

**Virginia Preschool Initiative Subgroup
December 8, 2014 10am Meeting Agenda**

Lt Governor's Conference Room, Oliver Hill Building, 102 Governor Street, Richmond;
Via conference call 866-842-5779 with pass code 4399398107

- I. Welcome and Introductions

- II. VPI Overview from the Department of Education - Cheryl Strobel and Christine Harris

- III. Discussion of Survey Results and Subgroup Priorities

- IV. Planning for January Meeting

Next Meeting: January 8, 2015 at 2pm



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Overview for CCCS School Readiness Workgroup-
Subgroup on Virginia Preschool Initiative**

VIRGINIA PRESCHOOL INITIATIVE

December 8, 2014

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

□ PURPOSE OF THE VIRGINIA PRESCHOOL INITIATIVE

- The purpose of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) is to provide quality preschool programs for at-risk four-year-olds who are unserved by Head Start programs.

□ LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

- The 1993 *Acts of Assembly*, Chapter 994, Item 126, required the Board of Education, the Department of Education, and the Virginia Council on Child Day Care and Early Childhood Programs to conduct a study of current early childhood programs provided for at-risk children in Virginia. The results of the study were presented to the Chairmen of the Senate Finance and House Appropriations Committees on November 1, 1993.
- In 1994, the Legislative Commission on Equity in Public Education recommended the establishment of state-funded, quality preschool programs for unserved at-risk four-year-olds. Research culminating from this legislative study defined the criteria for quality programs.
- The 1995 General Assembly appropriated \$9.3 million for the At-Risk Four-Year-Old Program (Virginia Preschool Initiative) to begin in FY 1996. The passage of the Omnibus Education Act (HB 2542) and the *Appropriation Act* reinforced all components of the 1994 package, and determined a need for an initiative for at-risk four-year-olds. The legislative intent of the initiative was designed to establish a quality preschool education program for at-risk four-year-olds.
- Funding for the Virginia Preschool Initiative gradually increased as the program grew to support more at-risk children. By FY 2006, 100 percent of eligible at-risk four-year-olds were included in the funding formula.
- The 2006 General Assembly added new language to the *Appropriation Act* that authorized the Virginia Department of Education to use unexpended balances of Virginia Preschool Initiative state funding each year to provide grants to qualifying divisions/localities for one-time

expenses, other than capital, related to the start-up or expansion of their Virginia Preschool Initiative programs.

- The 2006 General Assembly funded an increase in the per pupil rate from \$5,400 to \$5,700, effective in FY 2007.
- The 2008 General Assembly funded an increase in the per pupil rate from \$5,700 to \$6,000 in FY 2009 and capped the local match requirement at 0.5, effective in FY 2010.
- For the 2012-2014 budget, the number of unserved at-risk four-year-olds in each locality for FY 2013 and FY 2014 is based on the projected number of kindergarten students updated once each biennium. For FY 2013 and FY 2014 only, as a hold harmless provision, the number of slots funded in each school division is the higher of 1) the calculated slots based on projected kindergarten enrollments or 2) the lesser of either the calculated slots using projections of four-year-olds from the Virginia Employment Commission or the actual number of slots utilized in FY 2012. The proposed number of slots and funding for FY 2013 and FY 2014 exceed slots and funding provided in FY 2012.
- For FY 2015 and beyond, the number of unserved at-risk four-year-olds in each division will be based on the projected number of kindergarten students. The division level free lunch eligibility percentage will be used as the at-risk criterion in the funding formula.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

□ APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- The *Appropriation Act* requires the chief administrator (city manager or county administrator), in conjunction with the school division superintendent, to identify a lead agency within the division/locality as part of the VPI grant application for funds on or before June 15 each year.
- Divisions/localities must coordinate resources and funding streams to serve the greatest number of four-year-old children. They must demonstrate the coordination of comprehensive service providers, including schools, child-care providers, local social services agencies, Head Start, local health departments and other groups.

