



# VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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# AGENDA ITEM

**Agenda Item:** K

**Date:** April 21, 2022

**Title:** First Review of *Guidelines for Practice Year 2 of the Early Childhood Unified Measurement and Improvement System (VQB5)*

**Presenter:** Ms. Jenna Conway, Deputy Superintendent, Division of Early Childhood Care and Education

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**Purpose of Presentation:**  
Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

**Executive Summary:**  
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 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 to participate in VQB5 starting in the fall of 2023.

VQB5 is currently being implemented through two practice years which provide every publicly-funded birth-to-five program (school-based preschool, Head Start/Early Head Start, and child care subsidy participating child care and family day home) the opportunity to practice being measured before results are shared publicly. 2021-2022 marked the first Practice Year (Practice Year 1) of VQB5 with Practice Year 2 set to take place from 2022-2023.

VQB5 used two nationally recognized quality standard measurements for Practice Year 1 of VQB5. During Practice Year 2, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) proposes the continued use of Interactions and Curriculum to measure quality and inform improvement.

- **Interactions** - This standard measures the quality of teacher-child interactions and instruction in a developmentally-appropriate way, as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). All children benefit socially and academically

from being in classrooms with high quality teacher-child interactions, including children from diverse settings, dual language learners (DLLs) and children with special needs.<sup>1</sup>

- **Curriculum** - This standard measures the use of a comprehensive curriculum in alignment with Virginia’s early learning and development standards to ensure that all areas of learning and development are being covered in developmentally appropriate ways. This standard will also help ensure that early childhood programs have curricula that provide guidance on how to individualize instruction based on needs, including children with disabilities, suspected delays, or other special needs.

Over half of all of Virginia’s 3,142 publicly-funded programs opted to participate in Practice Year 1. In Practice Year 2, the VDOE hopes to engage 100% of publicly-funded birth-to-five programs, including up to 9,100 classrooms, in this final opportunity for practice.

Based on extensive stakeholder engagement and feedback, Practice Year 1 data analysis and other strategic analysis, the VDOE proposes a set of enhancements for Practice Year 2 of VQB5 to scale the system and ensure consistency of implementation.

The VDOE received a full endorsement from the Early Childhood Advisory Committee for the proposed Practice Year 2 guidelines. The 22 member committee convened for a three hour discussion of the proposal on March 24, 2022.

This item supports Priority 1 of the Board’s Comprehensive Plan to provide high-quality learning environments for all students by providing a framework to measure and improve the quality of early learning experiences.

**Action Requested:**

Action will be requested at a future meeting. Specify anticipated date below:  
June 16, 2022

**Superintendent’s Recommendation:**

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends the Board of Education receive for first review the *Guidelines for Practice Year 2 of the Early Childhood Unified Measurement and Improvement System*.

**Previous Review or Action:**

No previous review or action.

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<sup>1</sup> Teachstone Training, LLC. (2020). *Research Validating CLASS® with Child Outcomes across Diverse Populations of Children*.

**Background Information and Statutory Authority:**

The Board is required to establish a uniform quality rating and improvement system by July 1, 2021. The system must result in ratings for the public no later than July 1, 2024. Section 22.1-289.05 of the *Code* states:

- A. The Board shall establish a uniform quality rating and improvement system designed to provide parents and families with information about the quality and availability of publicly funded providers. Such system shall include:
  - 1. Service provision and performance targets for children from birth to age five that align with standards for kindergarten readiness and early elementary grades;
  - 2. Consistent quality standards;
  - 3. Outcome-based measurements; and
  - 4. Incentives to encourage participation and improvement.
- B. All publicly funded providers shall be required to participate in the quality rating and improvement system established pursuant to subsection A. All other child day programs may participate in such system. Any participation in such system shall comply with all applicable federal laws and regulations, including the federal Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. § 9801 et seq.), as amended, and associated regulations.
- C. The Board shall establish consequences for publicly funded providers that fail to participate in the quality rating and improvement system established pursuant to subsection A or persistently fail to meet minimal quality standards.

This requirement is one component of the broader charge to the Board to strengthen the early childhood and education system by supporting the development of one unified public-private system for early childhood care and education that ensures that every child has the opportunity to enter kindergarten ready to learn.

This legislative directive is the result of years of collaborative, bipartisan efforts to strengthen Virginia’s early childhood system. Through joint efforts across the general assembly, stakeholders, and local and state leaders, Virginia has taken many steps to prepare in building a more unified early childhood system that is grounded in local early childhood networks.

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**

The *Guidelines for Practice Year 2 of the Early Childhood Unified Measurement and Improvement System* will be submitted to the Board for final review on June 16, 2022. Following Board approval, the *Guidelines* will be submitted to Town Hall for a 30-day public comment period, pursuant to the Administrative Process Act.

**Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:**

The VDOE's existing resources supported the development of the proposed guidelines. Any costs associated with the dissemination, training, or implementation related to the guidelines for Practice Year 2 will be supported through federal Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five funding, as has the costs incurred thus far. Additional funds from the American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds will support community coordination. Some State General Funds are projected to be used to support External Classroom Observations.



