

Early Childhood State of the State

Summer 2023
July 26, 2023



OBJECTIVES AND AGENDA

Objectives: As a result of this presentation, participants will:

- 1) Review key 2022-2023 accomplishments for early childhood in Virginia
- 2) Learn more about what's ahead for 2023-2024

Agenda:

- Virginia's Shared Challenges and Vision for the Future
- Key Accomplishments and What's Ahead
 - Access and Choice
 - Quality Improvement
 - Family Engagement
 - Health and Safety
 - Regional Capacity and Innovation
- Next Steps and Questions

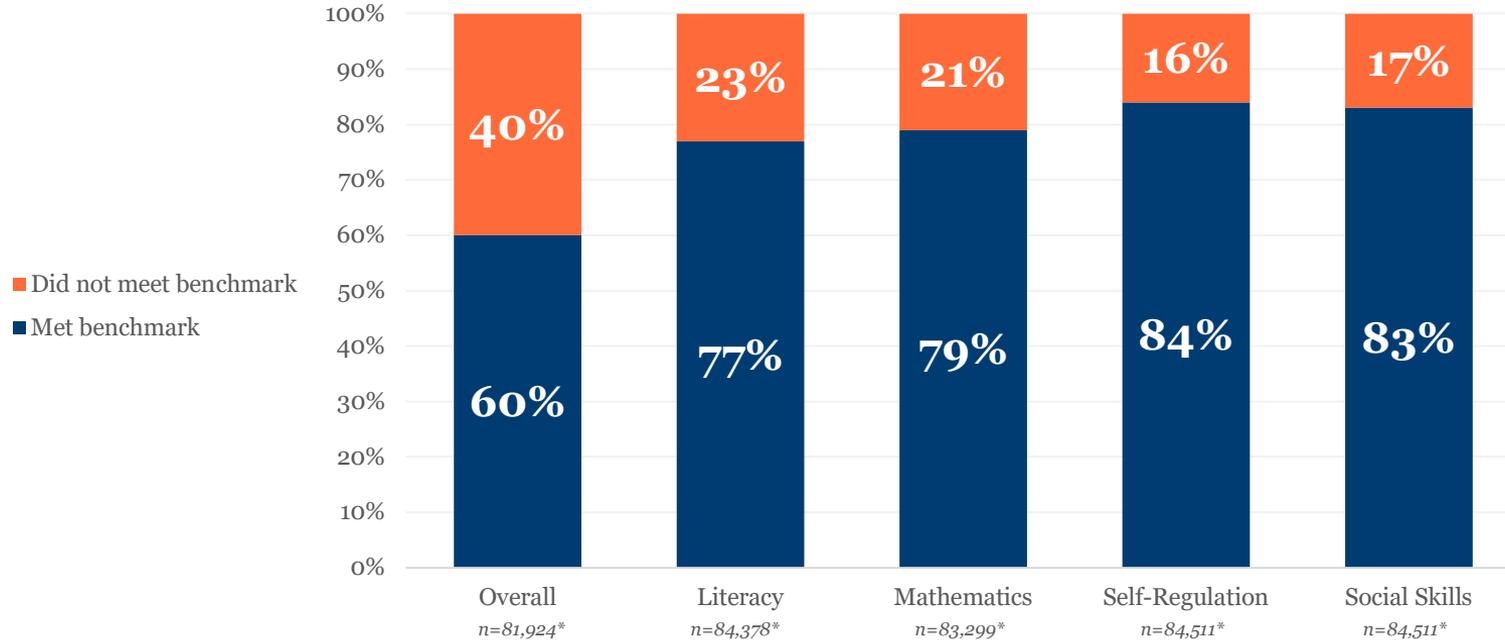
Shared Challenges

SCHOOL READINESS IN VIRGINIA



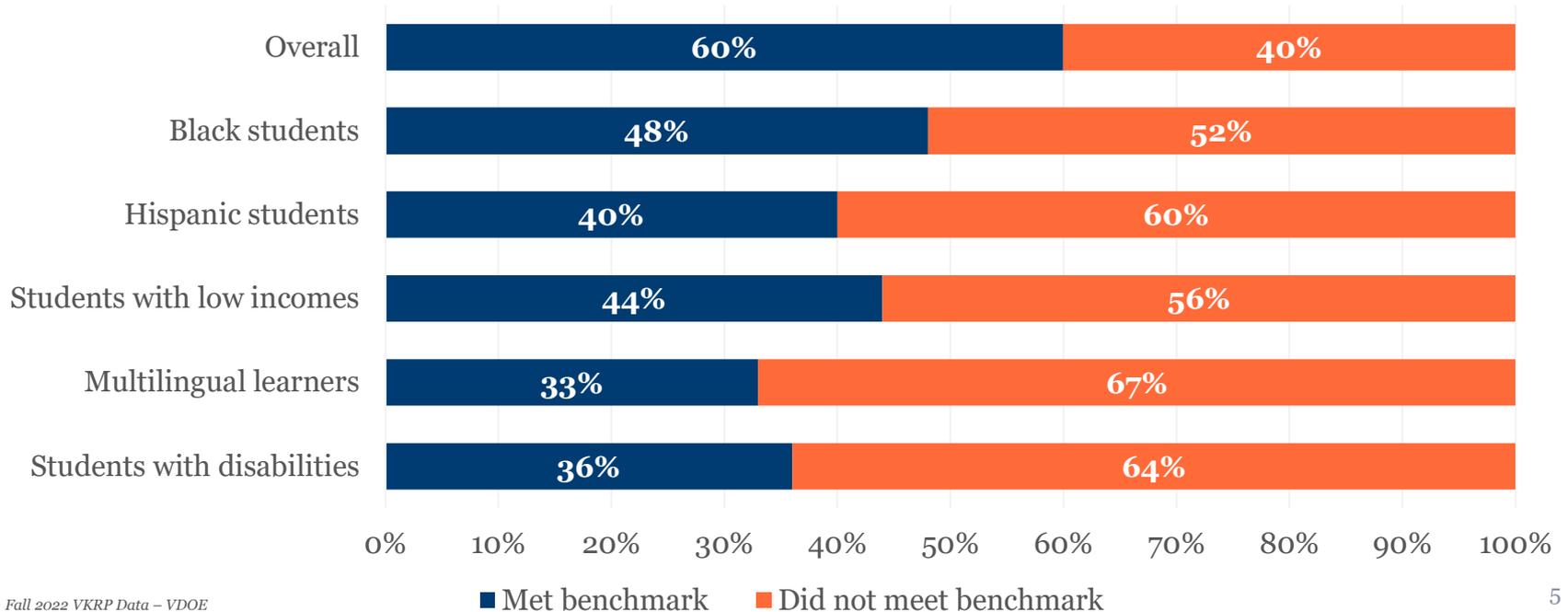
40%

of Virginia's kindergarteners began the 2022-2023 school year still needing to build skills in Literacy, Mathematics, Self-Regulation, and/or Social Skills.*