- Programs may be operated by public schools or community-based organizations. These entities may subcontract for services from other providers. State funds are paid directly to school divisions or local governments, which have responsibility for the programs.
- All applicants must:
 - Demonstrate willingness to provide a quality preschool education program that conforms to the guidelines and criteria;
 - 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;
 - Develop selection criteria based on the community's definition of at-risk; and
 - Complete an application and submit it to the Virginia Department of Education by June 15 each year and complete a verification report by October 15 each year.

□ **PROGRAM COMPONENTS**

- Children are to receive a quality preschool education, which includes:
 - A curriculum aligned with Virginia's *Foundation Blocks for Early Learning* and designed to address the learning needs of young children;
 - A group size limit of 18 and a child/staff ratio of 9:1;
 - A minimum of half day for the entire school year;
 - Qualified staff; and
 - Assessment procedures.
- Parents are partners in the Virginia Preschool Initiative programs as evidenced by:
 - Their inclusion in program planning and program activities to the extent possible;
 - The planning for regular, frequent communication with individual parents and parents as a group; and
 - The availability of resource materials to them on topics such as parent-child relationships or child behavior.

- Health services for participating children required at the time of entry or during the program year include:
 - Full immunizations;
 - Vision, hearing, and dental screenings;
 - Complete physical health evaluations;
 - Periodic check-ups; and
 - Eyeglasses, hearing aids, or other assistive devices when necessary.
- Social services for the program year for families of participating children include the identification of services available from sources other than government sources that may be utilized to support families.
- Transportation services are provided for every child to and from the program and as required to receive necessary support services.

□ **RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Various resources are available to assist divisions/localities with program areas where assistance is necessary.

- Technical assistance and guidance are available to divisions by Department of Education staff as needed or requested.
- The University of Virginia, through the office of Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) at the Curry School of Education, continues to provide the PALS-PreK instrument. The screening tool provides information about students' need for additional assistance with literacy skills. The PALS office maintains a Web site at <http://pals.virginia.edu> to assist all preschool teachers in Virginia with instructional activities. The cost for PALS Online Score Entry and Reporting System was funded with nongeneral funds through 2010-2011 and became a local responsibility in 2011-2012. VPI state funds may be used for PALS-PreK.
- Data from the PALS-PreK consistently shows students participating in a VPI PreK classroom are well prepared, outperform their peers, and need less interventions when they enter Kindergarten in the fall.

- Virginia's *Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Comprehensive Standards for Four-Year-Olds* outline standards that establish a measurable range of skills and knowledge essential for four-year-olds to be successful in kindergarten. The standards assist early childhood educators in providing indicators for student success. These standards are in alignment with the Virginia Kindergarten Standards of Learning and the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening for Kindergarten (PALS-K) instrument. The *Foundation Blocks* were revised in 2007 to incorporate additional standards in the areas of physical/motor skills and personal/social skills. Music and the visual arts were added in 2013. The *Foundation Blocks* can be accessed on the Virginia Department of Education's Web site at:
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/foundationblocks.pdf
- Virginia's *Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool*, was updated to include music and visual arts in 2013. It serves as a valuable resource to assist curriculum specialists and practitioners in developing appropriate curricula and/or analyzing their current curricula in regard to alignment with Virginia's *Foundation Blocks for Early Learning*. It can be accessed on the Virginia Department of Education's Web site at:
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/preschool_rubric.pdf
- Virginia's *Quality Indicators for Responsive Teaching* was created in 2013. It is a new technical assistance tool that complements the preschool standards and the rubric. The purpose of the indicators is to help teachers and parents design environments, materials, and interactions that support children's learning. Each section correlates with Virginia's *Foundation Blocks for Early Learning*. It can be accessed on the Virginia Department of Education's Web site at:
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/preschool_quality_indicators.pdf
- In 2014 the Department of Education developed a Web site to support teachers and young English Language Learners. Instructional tools, reports, assessments, and standards information can be accessed on the Web site at:
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/esl/index.shtml

PARTICIPATION

□ STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Table 1 outlines the budgeted and actual participation histories of the Virginia Preschool Initiative since fiscal year 2006.