# Guidelines for Practice Year 2 of the Early Childhood Unified Measurement and Improvement System

Adopted on XXXX by the Board of Education

Daniel A. Gecker, President

Pamela Davis-Vaught

Franciso Durán

Anne B. Holton

Tammy Mann

Keisha Anderson

Superintendent of Public Instruction

Jillian Balow

VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

## PREFACE

The *Code of Virginia* (§ 22.1-289.03) directed the Virginia Board of Education 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 of Education fulfilled this expectation by approved the [Guidelines for Practice Year 1 of VQB5](#)<sup>1</sup> of the Unified Measurement and Improvement System, which has since been formally named VQB5. The Code of Virginia further requires that this system will expand over time, with [all publicly-funded providers required](#) to participate in VQB5 starting in the fall of 2023.<sup>2</sup>

VQB5 is currently being implemented through two practice years which provide every publicly-funded birth-to-five program (school-based preschool, Head Start/Early Head Start, and child care subsidy participating child care and family day home) the opportunity to practice being measured before results are shared publicly. 2021-2022 marked the first Practice Year (Practice Year 1) of VQB5 with Practice Year 2 set to take place from 2022-2023.

Over half of all of Virginia’s 3,142 publicly-funded programs opted to participate in Practice Year 1. In Practice Year 2, the VDOE hopes to engage 100% of publicly-funded birth-to-five programs in this final opportunity for practice. Based on the learned experiences from Practice Year 1, as well as extensive stakeholder engagement and feedback (see Section 3 and Appendix A) the VDOE has proposed a set of minor updates and enhancements for Practice Year 2 of VQB5

The following chart provides an overview of the key updates and proposed enhancements to the Guidelines for Practice Year 2 of the Early Childhood Unified Measurement and Improvement System (VQB5)

### OVERVIEW OF PRACTICE YEAR 2 UPDATES and PROPOSED ENHANCEMENTS

Section	Updated/New Content within this Document
<b>SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Updated with 2021 school readiness data</li><li>2. Updated with 2021-2022 development milestones for building a unified early childhood system</li></ol>
<b>SECTION 2: VIRGINIA’S UNIFIED MEASUREMENT</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Clarifications regarding participation requirements</li></ol>

<sup>1</sup> Guidelines for Practice Year 1 of the Early Childhood Measurement and Improvement System - <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/early-childhood/build-unified-early-childhood-system/boe-guidelines-ec-unified-system-final.docx>

<sup>2</sup> Code of Virginia (§ 22.1-289.03) - <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter14.1/section22.1-289.03/>

<b>AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM</b>	
<b>SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTING THE UNIFIED MEASUREMENT AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Updated VQB5 Timeline</li> <li>2. Updated information regarding the role of the Preschool Development Grant and Ready Regions</li> <li>3. Practice Year 1 Progress Update</li> </ol>
<b>SECTION 4: MEASURING THE QUALITY OF TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTIONS</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CLASS Observation Windows for 2022-2023</li> <li>2. Updates to Local Observer requirements and Ready Regions assurances</li> <li>3. Clarifications to Local CLASS Observation Protocols <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Length of Observations</li> <li>ii. Adults to Observe</li> <li>iii. Submitting Scores</li> <li>iv. Record Keeping</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Updates to Guidance for Ensuring Consistency of Observations</li> <li>5. Updated information about External Observations</li> </ol>
<b>SECTION 5: MEASURING USE OF QUALITY OF CURRICULUM</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Updates on Increasing Curriculum Access for All</li> <li>2. Updated information about the Curriculum Review Process</li> <li>3. Updated List of Approved Curriculum</li> </ol>
<b>SECTION 6: SETTING PROGRAM QUALITY MEASURES</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clarification to program/site definition</li> <li>2. Clarifications to Practice Year 2 rating eligibility</li> <li>3. Clarifications to Interaction Points calculation</li> <li>4. Information about the Development of a Site Quality Profile</li> <li>5. Information about the Development of an Appeals Process</li> </ol>
<b>SECTION 7: SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improvement Partner List updated with 2022-2023 information</li> <li>2. Progress Update on Activities to Support Improvement Partners</li> <li>3. Updates to Targeted Supports for Curriculum (Open Access Curriculum Support)</li> <li>4. Progress Update on ICP-CLASS Pilot</li> <li>5. Information about RecognizeB5 (Teacher Recognition Incentive)</li> <li>6. Updates to Investments in Improvement</li> </ol>
<b>APPENDIX</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appendix A: Practice Year 1 Data (2021-2022)</li> <li>2. Appendix B: Updated information about Virginia Quality Transition</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Appendix C: Updated information about Current Early Childhood Investments</li><li>4. Appendix D: Updated Early Childhood Overview with 2021 information</li></ol>
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# SECTION I - INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## WHY SCHOOL READINESS MATTERS

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.<sup>3</sup> 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.