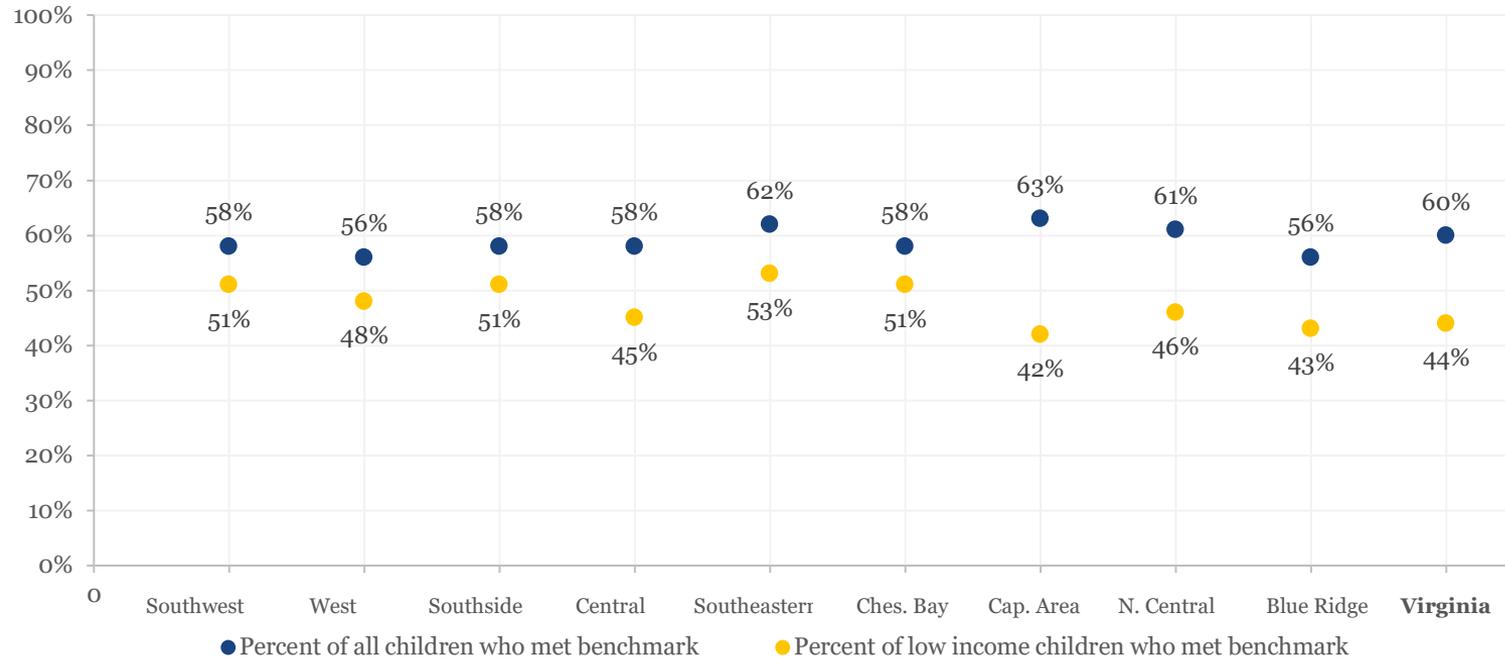
PERSISTENT DISPARITIES IN READINESS

Students who have historically faced barriers are less likely to enter kindergarten with the skills needed to succeed.



REGIONAL VARIATIONS IN READINESS

Students from low-income families are less likely to enter kindergarten ready in every region of Virginia.



DEMONSTRATED IMPACT IN VIRGINIA

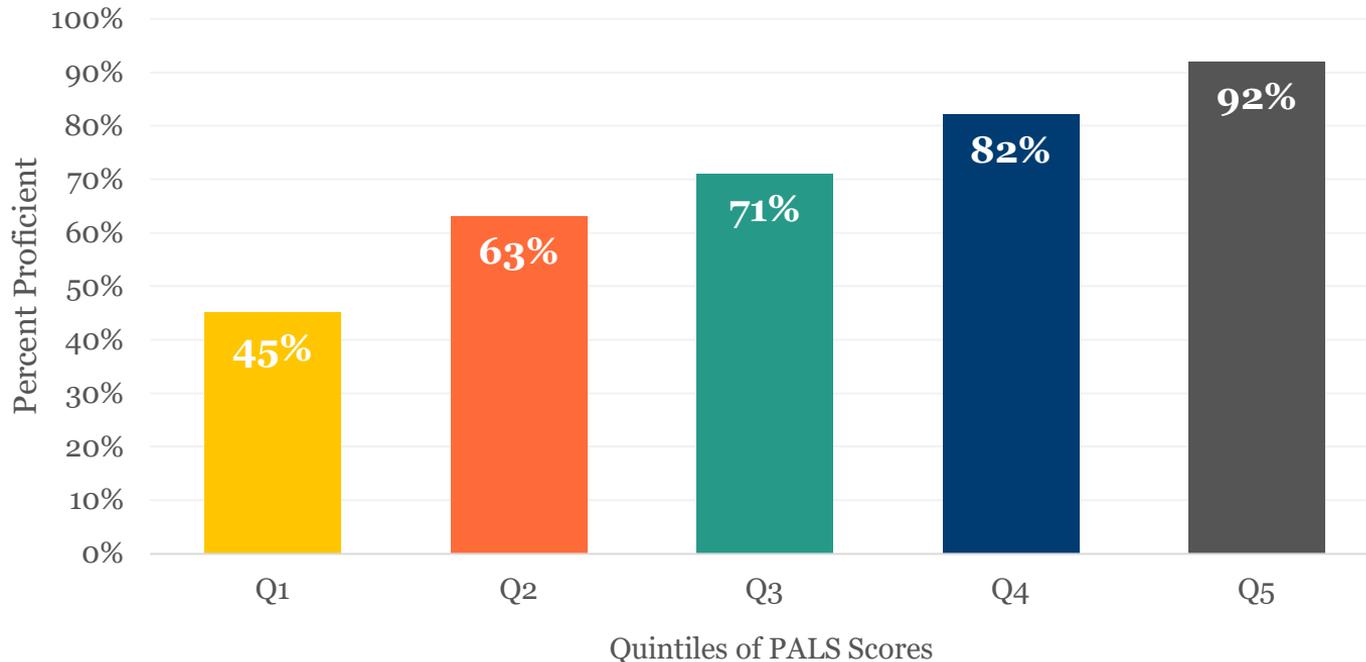
Preschool can have a significant impact on school readiness for Virginia students from low-income backgrounds. Research shows this pattern holds true for different public and private early childhood experiences.



