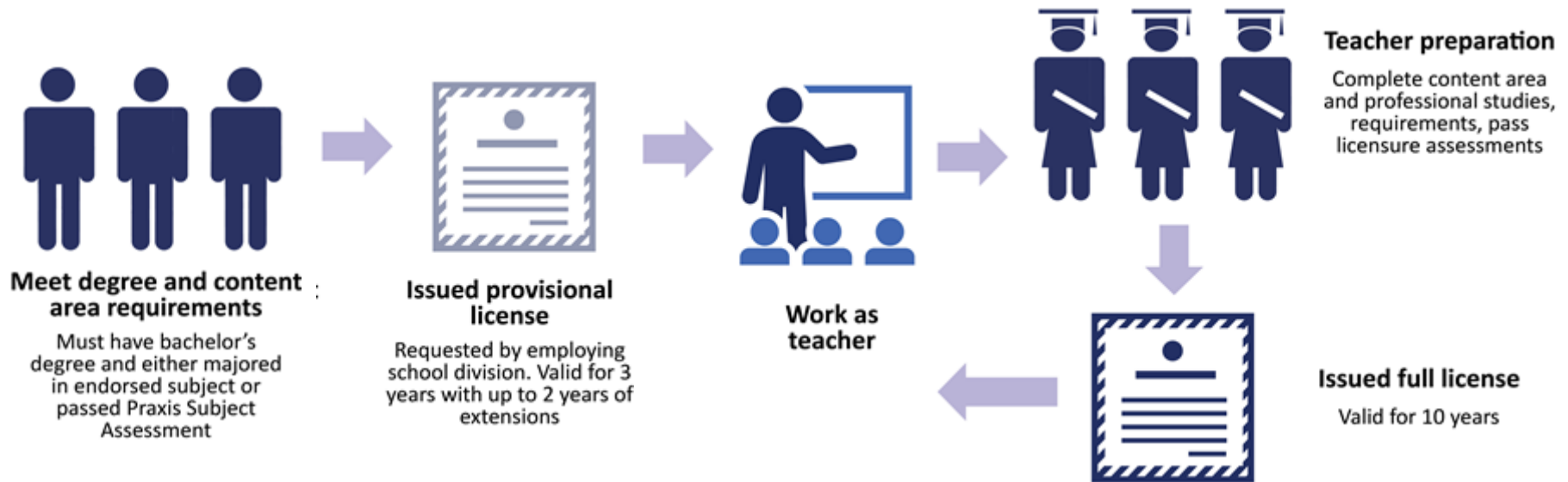
Barriers to teacher preparation

Teacher licensure process

State evaluation of teacher pipeline

Most individuals have historically used "direct" pathways to become fully licensed K-12 teachers

Teacher preparation

Complete content area and professional studies requirements, student teaching, pass licensure assessments

Issued full license

Valid for 10 years

Work as teacher

- Traditional higher education teacher preparation programs at 14 public institutions, 23 private institutions

- Teacher residency programs and partnerships across state

Individuals can also take "indirect" pathways to become a K-12 teacher

Meet degree and content area requirements

Must have bachelor's degree and either majored in endorsed subject or passed Praxis Subject Assessment

Issued provisional license

Requested by employing school division. Valid for 3 years with up to 2 years of extensions

Work as teacher

Teacher preparation

Complete content area and professional studies, requirements, pass licensure assessments

Issued full license

Valid for 10 years

Virginia has several different types of indirect pathways to teaching

Provisional license, classes as needed over time	Individual works as "teacher of record" while completing courses and tests required for full licensure.
Special education provisional license	After completing prerequisite course, individual works as teacher of record under provisional license (while completing remaining courses/tests for full licensure).
Career switcher programs	Individual completes accelerated coursework and brief field experience before becoming teacher of record on provisional license. Granted full license after at least 1 year teaching and 20 hours of additional seminars.
Division-led preparation	Individual works as teacher of record under provisional license while completing professional studies courses for full license provided by division staff or external providers (e.g., iTeach).

State has new teacher apprenticeship program and multiple other teacher pipeline initiatives

- VDOE is implementing a new teacher apprenticeship program
  - Grants awarded to six higher education institution/division partnerships to begin programs

- State also has ~20 state-supported programs/initiatives to help attract, prepare, recruit, and retain teachers
  - Examples – Grow Your Own pilot, mentor teachers program, dual enrollment tuition grants, etc.

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In November 2022, JLARC raised concern about quantity & quality of teachers after pandemic

- Enrollment in teacher preparation programs had been in long-term decline

- Fewer individuals were becoming newly licensed teachers

- More teachers were leaving Virginia school divisions or the profession entirely

Latest available data shows continued deficit between newly licensed teachers and those leaving