TABLE 1. Virginia Preschool Initiative Student Participation

Year	Calculated Number of VPI Slots in Formula ¹	Actual Number of VPI Slots Used	Percentage of VPI Slots Used	Total Actual State Share of VPI Cost (in millions) ²
FY 2006	17,042	11,343	66%	\$38.5
FY 2007	18,730	12,501	67%	\$46.2 ³
FY 2008	18,929	13,125	69%	\$48.3 ⁴
FY 2009	20,705	14,585 / 15,639 ⁵	70% / 75% ⁵	\$58.5 ⁵
FY 2010	21,072	14,944 / 15,901 ⁶	71% / 75% ⁶	\$63.1 ⁶
FY 2011	23,177	15,881 ⁷	69% ⁷	\$60.5 ⁷
FY 2012	23,443	16,618 ⁸	71% ⁸	\$62.9 ⁸
FY 2013	24,483	17,313 ⁹	71% ⁹	\$64.9 ⁹
FY 2014	24,629	18,021 ¹⁰	73% ¹⁰	\$67.4 ¹⁰
FY 2015	25,746	18,237 ¹¹	63% ¹¹	\$68.8 ¹¹

¹In FY 1996, the budgeted number of Virginia Preschool Initiative slots was prorated at 30 percent. From FY 1997 to FY 2004, the budgeted number of slots was prorated at 60 percent. For FY 2005, the budgeted number of Virginia Preschool Initiative slots was prorated at 90 percent. Beginning in FY 2006, all eligible unserved at-risk four-year-olds were included in the budget formula.

²The state share of payments to divisions/localities is based on the actual number of children being served as certified on the Virginia Preschool Initiative interim report that is due in October of each year. Total funding for each program is derived from the division/locality's composite index plus the required local matching funds.

³In FY 2007, the state share included \$1.35 million in undistributed Virginia Preschool Initiative funding that was used for start-up grants to school divisions not operating a Virginia Preschool Initiative program in FY 2007 but wishing to operate in FY 2008, or for expansion grants to divisions wishing to expand their Virginia Preschool Initiative program in FY 2008.

⁴In FY 2008, the state share included \$1.75 million in undistributed Virginia Preschool Initiative funding that was used for start-up or expansion grants. This funding does not include the \$1.7 million appropriated in FY 2008 for the Preschool Pilot grants summarized later in this document.

⁵In FY 2009, the state share included \$4.1 million in undistributed Virginia Preschool Initiative funding that was used for one-time expansion grants to serve additional at-risk four-year-olds in divisions that met one of three criteria: 1) needed additional slots/funds to hold them harmless for their FY 2008 share; 2) needed additional slots/funds to serve a minimum of nine students as a base classroom; and/or 3) needed additional slots/funds to serve additional at-risk students with preschool services if they were already receiving their full allocation.

⁶In FY 2010, the state share included \$4.1 million in undistributed Virginia Preschool Initiative funding that was used for one-time expansion grants to serve additional at-risk four-year-olds in divisions that met one of three criteria: 1) needed additional slots/funds to hold them harmless for their FY 2008 share; 2) needed additional slots/funds to serve a minimum of nine students as a base classroom; and/or 3) needed additional slots/funds to serve additional at-risk students with preschool services if they were already receiving their full allocation.

⁷ In FY2011, no funds were used for expansion grants.
⁸ In FY2012, no funds were used for expansion grants.
⁹ In FY2013, no funds were used for expansion grants.
¹⁰ In FY2014, no funds were used for expansion grants.
¹¹ In FY2015, no funds were used for expansion grants.