Only about **3** out of **10** students from low-income background with no preschool experience enter school ready.

LINKING READINESS TO 3RD GRADE READING

Virginia children who enter kindergarten ready are more likely to read on level in 3rd grade.



Source: Probability of Proficiency on Third-Grade SOL by Kindergarten PALS Quintile (All Children) – Bassok, Herring, McGinty, Miller, & Wycoff, 2019

Shared Vision for the Future

OUR SHARED VISION

We envision a Virginia where *all* children have the opportunity to enter school ready.

- All families have affordable access to and support to choose the option that meets their unique needs.
- All early childhood programs that take public funds benefit from measurement and supports for improvement, ensuring quality choices are available for all families.
- Programs are rewarded for continual improvement and educators are adequately compensated.
- Overall Virginia's early childhood system is unified, data-driven, and resource-effective so families can work, go to school, or pursue employment and children have every opportunity to be successful.



GOALS OF THE UNIFIED SYSTEM

ACCESS & CHOICE

Expand access to public and private early care and education, and ensure all families have quality choices.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Improve child outcomes by supporting continuous improvement of teacher-child interactions and use of curriculum.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Increase the capacity of providers to support families to foster children's development, learning, and well-being.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Partner with providers to keep all children in care healthy and safe.

REGIONAL CAPACITY & INNOVATION

Establish regional structure to coordinate across settings, address unique community needs, and ensure opportunity for all children.

COMPETITIVE EDUCATOR COMPENSATION IS ESSENTIAL TO EACH AREA

Access and Choice

Accomplishments and Next Steps

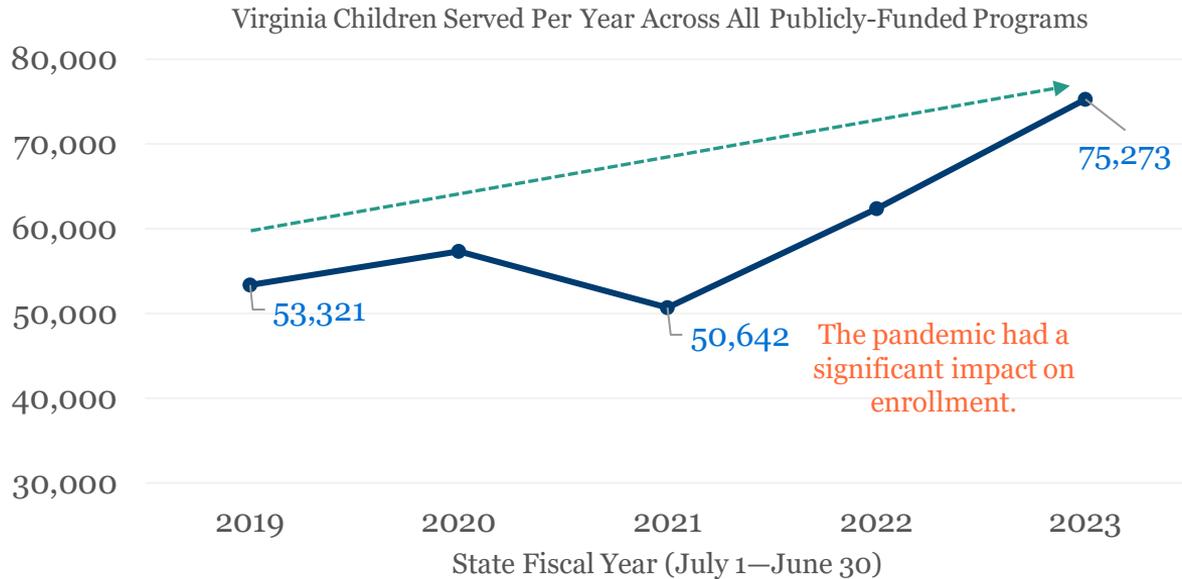
CONTINUED GROWTH IN FAMILY DEMAND

During 2022-2023, Virginia's early childhood programs served over 60,000 children in response to growing family demand.

- More than 2,000 children benefited from Mixed Delivery this year, a 40% increase from the prior year.
- More than 21,000 children benefited from VPI this year, including 905 in community provider settings.
- Demand for CCSP continues to steadily increase, with enrollment growing from ~32,700 in July 2022 to over 39,000 in May 2023.
- All partners worked with Head Start to ensure that Virginia maximizes all federal resources, helping to offer access to comprehensive two-generation services for our most vulnerable families.

MORE CHOICES FOR MORE FAMILIES

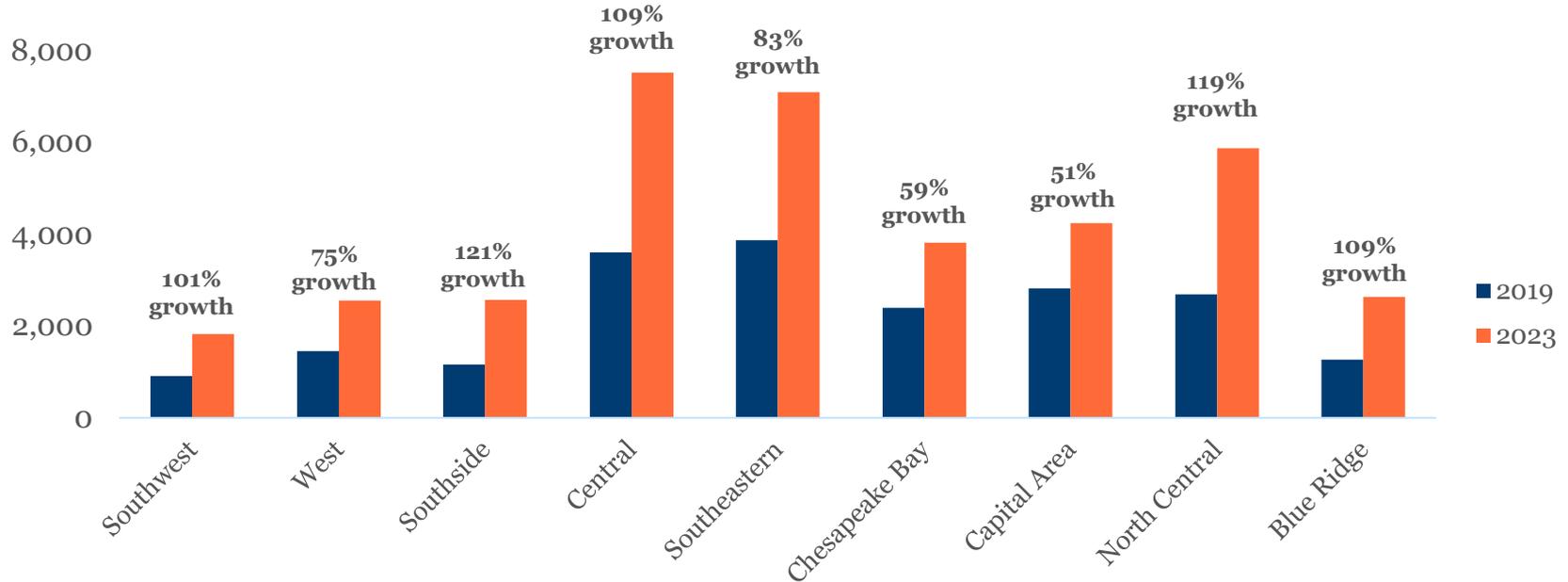
More families are seeking to participate in Virginia's publicly-funded early childhood system.