Teachers: **leaving***

Deficit

-5,482

Teachers: **newly licensed**
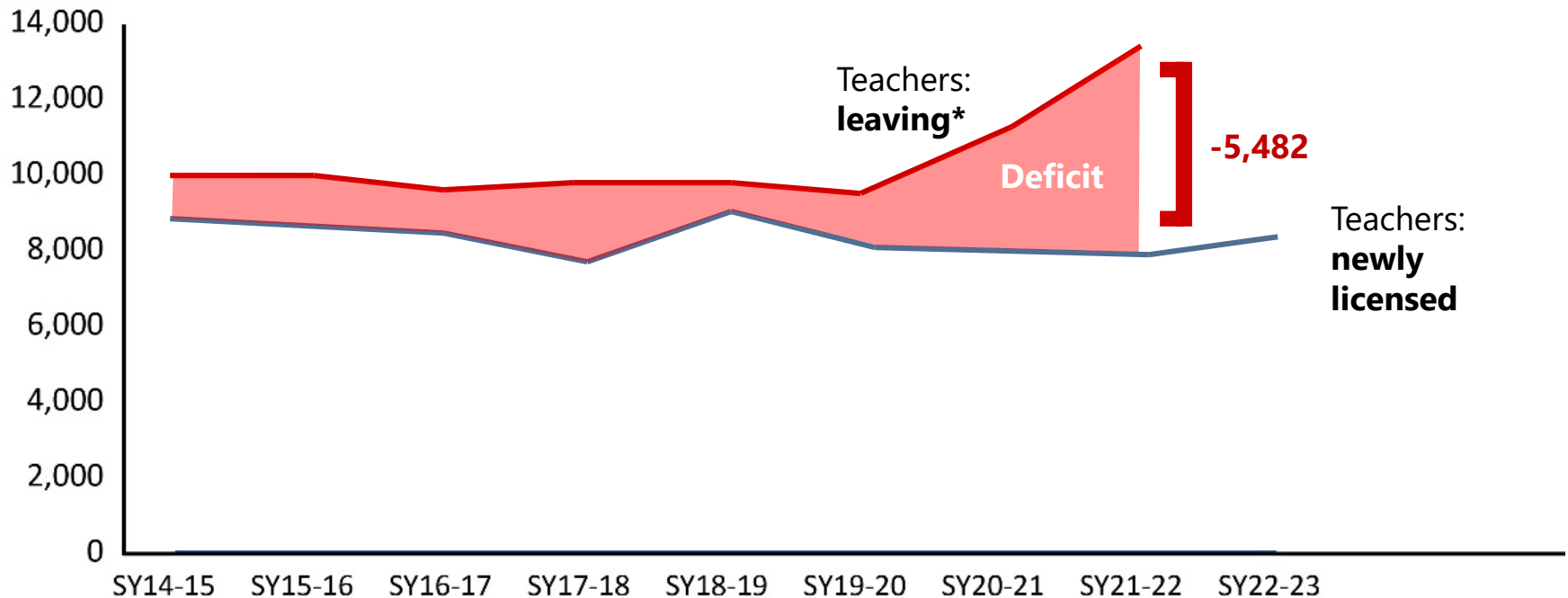
* 2023 data on teachers leaving not available until early 2024

Vacant teaching positions continue to be above historical trend

Number of unfilled positions
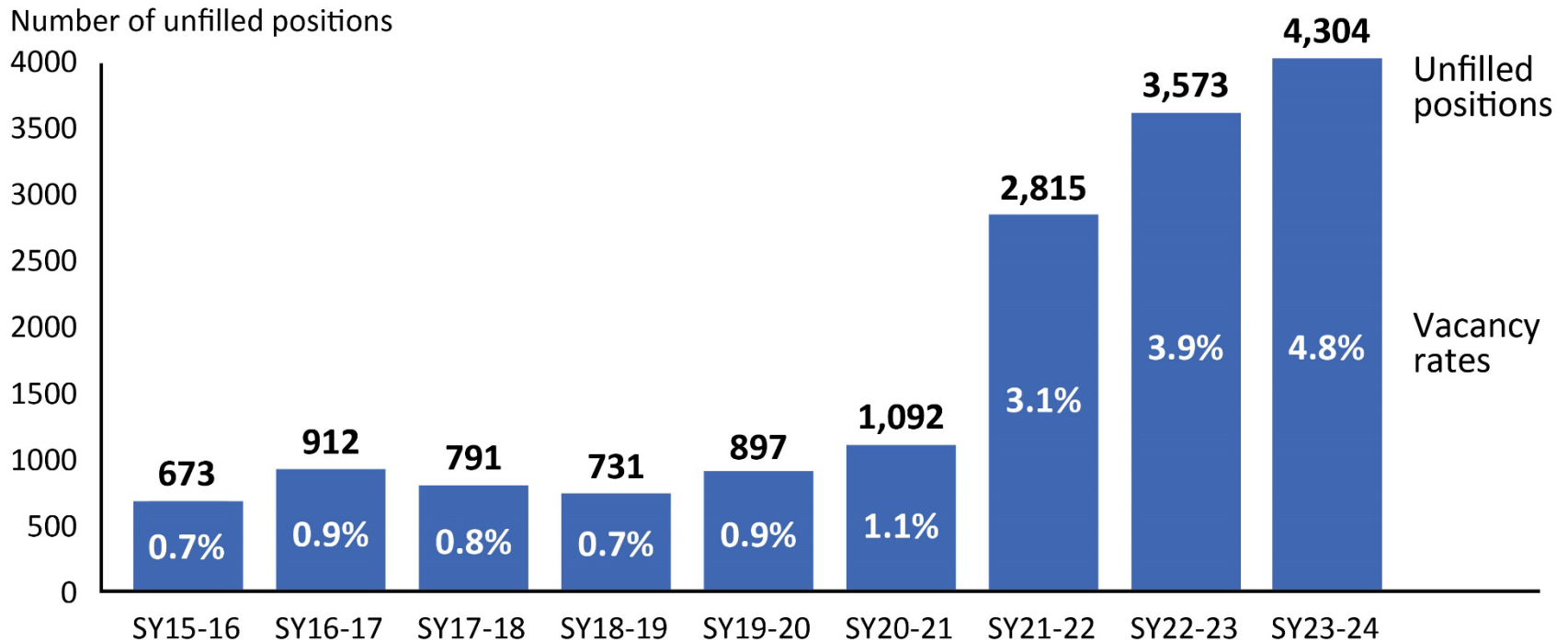
Note: Teacher vacancies reported as of October 1, 2022 for SY15–16 through SY22–23.
Actual or anticipated vacancies on first day of school for 123 divisions for SY23–24.