□ DIVISION PARTICIPATION

- For the 2014-2015 school year 121 of 132 eligible divisions participated. Three of the 135 divisions are not eligible for funding under the formula.
- Of the 121 divisions participating in VPI:
 - 56 divisions (46 percent of those participating) use 100 percent of their slot allocation.
 - 25 divisions (21 percent of participating divisions) use 76-99 percent of their slot allocation.
 - 24 divisions (20 percent of participating divisions) use 50-75 percent of their slot allocation.
 - 16 divisions (13 percent of participating divisions) use less than half of their slot allocation.
 - The self reported wait list is 3,844.

TABLE 2. Virginia Preschool Initiative Division Participation¹

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Number of divisions/localities in the Commonwealth	136	136	136	136	136	135	135
Number of divisions/localities eligible for funding	124	125	127	127	131	131	132
Number of participating divisions/localities	112	112	113	114	119	119	121
Number of eligible, nonparticipating divisions/localities	12	13	14	13	12	12	11
Number of divisions/localities not eligible	12	11	9	9	5	4	3
Number of eligible children	20,705	21,072	23,177	23,443	24,483	24,629	25,746
Number of eligible children served	14,585	14,944	15,881	16,618	17,313	18,021	18,237

¹This table does not include participation of divisions receiving one-time funds through the FY 2009 and FY 2010 redistribution of unallocated funds.

- Forty-six percent of divisions/localities use their full allocation. Some divisions use only a partial amount. Many divisions from each of these categories report wait lists. A few divisions choose not to participate.
- Eleven divisions/localities are eligible, but not participating in VPI.
- Thirteen divisions/localities have 100 or more unused slots.
- Reasons for partial use of allocation or nonparticipation include:
 - Divisions/localities express difficulty or inability to meet the required local match;
 - Divisions/localities have insufficient space to house additional preschool classrooms in school facilities; and/or
 - In some divisions/localities there are a minimal number of students eligible for the program by state allocation formula, resulting in a program that may not be cost effective.
- For fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014 only, the number of slots funded in each school division is the higher of 1) the calculated slots based on projected kindergarten enrollment or 2) the lesser of either the calculated slots using projections of four-year-olds from the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) or the actual number of utilized slots in fiscal year 2012. Beginning with fiscal year 2015, the number of funded slots will be based only on projected kindergarten enrollment in lieu of VEC projected number of four-year-olds. The number of children being served by Head Start is subtracted from this number to determine the number of Virginia Preschool Initiative student slots to be funded after application of the division free lunch percentage. In some divisions/localities the resulting number is zero; therefore, the division/locality is not eligible to participate.
- The three divisions/localities that are not eligible for VPI funding are serving as many or more students through Head Start than are estimated for services through the state's VPI funding formula. Eligibility for Head Start is family income at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level, with some allowance for serving at-risk children in families above that income range.

What are the 3 most pressing changes you believe need to be made to VPI?

- Increase Participation* (8)
 - Rural (1)
 - Low Income (1)
 - 3 year olds (1)
 - Bring Head Start to the table w/ enrollment to better serve all kids (1)
 - Create financial incentives to increase participation (2)
 - Adjust the formula to reflect a growth a model (1)

- Better Utilize the Funding Currently Allocated* (7)
 - In localities that don't draw down any funding (1)
 - Reallocate to those localities who want to expand (3)
 - Use funding for one-time capital outlays (1)
 - Reallocate/ increase flexibility for those with wait lists (1)

- Increase Per Pupil Funding* (4)
 - To include real cost of starting up a classroom (2)
 - To reflect regional cost variances (1)

- Local Match* (1)
 - Decrease cash match requirement (1)

- Other* (5)
 - Increase community understanding of benefits of PreK (1)
 - Increase community understanding of rigorous monitoring (1)
 - High quality and developmentally appropriate programs (1)
 - Technical assistance to school divisions regarding models of service delivery (private – partnerships) and how to initiate or expand services (2)