41%
INCREASE
in enrollment
compared to
pre-pandemic

GROWTH IN DEMAND EVERYWHERE

Children served in Mixed Delivery and the Child Care Subsidy Program increased in every region between 2019 and 2023, ranging from 51% in Capital Area to 119% in North Central.



ACCESS FOR UNDERSERVED FAMILIES

As Virginia continues to respond to family demand for ECCE, publicly-funded programs are reaching more children in historically underserved age groups and communities since 2019.



3,819

3-year-olds received publicly-funded preschool through VPI

Note: 3-year-olds were not served in VPI until FY 2021.



62%

more infants and toddlers participated in Early Head Start, Mixed Delivery, and Child Care Subsidy



51%

more children participating in publicly-funded programs in rural communities*

**as identified by the Office of Rural Health Policy through the 2010 Census*

FUNDING TO MEET QUALITY EXPECTATIONS

Virginia is now the third state in the nation to set payment rates for publicly-funded providers on estimated costs, rather than the prevailing market rate.

- Under the direction of the General Assembly, VDOE has shifted to cost-based payment methodologies for publicly-funded ECCE providers.
- Rates based on cost estimates are intended to support programs to meet quality expectations in VQB5, including competitive compensation for educators.
- Cost-based payment rates went into effect for providers in the CCSP in October 2022.
 - Family day homes in the CCSP will receive another payment rate increase in August 2023.
 - Effective August 2023, VDOE will also introduce a 2-year-old rate in the CCSP to align with licensing ratio and group sizes.
- Beginning in FY24, per-pupil costs in VPI will be included in the biennial rebenchmarking process and reflect the actual costs, including actual costs for community provider add-ons.

REDUCING COST BURDENS FOR FAMILIES

In January 2023, VDOE and VDSS rolled out a new copayment scale for families in the CCSP.

- Copayments are now an easy-to-understand flat per-child fee, up to 3 children.
 - Copayments are waived for all families at or below the federal poverty guidelines.
 - Copayments are capped at 7% of income for all families, regardless of the number of children in care.
- The new scale has fewer step increases, so families can earn additional income without immediately owing more to their provider.
- This resulted in the vast majority of families experiencing a significant decrease in copayment amounts.

GROWING COORDINATED ENROLLMENT

Communities continue to coordinate enrollment across publicly-funded programs, making it easier for families to find the right choice for them.

- Ready Regions have integrated Coordinated Enrollment strategies, including a self-assessment and coordinated enrollment plan, into their annual regional strategy.
- 100% of Ready Regions participate in Coordinated Enrollment activities, covering every locality in Virginia through the state's regional ECCE infrastructure.
- Virginia is piloting a Coordinated Enrollment technology system in 3 Regions, hoping to learn and apply lessons statewide.



WHAT'S NEXT FOR ACCESS AND CHOICE?

- **Expand Birth-to-Five Enrollment:** Continue to increase the number of children participating in each publicly-funded program, with a focus on children and communities that are historically underserved despite high demand:
 - *~2,500 children will benefit from Mixed Delivery, including up to 400 infants and toddlers.*
 - *Up to 27,000 children will benefit from VPI with 1,770 slots in community settings.*
 - *Up to 45,000 children will benefit from the Child Care Subsidy Program.*
- **Evaluate Impact of Cost-Based Payment Rates:** Research-to-policy partners at UVA will conduct a provider survey in fall 2023 to understand the extent to which increased payment rates are driving compensation increases for educators and helping programs address staffing challenges.
- **Identify Opportunities to Further Reduce Cost Burdens for Families:** VDOE will work with state and federal partners to determine strategies for further reducing cost burdens for families with low incomes and those with minimal care needs through CCSP.
- **Learn from the Work of the Ready Regions and Elevate Best Practices:** VDOE and VECF will continue working with Ready Regions lead agencies to strengthen Coordinated Enrollment efforts at the Regional and State level for the benefit of families and providers alike.

Quality Improvement

Accomplishments and Next Steps

VQB5: UNIFIED MEASUREMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

In response to state law, the Virginia Board of Education has established a unified measurement and improvement system (VQB5), for all publicly-funded birth-to-five early childhood programs.

- The VDOE piloted and then scaled VQB5, working with multiple stakeholders and communities to develop the new system.
- VQB5 included two Practice Years, which included participation from over 70% of publicly funded programs across the state.
- In the fall 2023, all publicly-funded birth-to-five programs, will be required to participate in VQB5, with the first quality ratings published in fall of 2024.
- This will include ~3,600 schools, child care, and family day home programs with ~12,000 "classrooms."

The 2023-2024 VQB5 Guidelines received a full endorsement from the Early Childhood Advisory Committee and were approved by the Board of Education on June 15, 2023.