Wide variation in vacancies across divisions

10 divisions with <u>highest</u> teacher vacancies SY23–24

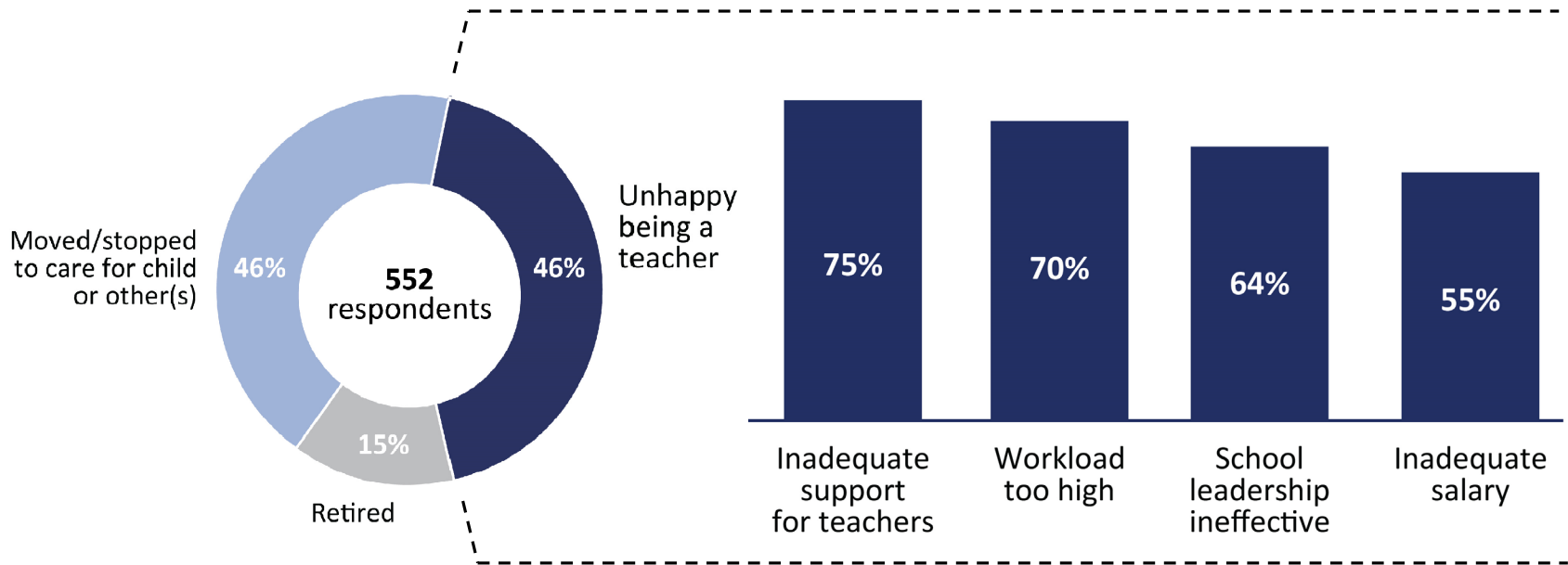| Division	Vacant
Danville City	40.4%
Charles City County	21.5
Suffolk City	17.7
Lancaster County	17.0
Norfolk City	16.8
Essex County	15.1
Cumberland County	14.7
Poquoson City	14.3
Caroline County	13.7
Pulaski County	13.2

Note: Data from VDOE survey of 123 divisions. Actual or anticipated teacher vacancies on first day of school for SY23–24.

