# Title: Strengthening Quality in Early Childhood Classrooms: Update on

# Practice Year 1

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## Summary of the Topic:

## The first five years of a child’s life are incredibly important for the developing brain. Many critical language, social/emotional and early cognition skills are formed during these early years and they lay the foundation for future success. Numerous studies show that children who enter school ready, with key early academic and social-emotional skills, are well poised to succeed in school and beyond. With many young children spending time in early childhood care and education outside of the home, much essential early learning takes place in child care, family day homes, Head Start or Early Head Start programs, and public schools. To maximize their potential, all of Virginia's young children need the opportunity to access early childhood experiences in public and private settings that support them to grow, learn and thrive.

Supporting continuous quality improvement in early childhood programs of all types, including public schools, Head Start/Early Head Start, child care and family day homes, is essential to improving the short and long-term outcomes for Virginia’s youngest learners. The most important aspects of quality in early childhood education are stimulating and supportive interactions between educators and children and effective use of curricula.

In response to recent state law to improve school readiness outcomes, Virginia is building a uniform quality measurement and improvement system that focuses on measurable indicators of teaching and learning. This system will:

* Focus on the measures that promote positive child outcomes;
* Empower educators with frequent, specific and individualized feedback;
* Provide improvement pathways that are accessible to all programs so that all educators have opportunity to strengthen their practice and support their children to thrive; and
* Empower and meaningfully engage parents and families in the co-creation of a system that fundamentally seeks to meet the unique needs of their children and families.
* Reward programs for continual improvement and ensure that educators are adequately compensated.

The *Code of Virginia* (§ 22.1-289.03) directed the Virginia Board of Education (Board) to establish a unified quality rating and improvement system for all publicly funded birth-to-five providers as of July 1, 2021. In June 2021, the Board fulfilled this expectation by approving the [Guidelines for Practice Year 1 of VQB5](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/build-unified-early-childhood-system/boe-guidelines-ec-unified-system-final.docx) of the Unified Measurement and Improvement System, which has since been formally named VQB5. The *Code* further requires that this system will expand over time, with [all publicly-funded providers required](https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/build-unified-early-childhood-system/ec-quality-req-faq-21.docx) to participate in VQB5 starting in the fall of 2023. VQB5 is using nationally-recognized quality measurements of Interactions and Curriculum in VQB5 Practice Year 1 to address the goals stated above. During Practice Year 2, the VDOE proposes the continued use of these measures to support quality and inform improvement.

This presentation will provide an overview on the importance of school readiness and quality early education as well as a progress update on the VQB5 Practice Year 1. This presentation will provide the Board with the opportunity to review and discuss key background information and relevant data prior to taking action on the forthcoming proposal for VQB5 Practice Year 2.

## Timetable for Follow-up or Next Steps:

A first review of Guidelines for Practice Year 2 of the Early Childhood Unified Measurement and Improvement System (VQB5) will be conducted during the Board’s Business Meeting on April 21, 2022.