UPDATE ON VQB5 – PRACTICE YEAR 2

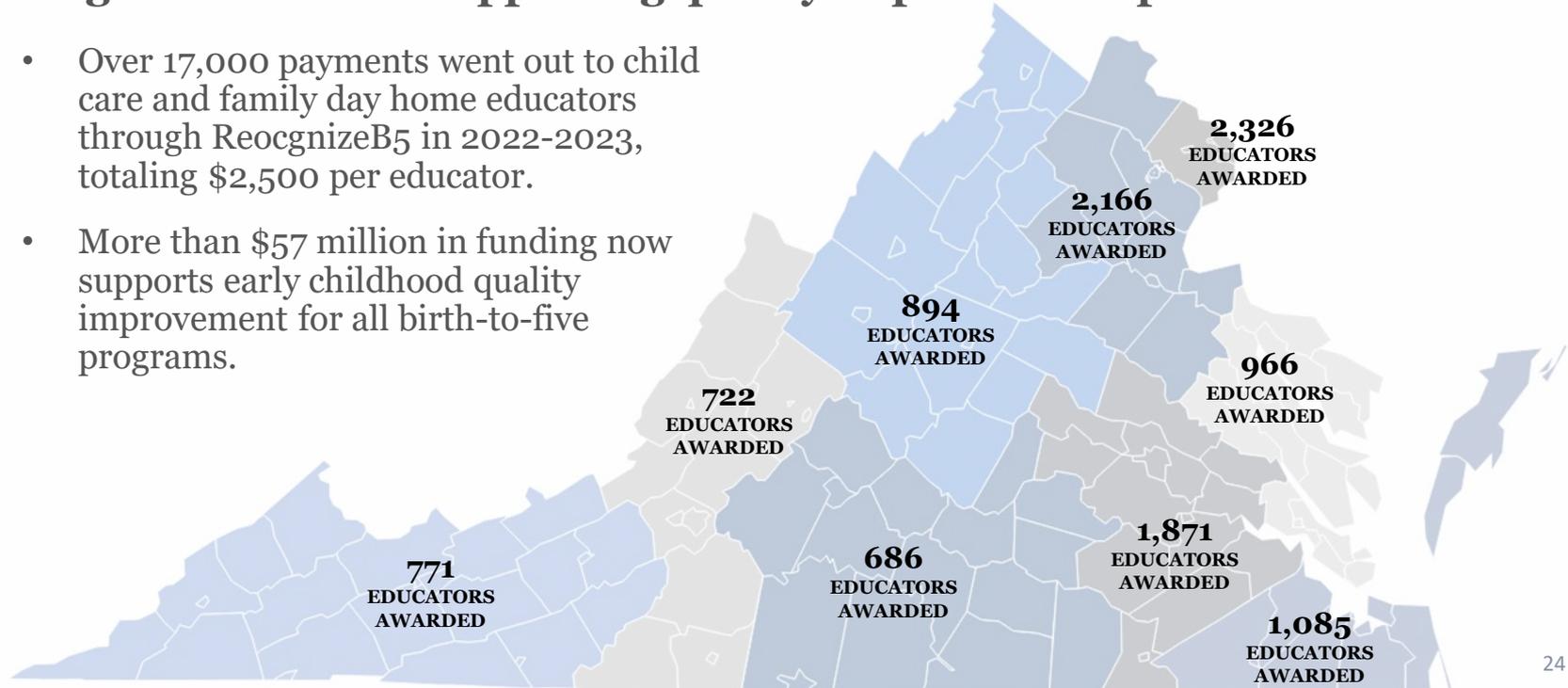
During 2022-2023, Virginia launched Practice Year 2 of VQB5, Virginia's new Unified Quality Measurement and Improvement System.

- Over 70% of all publicly-funded programs participated in Practice Year 2 of VQB5, with over 8,000 classrooms receiving feedback on their practice multiple times this year.
- More than 20,000 users, including over 16,000 educators, have entered the LinkB5 system over the past four years, a critical component of supporting the VQB5 system.
- This year Virginia has completed ~19,500 CLASS observations, including 92% of participating classrooms this spring.
- More than 1,000 certified CLASS observers support these efforts, a 500% increase in observers from 2019.

MORE FUNDING FOR EDUCATORS

Financial investment in RecognizeB5 increased in 2022-2023, as did Virginia's focus on supporting quality improvement partners.

- Over 17,000 payments went out to child care and family day home educators through ReocgnizeB5 in 2022-2023, totaling \$2,500 per educator.
- More than \$57 million in funding now supports early childhood quality improvement for all birth-to-five programs.



SUPPORTING CLASSROOM LEARNING

Virginia has expanded the number of curriculum options, including an open-access option, and increased educators understanding of child learning and progress.

- Over [58 quality curricula](#) options have been reviewed and approved for birth-to-five programs, including STREAMin3.
 - [STREAMin3](#) is 1 of 3 free or low-cost options, with 2,000 classrooms receiving materials, comprehensive training, and coaching.
 - 18 infant and toddler, and 3 Family Day Home curricula added in FY23.
- Mixed Delivery, VPI, and select Head Start partners completed [VKRP screenings](#) for 3 and 4 year old learners, supporting efforts to individualize instruction and engage families.
- The [Early Learning Development Standards](#) Micro-credential was made available in English and Spanish with 87.9% of completers reporting "some, great, or transformative impact on their classroom practice."
- More than 130 early childhood educators and families participated in Virginia's Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Pilot Year 2.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT?

- **Statewide Participation in VQB5:** Beginning in Fall of 2023, every publicly-funded provider serving children ages birth to five must participate in VQB5.
- **Continued Expansion of RecognizeB5:** Many more educators will be eligible for the retention incentive with full implementation of VQB5, which increases to \$3,000 per eligible educator in the 2023-2024 program year.
- **Refinement of VKRP and VLP Instructional Supports:** VKRP is available for 3 and 4-year-old classrooms and is launching a mid-year pilot in FY24. The revised Preschool Language and Literacy Screener will provide more instructionally useful information and align to elementary grades to better track children's progress over time.
- **Continue to Strengthen Quality Supports:** Programs participating in VQB5 will be prioritized for coaching and training, facilitating the cycle of improvement.
 - *The VDOE will continue to support over \$57 million of investments.*
 - *Virginia will continue to pilot in-person and virtual mental health consultation services to teachers and families by referral and in response to VQB5 data.*

Family Engagement

Accomplishments and Next Steps

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AS A PRIORITY

VDOE continues to work with state and regional partners to maximize parent and family engagement in the B-5 system.

- Family Engagement remains a priority work area for Ready Regions.
 - Ready Regions work with Start Early and other partners annually to review their current family engagement plans and identify new goals, emphasizing system-building strategies.
- Family Councils are now shaping the work of Ready Regions in every region of the state.
- VDOE leveraged federal Preschool Development Grant funding to award *Family Engagement Innovation Grants* in two Ready Regions: FirstSpark/Ready Region Chesapeake Bay and Thrive Birth to 5/Ready Region Central

LEARNING FROM FAMILY EXPERIENCES

Virginia has now completed a birth-to-five family survey for three years and is developing new approaches to engaging families in their children's learning experiences.

- More than 13,000 survey responses have informed state and community leaders about what families need, as well as challenges experienced by families furthest from resources.
- Relationships through Mixed Delivery and PDG B-5 have amplified family voices at the community and state level.
- VKRP is engaging groups of families in 3-part focus groups to inform improvements to screening reports and instructional resources and strengthen the home school connection to improve school readiness.
- Parent voices have been prioritized as part of the [Virginia Promise Partnership](#) Parent Advisory group as grassroots advocates.