Smaller proportion of Virginia's teacher workforce is fully licensed than a decade ago
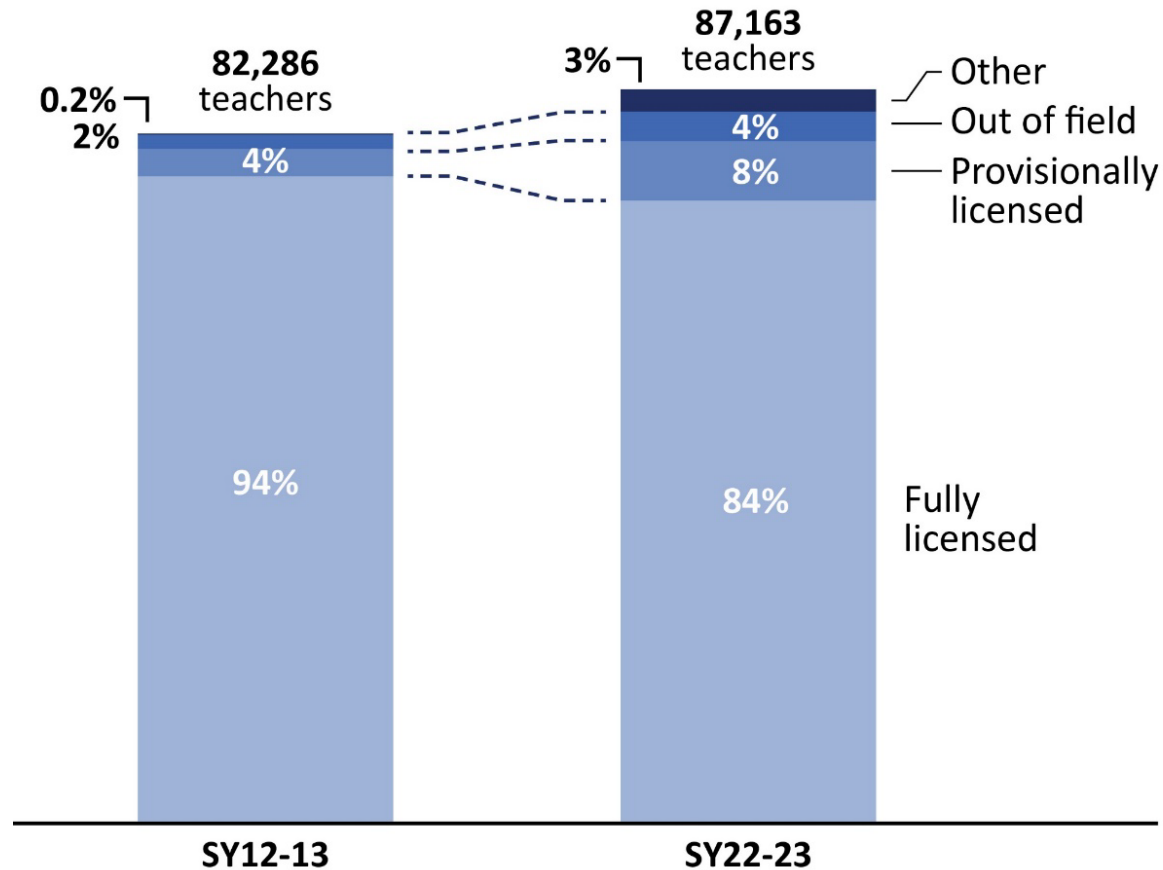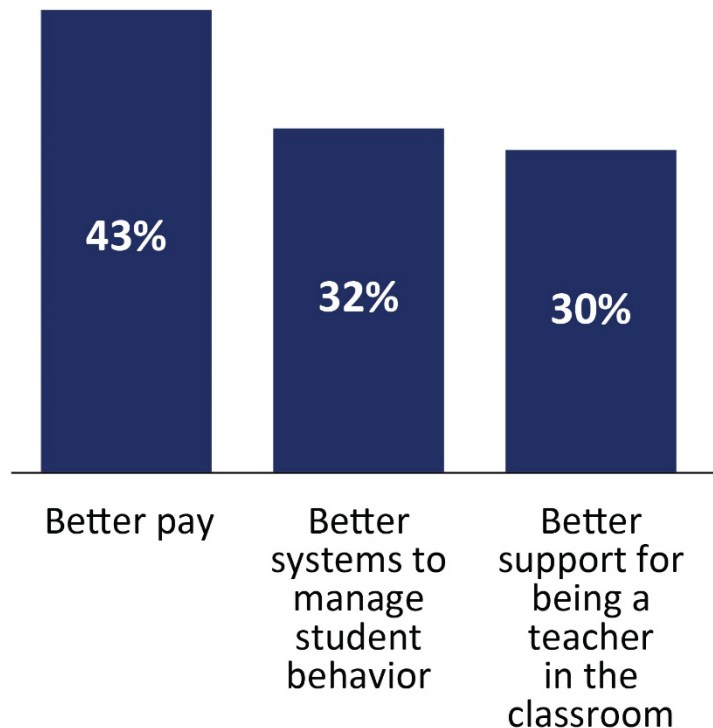

Note: "Other" includes teachers such as long-term substitutes.

Teachers reported leaving for personal reasons, or because they were unhappy being a teacher

Moved/stopped to care for child or other(s)

46%

552 respondents

46%

Unhappy being a teacher

15%

Retired

Inadequate support for teachers	Workload too high	School leadership ineffective	Inadequate salary
75%	70%	64%	55%

Note: Feedback from JLARC survey of licensed teachers who are not currently teaching in a Virginia public school, 2023. Individuals could select multiple reasons for leaving public K–12 teaching.

Teachers who left may return for better pay and classroom conditions; addressed in prior JLARC recommendations

43% — Better pay

32% — Better systems to manage student behavior

30% — Better support for being a teacher in the classroom

Previously recommended:

- Calculate funds for teacher salaries to better reflect actual salaries paid*
- Update staffing standards to reflect substantially higher actual number of instructional assistants*

- Expand state program to help schools manage student behavior and fund instructional assistants to help teachers in difficult classrooms**

Source: JLARC survey of licensed teachers not currently teaching in a Virginia public school, 2023.
*Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula report (July 2023)
**Pandemic Impact on Public K-12 Education report (Nov 2022)

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Well-prepared teachers play critical role in state's K–12 education system

- High quality K–12 system should strive for all teachers to be well prepared to be successful in the classroom

- Professional studies coursework and student teaching increase preparedness of new teachers

- Teacher preparation should be
    - affordable
    - provided in a way that is accessible

Finding

Individuals who use "direct" pathways to become fully licensed are generally better prepared to teach, but these pathways cost more.