WHAT'S NEXT FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT?

- **Continued Opportunities to Engage and Listen:** Ready Regions will continue to focus on family engagement with dedicated funding, staff, and structures. VDOE and state partners will continue to directly engage families through surveys, regional roundtables, focus groups, and listening-feedback sessions.
- **Elevating Family Voice:** through the expansion of Family Councils, Ready Regions are ensuring family voice is informing early childhood systems decisions.
- **Expanding the Reach of ECCE Family Surveys:** Efforts in 2023-2024 will focus on families who are not currently connected to Virginia's B-5 system to further inform efforts to reach families who need care.
- **Increasing Family Tools and Resources:** VDOE is developing a family-friendly ECCE web portal to promote families' access to information about the health, safety, and quality of ECCE programs. [VKRP](#) and the [ECE Resource Hub](#) continue to expand family facing resources to support school readiness.

Health and Safety

Accomplishments and Next Steps

HEALTH AND SAFETY—PROVIDER SUPPORTS

The Office of Child Care Health and Safety continues its efforts to support child care providers while ensuring the health and safety of children.

- Two regulations, *General Procedures and Information for Licensure*, and *Background Checks for Child Day Programs and Family Day Systems*, were revised and merged to better align the regulations with statutory requirements. The draft is currently pending approval to be posted for Public Comment.
- The provider portal was updated to be more user friendly and allow providers to submit renewal applications for licensure, registration, and exemptions; requests for modifications; and updated documents.
- Updated and released Prelicensure Phase I training for family day homes to aid prospective applicants in understanding the application process and requirements.

HEALTH AND SAFETY—PROVIDER SUPPORTS (CONTINUED)

The Office of Child Care Health and Safety continues its efforts to support child care providers while ensuring the health and safety of children.

- Applications for licensure were updated to streamline information collected.
- The Department's child care website was redesigned to include intuitive, modern navigation systems that allow for easy access to information and resources on dozens of topics directly from the homepages and from every page.
- The regulation sets for home-based programs and the Virginia Preservice Training for Child Care Staff were made available in Spanish to support bilingual and multilingual providers.
- VDOE secured funding to cover the cost of fingerprint based criminal background checks through June 2024, while providers continue to recover from the pandemic.

REVISING REGULATIONS FOR LICENSED CHILD DAY CENTERS

The VDOE established a temporary workgroup in December 2021 to inform the revision of regulations for licensed child day centers.

- It was charged with (i) completing a comprehensive review of the regulations, and (ii) producing recommendations for review by the Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC).
- Membership represented multiple types of center-based program leaders, health and safety experts, and other key stakeholders and spent a year reviewing the standards.
- The workgroup had to balance multiple, sometimes competing, priorities:
 - Ensuring alignment with state and federal law;
 - Protecting the health, safety, and well-being of children;
 - Considering the cost and operational impact of regulations;
 - Considering input from other state entities (e.g., Department of Health, Recreation and Park Society, and Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services); and
 - Reducing any burdensome requirements.

REVISING REGULATIONS FOR LICENSED CHILD DAY CENTERS (CONTINUED)

Recent and upcoming milestones for the Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers include:

- On April 27, 2023, the VDOE received ECAC's endorsement of the Notice of Intended Regulatory Action (NOIRA) and an initial draft of the revised standards.
- On June 15, 2023, the VDOE received the Board of Education's (Board) approval to move the NOIRA forward in the regulatory process.
- The next step is to post the NOIRA to Town Hall and the Executive review process will begin.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY?

- **Making Proposed Revisions to Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers Available for Public Comment:** The NOIRA will become available for a 30-day public comment period after approval by the Governor. Once the public comment period is complete, VDOE will request a first review of the draft regulation by the Board.
- **Establishing Protocol and Training Regarding Undesignated Epinephrine:** VDOE is collaborating with VDH to establish protocols, trainings, and resources for providers in response to the recently passed [legislation](#) that amended and reenacted § 22.1-289.059 of the Code regarding undesignated epinephrine in regulated child day programs.
- **Expanding Online Systems:** VDOE will continue to explore ways to enhance the provider portal's functionality and to update the licensing system used for health and safety inspections for efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Strengthening Training, Support, and Partnership:** Virginia will continue to revise and improve training and supports for providers as well as deepening partnerships with providers across the state.

Regional Capacity and Innovation

Accomplishments and Next Steps

READY REGIONS FOR VIRGINIA

Ready Regions are providing VQB5 coordination, accountability, and family engagement for early childhood programs in every corner of the state, **including supporting programs with the completion of the required VQB5 activities.**



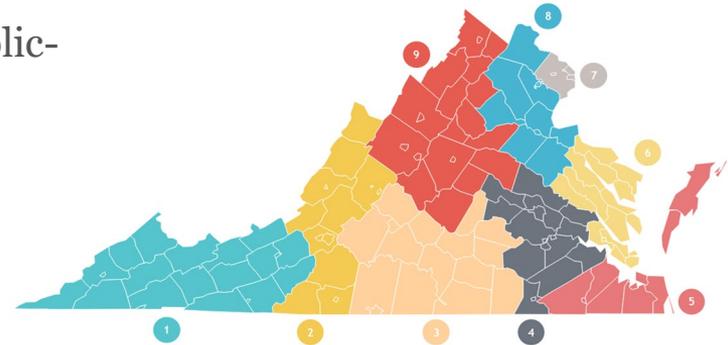
Visit the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation website to learn more about [Ready Regions](#).

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLACE

Ready Regions are established and provide VQB5 coordination, accountability, and family engagement statewide.

Since their launch in July 2022, Ready Regions, which are administered by VECF, have:

- Recruited and engaged 2,600+ sites
- Established regional structures, staffing teams, and public-private partnerships
- Completed ~25,000 local CLASS observations
- Supported more than 22,800 users to use LinkB5
- Hired staff to lead family engagement and coordinated enrollment efforts
- Established family councils in every region
- Collaborated with partners to align professional development and prioritize supports for sites that need support the most



[Ready Regions Website](#)

INNOVATION HIGHLIGHTS

Virginia is innovating at all levels of our early childhood system.