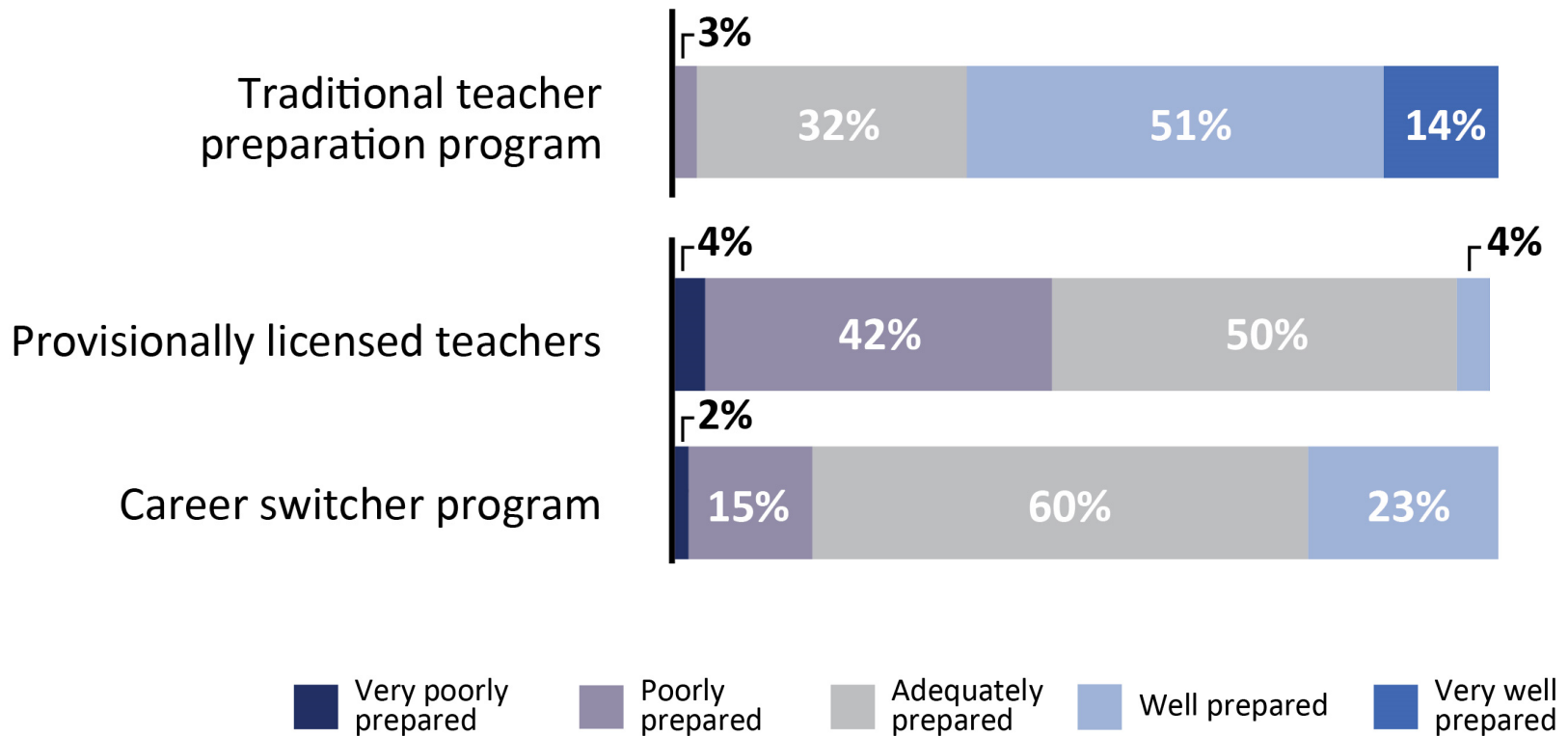# Pathways represent tradeoffs between quality and affordability

	Program quality / Participant preparedness	Participant affordability
Direct pathways		
Traditional teacher preparation programs	●	○
Teacher residency programs	●	● a
Registered apprenticeship programs	– b	– b
Indirect pathways		
Provisional license, classes as needed	○ c	◐
Special education provisional license	◐	◐
Career switcher programs	◐	◐
Division-led preparation	Varies	●

a = Teacher residency programs are affordable for participants but often costly for the state or sponsoring division.
b = Virginia's registered apprenticeship programs just being implemented; too new to evaluate.
c = Preparedness measured when provisional licensee becomes teacher of record; preparedness varies and is likely to increase as classes are completed.

Divisions reported teachers from traditional preparation programs tend to be more prepared

Traditional teacher preparation program
3% | 32% | 51% | 14%

Provisionally licensed teachers
4% | 42% | 50% | 4%

Career switcher program
2% | 15% | 60% | 23%

Legend:
- Very poorly prepared
- Poorly prepared
- Adequately prepared
- Well prepared
- Very well prepared

Source: JLARC survey of Virginia school divisions, summer 2023.

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Indirect pathways give individuals flexibility to obtain credentials over time and cost less

- Most provisionally licensed teachers take required courses at their convenience—often online—while working as a teacher

- Obtaining a provisional license is generally more affordable for participants than traditional programs

	Traditional program	Career switcher program	Division preparation program	Provisional License *(taking classes as needed)*
Cost to participant	$15K–$96K	$2K–$6K	$0	$0K–$12K

Teacher residencies provide rigorous preparation and pay participants, but capacity is limited

- Residency model designed to maximize preparation
  - extended on-the-job training and simultaneous coursework
  - classroom shared with experienced teachers

- Preparation cost typically covered for residents with stipends; program costly for state to administer

- Three state-supported residency programs in Virginia
  - Prepared <100 individuals (SY22–23)

New teacher apprenticeship program expected to provide rigorous preparation with advantageous funding model

- Registered teacher apprenticeships use rigorous preparation model much like residencies

    - Federal program requirements (e.g., 2,000 job training hours per year, increasing wages)

- Unlike residencies, apprenticeship programs can use federal workforce funding to cover portion of costs

- Six school division/higher ed institution partnerships in process of implementing registered apprenticeship programs

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Finding

VCLA—a Virginia-specific assessment required for full licensure—is outdated and is an unnecessary barrier to entering and completing traditional teacher preparation programs.