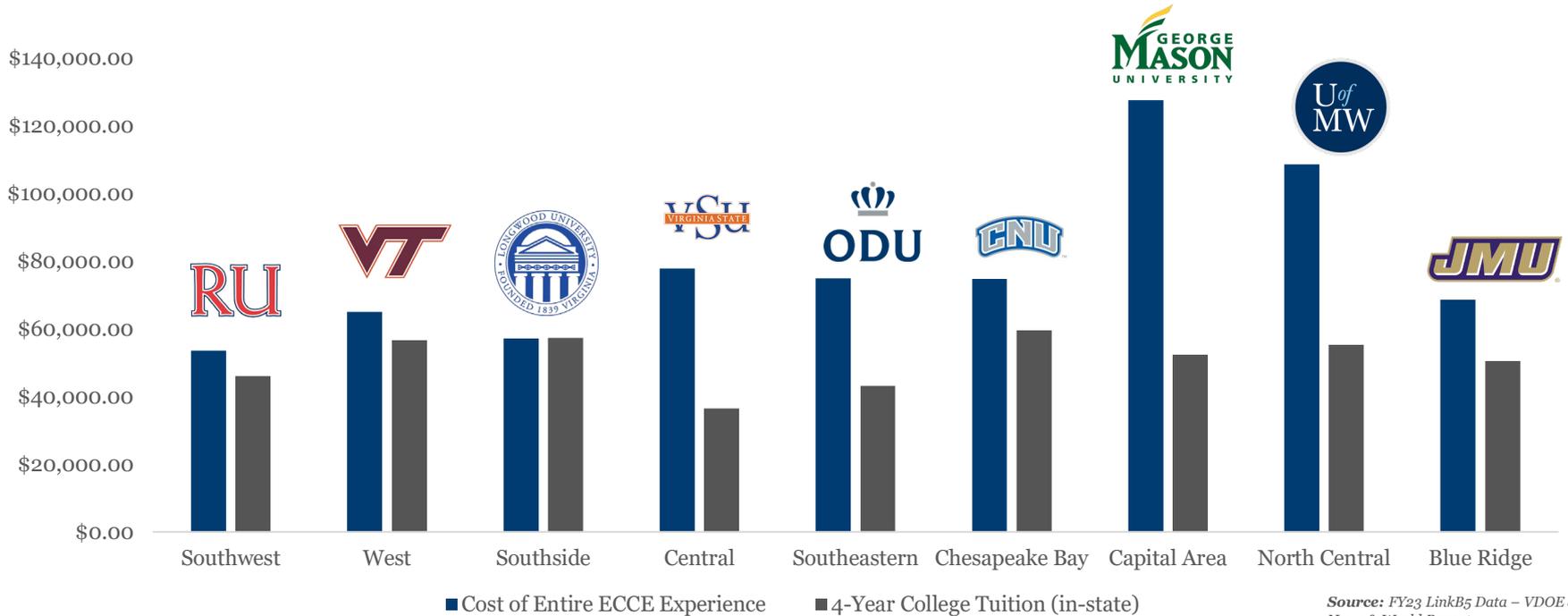
- Through LinkB5 and other new technology efforts, Virginia is building a more robust data infrastructure that will enable the linking of information in new and innovative ways.
- State and regional partners are leading the way by:
 - Piloting the **Early Educator Fast Track Initiative** to create a pipeline of qualified, well-compensated early educators and ultimately build the supply of child care.
 - Testing new communication strategies within and across regions, and deepening partnerships with local and regional leaders.
 - Convening child care business leaders to inform ongoing policy efforts to increase compensation.
- With research-to-policy partners, Virginia is taking advantage of opportunities to collect, analyze, and present data on our birth-to-five public-private system in new and different ways.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR REGIONAL CAPACITY AND INNOVATION?

- **Increased Use of Data to Support Innovation:** With support from PDG, LinkB5 will continue to evolve and will be used statewide while other systems (e.g., enrollment, licensing) will also be enhanced and built out. Virginia will share more data and data resources than ever before with key stakeholders, including Virginia's Ready Regions.
- **Empower Regional Leaders to Use Data Effectively:** VDOE and key partners are developing tools and resources to support regional leaders' use of regional data to inform strategic decisions, develop partnerships, and target resources.
- **Pilot Navigator Position at VDOE:** VDOE is bringing on two new team members to support ECCE leaders to become and remain publicly-funded and build the supply of publicly-funded slots in two regions: Ready Region Southwest and Ready Region Central.
- **Launch the Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education:** The Commission is comprised of Virginia legislators and representatives of business and key ECCE stakeholders and is charged with providing recommendations to increase access to—and develop strategies to finance—Virginia's public-private ECCE system.