Virginia currently requires individuals to pass two tests to qualify for full teacher licensure

- Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA)
  - Virginia-specific test
  - Tests (i) reading comprehension and (ii) written communication
  - Passage often admission requirement for traditional prep programs

- Praxis subject assessments
  - Used nationally
  - Tests specific content knowledge*
  - Passage typically required before student teaching

*Individuals in some endorsement areas (e.g., elementary education, special education) are also required to take a Praxis teaching reading assessment that measures knowledge of reading instruction.
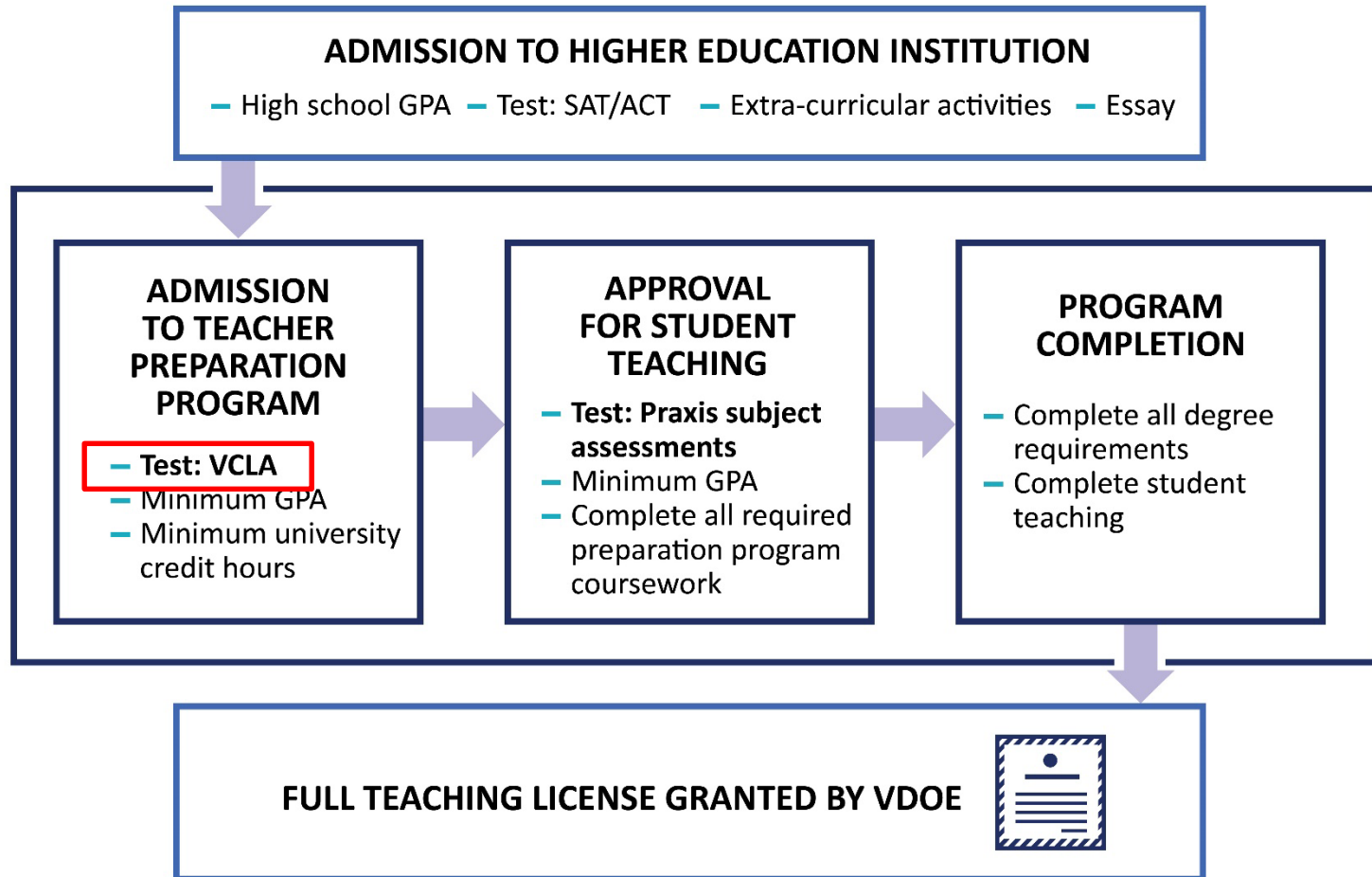
VCLA is outdated and includes irrelevant content for certain endorsement areas

- Virginia developed the VCLA in 2007, and it has not been changed since

  - Vendor has offered to update test at no cost to the state

- VCLA tests certain skills that are not essential for certain types of teachers, according to preparation staff

  - Example - copy editing for math or physical education teachers

Inability to pass the VCLA is a barrier for some individuals interested in traditional prep programs

- 86% of individuals eventually pass the VCLA; 14% do not (630 test takers annually, on average)

- 11 of Virginia's 14 public higher education teacher preparation programs cite difficulty passing required tests as a top barrier to enrollment or completion

Traditional preparation program participants must fulfill requirements other than VCLA passage

ADMISSION TO HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

– High school GPA – Test: SAT/ACT – Extra-curricular activities – Essay

ADMISSION TO TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM

– **Test: VCLA**
– Minimum GPA
– Minimum university credit hours

APPROVAL FOR STUDENT TEACHING

– **Test: Praxis subject assessments**
– Minimum GPA
– Complete all required preparation program coursework

PROGRAM COMPLETION

– Complete all degree requirements
– Complete student teaching

FULL TEACHING LICENSE GRANTED BY VDOE

Recommendation

Board of Education should either replace the VCLA with a relevant and nationally recognized test or remove it as a requirement for full licensure.