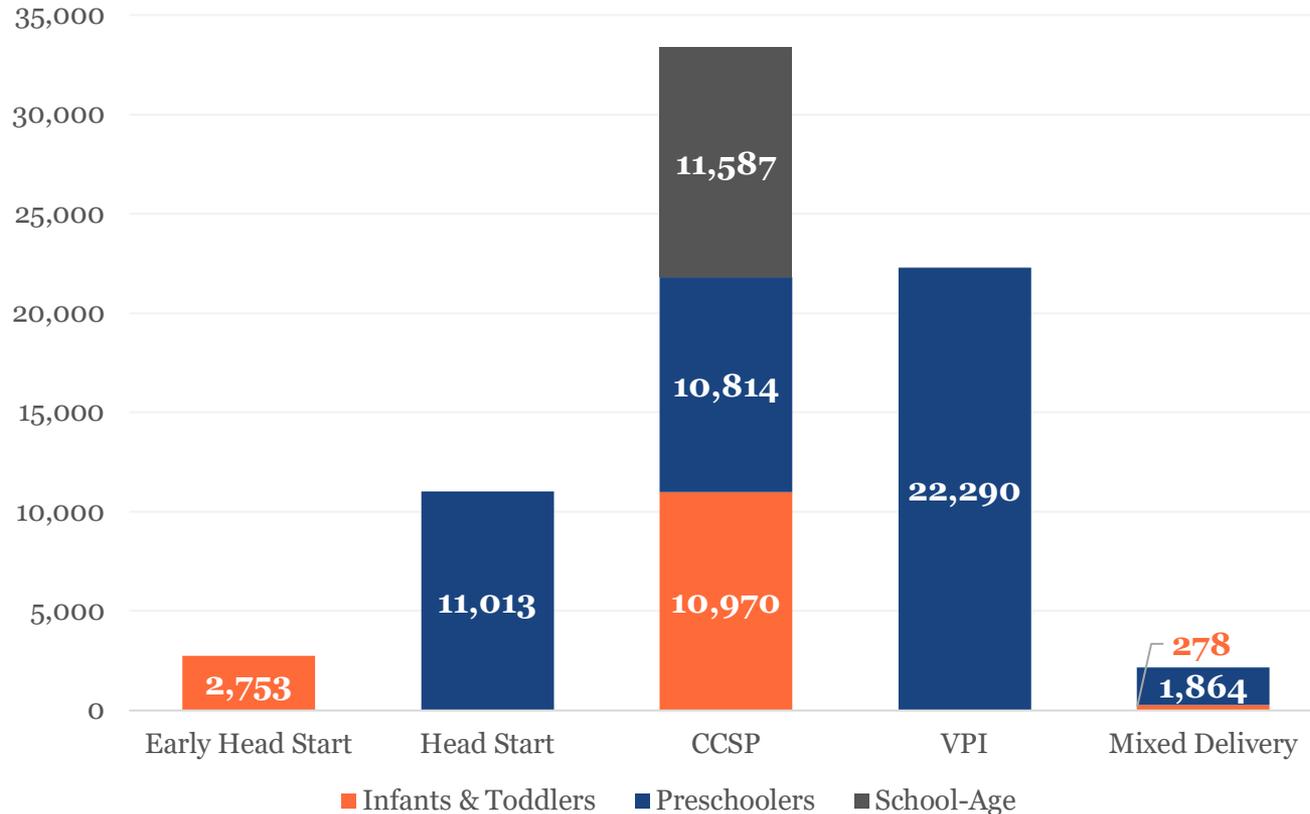
AS EXPENSIVE AS HIGHER EDUCATION

In nearly every region, it costs more to send one child to child care than to earn a bachelor's degree from a local public university.



Source: FY23 LinkB5 Data – VDOE & US News & World Report

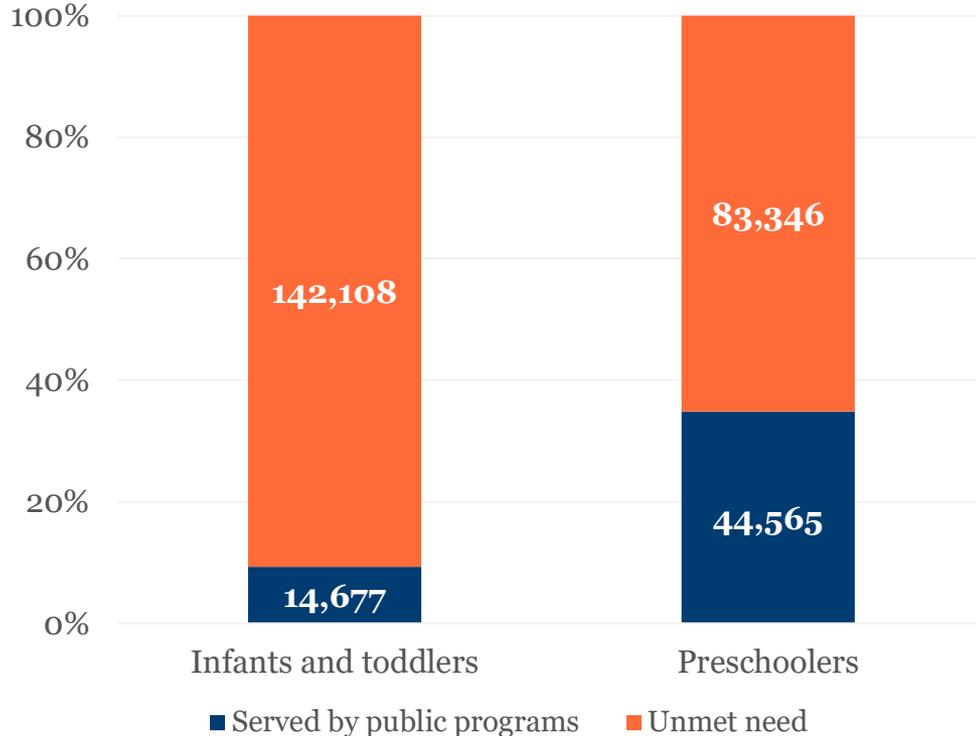
MOST PUBLIC FUNDS SUPPORT PRESCHOOL



Which children do publicly-funded early childhood slots support?

- **20%** support infants and toddlers (ages birth–3)
- **64%** support preschoolers (ages 3-5)
- **16%** support school-age children (kindergarten entry through age 12)

UNMET NEED IN ECCE



- Approximately half of eligible preschoolers in Virginia lack access to publicly-funded early childhood education.
 - Most are 3 year-olds.
- Unmet need is greatest among the youngest Virginians, with more than 90 percent of eligible infants and toddlers lacking access to ECCE.

AVAILABILITY LIMITS CHOICE

For every child served in a publicly-funded birth-to-five slot...



... three potentially-eligible children
lack access.

Next Steps and Questions

WAYS TO STAY ENGAGED IN 2023-2024

- 1. Sign Up for [Readiness Connections Updates](#):** Weekly updates are shared with over 12,000 subscribers, including child care centers, family day homes, Head Start, and public schools.
- 2. Get Connected to your [Ready Region](#):** Ready Regions are the key regional source for information, updates, and opportunities to get involved. Ready Regions will be the local implementation leaders for the upcoming 2023-2024 program year of VQB5.
- 3. Participate in [VQB5 Year 1](#):** Registration for VQB5 2023-2024 will take place from August 15-October 1, and is required for all publicly-funded programs. Programs that do not receive any public funding have the option to participate. Throughout the year, programs will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the new VQB5 Quality Profiles which will be shared publicly in the fall of 2024.
 - *VQB5 Registration will take place through [Ready Regions](#).*

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION







Earlychildhood@doe.virginia.gov

VQB5 REQUIREMENTS

The 2023-2024 VQB5 Guidelines received a full endorsement from the Early Childhood Advisory Committee and were approved by the Board of Education on June 15, 2023.

- Guidelines Resources on the VQB5 Website:
 - VQB5 2023-2024 Participation Requirements 1-Pager ([English/Spanish](#))
 - VQB5 2023-2024 Participation Requirements FAQ ([English/Spanish](#))
 - Overview of the 2023-2024 VQB5 Guidelines - Part 1: [Webinar Recording](#) (1 hour)
 - Overview of the 2023-2024 VQB5 Guidelines - Part 2: [Webinar Recording](#) (1 hour)
 - Spring Improvement Partner Webinar – May 31, 2023: [Webinar Recording](#) (1 hour)

READY REGIONS LEAD AGENCIES

Southwest	United Way of Southwest Virginia
West	United Way of Roanoke Valley
Southside	Center for Early Success
Central	Thrive Birth to Five
Southeastern	Minus 9 to 5, Eastern Virginia Medical School
Chesapeake Bay	FirstSpark (formerly Smart Beginnings Virginia Peninsula)
Capital Area	Fairfax County Office for Children
North Central	Foundation First (formerly Smart Beginnings Rappahannock Area)
Blue Ridge	United Way of Greater Charlottesville

**See [Ready Regions Contact List](#) for County/City Breakdown and contact information