VCLA action may take time, necessitating a waiver similar to that granted to school divisions

- General Assembly (2019) granted division superintendents authority to recommend full licensure without passing required assessments

- Waiver has helped some divisions fill vacancies

- Waiver only for divisions creates another disincentive to use traditional preparation programs

  - Some individuals who do not pass VCLA skip traditional programs to work in divisions with provisional license

  - Individuals who leave traditional preparation programs to work in divisions miss out on student teaching

Recommendation

Amend statute to create a waiver for higher education preparation programs to recommend qualified individuals who have not passed the VCLA (but meet remaining criteria) to be granted a full license.

Finding

Cost of completing traditional higher education preparation programs is a substantial barrier to program participation and completion for some students.

# New teachers and higher education administrators cite cost as a barrier

- Nearly 75% of new teachers who attended traditional teacher preparation programs cited cost as a "moderate" or "significant" barrier

- 10 of 14 higher education teacher preparation programs cited "financial concerns" as a top reason why candidates do not enter or complete programs

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Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program (VTSLP) helps offset tuition & fees for some individuals

- VTSLP requires recipients to teach > 2 years in critical shortage area or economically disadvantaged school*

- Appropriated $708,000 annually and provides aid to ~75 individuals per year
  - Estimated 10% of individuals with need based on Pell grant eligibility

- Institutions report substantial unmet demand with current funding level

*More than half of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

North Carolina and Maryland have similar, but larger, scholarship programs for future teachers
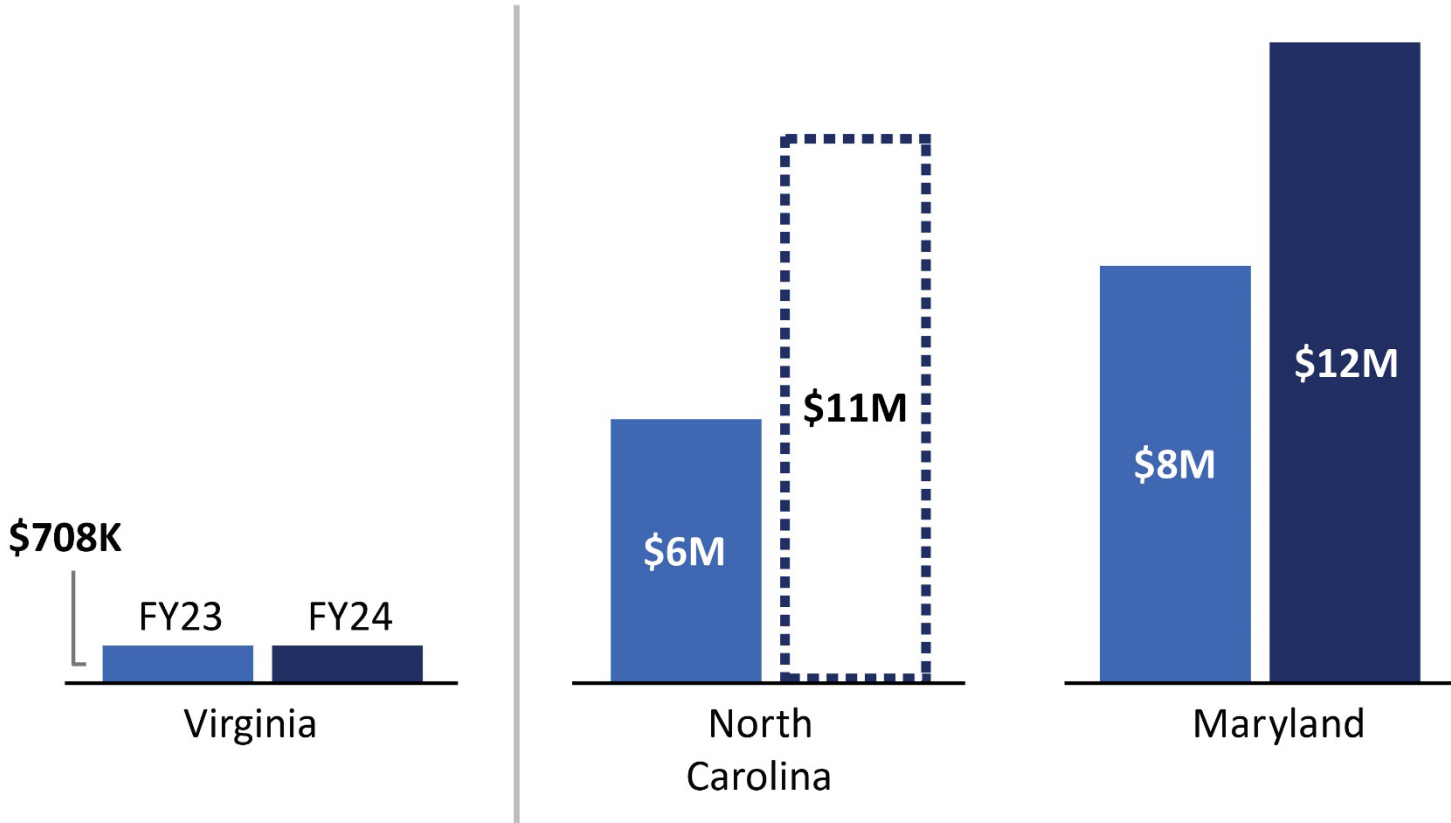
Notes: ~$1M of NC's FY23 funding was used for program administration. NC's FY24 funding amount is proposed.

Recommendation

Provide additional funding for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.

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In 2020, JLARC found multiple problems with state's teacher licensure process

- *Operations and Performance of VDOE,* October 2020
  - Application process was still paper based, requiring materials and a check to be mailed to VDOE
  - Divisions expressed concern about licensure process taking too long

- General Assembly appropriated funding to modernize and improve process

Finding

Licensure process has continued to be lengthy and frustrating for some applicants, but VDOE plans to implement new system in fall 2023.

After multiple problems, VDOE indicates it is ready to implement new licensure system
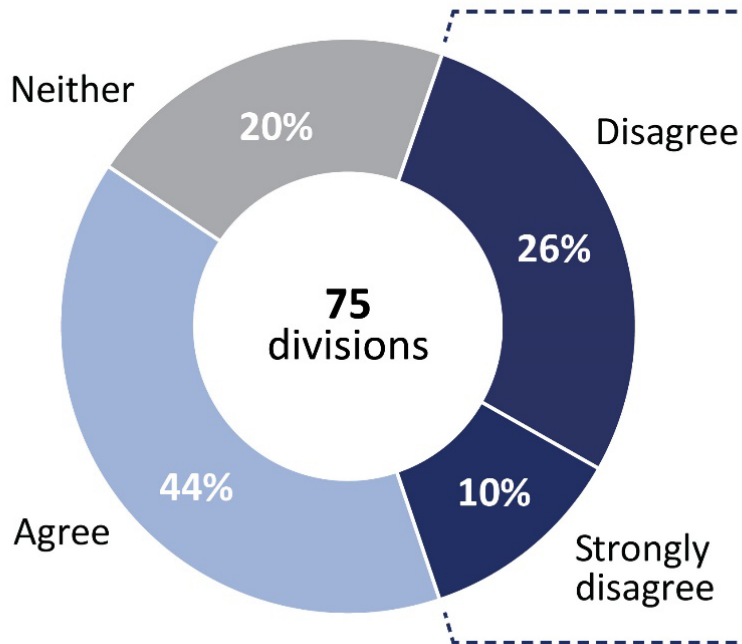
- First attempt that began in 2021 to improve licensure system was unsuccessful

- VDOE selected a new IT vendor in early 2023

- VDOE licensure office has experienced turnover

- As of late August 2023, VDOE indicates
  - On track to launch new licensure system in October 2023
  - Licensure backlog addressed (partially by automatically extending renewable licenses expiring June 30, 2023)
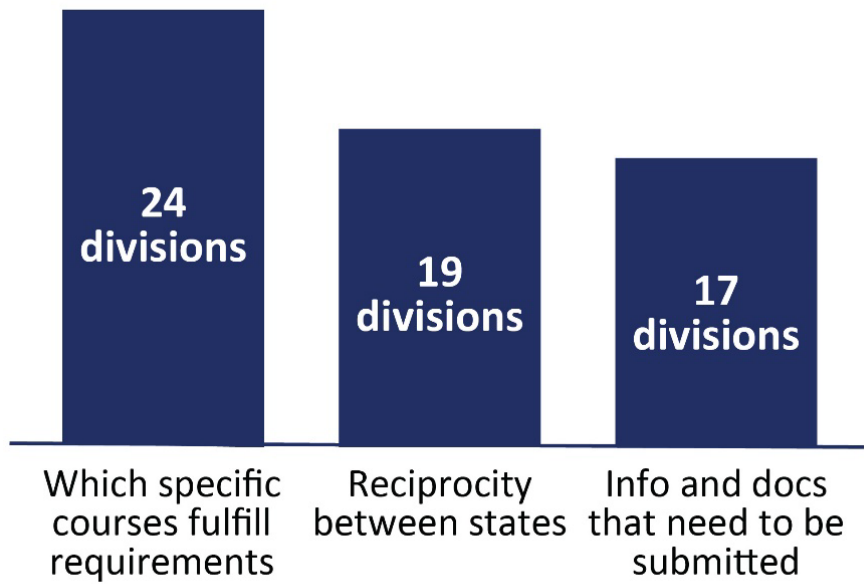
Finding

Some divisions and licensure applicants believe licensure requirements are unclear.

Some divisions indicate several aspects of licensure need to be clarified

The steps and requirements necessary to obtain a teacher's license are clearly defined and explained by VDOE.

Aspects of licensure process that need to be clarified

Neither 20%

Disagree 26%

75 divisions

Agree 44%

Strongly disagree 10%

24 divisions — Which specific courses fulfill requirements

19 divisions — Reciprocity between states

17 divisions — Info and docs that need to be submitted

VDOE does not make information publicly available about courses and license transfer

- No information for provisionally licensed teachers about specific courses that fulfill licensure requirements

- No information for teachers in other states about whether their license will transfer to Virginia

  - Requires out-of-state teachers interested in teaching in Virginia to compile and submit a full application to learn whether their teaching license will transfer

Recommendations

VDOE should:

(i) work with Virginia higher education institutions to identify and publish specific courses that fulfill licensure requirements

(ii) identify and publish specific license types and endorsement areas in other, selected states that qualify for a Virginia license through reciprocity

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Finding

State has limited ability to evaluate teacher pipeline because of lack of useful information about employment and performance of teachers, by preparation pathway and program.

State cannot effectively determine best way to improve pipeline without necessary data

- Which programs produce well-prepared teachers who perform well in classroom?

- Which pathways are

  - productive and should be expanded?

  - problematic and need to be improved or discontinued?

- Tennessee, Delaware, Florida, and Colorado collect and report information to help answer these questions

Recommendations

General Assembly should:

(i)   Direct and allocate funding for VDOE to share key teacher outcomes with Virginia preparation programs

(ii) Direct VDOE to report biennially on the preparedness and tenure of teachers—in aggregate—by pathway and program, and recommend improvements

JLARC staff for this report

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