Virginia’s current birth-to-five public-private system does *not* provide all children the early learning experiences they need to thrive. Recent data from the 2021 Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) shows that 42% of students entered kindergarten “not ready” in terms of demonstrating key school readiness skills. Kindergarten readiness results were especially concerning in the areas of literacy and math<sup>4</sup>. Equally concerning is the disproportionate percentage of Black and Hispanic children and English Learners who enter school without the opportunity to be ready in one or more critical school readiness areas. While it is well known that quality early childhood experiences prepare children for success, Virginia families and children lack equitable access to these opportunities. These results indicate a systemic problem with Virginia’s current early learning system, further illustrated by the following:

- Virginia ranks 33rd nationally in preschool funding and child care funding is at the 70th percentile of the market; over 66,000 vulnerable three- and four-year-olds lack access to quality, publicly-funded preschool, whether in a private or public setting.
- Prior to the 2021-2022 year, 75% of Virginia’s early childhood programs, including school based preschool, Head Start/Early Head Start and child care centers and family day homes that receive public funding did not participate in the state’s voluntary quality measurement system, meaning there was little information known about the experiences children are receiving in these sites.

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<sup>3</sup> Harvard University. (n.d.). *Center on the Developing Child*. Science of Early Childhood.

<sup>4</sup> Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program, University of Virginia. (2021). VKRP Fact Sheets.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to many young children missing out on learning and development opportunities. While preschool enrollment has recovered, some challenges remain. As of fall 2021, all schools and Head Start programs are now open for full-time in-person learning and more than 90% of Virginia’s child care programs have reopened. Early childhood enrollment in most settings has rebounded to at or above pre-pandemic levels. More families are also choosing public-private options such as Mixed Delivery and Child Care Subsidy. However, as noted earlier in VKRP fall 2021 results, young learners have experienced significant academic and social-emotional setbacks, especially in early literacy and math. Staffing challenges also continue to limit the availability of child care and ability of educators to fully respond to children’s greater needs. These realities mean that the need for supporting publicly funded educators and ensuring quality teaching and learning experiences are more important than ever.

High-quality early learning and care across public and private settings provides the support children need to build a foundation for school and future success. Yet quality early childhood experiences can be prohibitively expensive; the average cost of infant care, for example, is more than in-state tuition at most Virginia colleges. Public funds can help cover the cost but only 30% of eligible children in Virginia are served by publicly-funded early learning programs (Pre-K, Head Start, and Child Care Assistance), meaning many children from low-income families are without access to high-quality early childhood programs that could dramatically improve their opportunities for a better future.<sup>5</sup> This lack of opportunity has a significant impact. Extensive research has identified many short- and long-term benefits of early learning experiences, including:

- Early childhood education reduces the percentage of children repeating a grade by 15%.
- Early childhood education lowers the rate of special education placement by 10%.<sup>6</sup>
- Children participating in high-quality early childhood education had increased college graduation rates and increased rates of employment at age 30.<sup>7</sup>
- Those participating children are more likely to be employed and less likely to be dependent on government assistance.

These positive effects are larger, and more likely to be sustained, when programs are high quality. Research has further shown that the impact of quality early childhood is larger for children from low-income families. And these families want to choose quality for their children. With so much known about the power of quality early childhood, it is imperative that Virginia ensure all birth-to-five learners have access to early experiences in public and private settings that offer them opportunity to thrive.

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<sup>5</sup> First Five Years - (Why It Matters School Readiness)

<sup>6</sup> Karoly, L. A. (n.d.). *Informing Investments in Preschool Quality*. Research Reports.

<sup>7</sup> Heckman. (n.d.). *Research Summary: The Lifecycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program*. The Heckman Equation.

## MEASURING QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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.

Using nearly \$400 million in state and federal funding annually, Virginia offers a diverse set of early childhood care and education programs in public and private settings to provide early care and learning to at-risk children ages birth to five. However, despite this investment, Virginia has limited information on how publicly-funded programs define, measure and support quality and continuous improvement. Historically, only about 25% of Virginia’s eligible programs have opted to participate in Virginia’s voluntary quality rating system, called Virginia Quality (VQ). This means that even at VQ’s maximum enrollment, quality indicators were only measured about 5% of publicly-funded programs.<sup>8</sup> As of July 1, 2021, VQ is no longer accepting new applicants and ratings for current sites will end in June 2022 to prepare for the transition to the new unified measurement and improvement system, VQB5 (see Appendix B for additional VQ information).

There is no uniform system that measures or supports improvement for all publicly-funded programs, limiting Virginia’s efforts to systematically strengthen quality and improve school readiness outcomes. Without a source of clear, consistent and readily available information about all publicly funded quality early care and education options, it is also difficult for parents to make an informed choice for their children.

### A NEW APPROACH FOR MEASURING QUALITY

To improve school readiness outcomes, Virginia needs a new, uniform quality measurement and improvement system that focuses on measurable indicators of teaching and learning. This system must:

- Focus on the measures that promote positive child outcomes;
- Empower educators with frequent, specific and individualized feedback to educators;
- 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.

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<sup>8</sup> \*Note: 5% represents programs at levels 4 and 5 of Virginia Quality. Levels 1-3 do not require both. As of 2018, Virginia now requires both for all VPI programs but information is not available for families.

Studies on quality rating systems that include many measures have shown weak or inconsistent associations between quality ratings and children’s outcomes and development. By contrast, a large body of research has linked targeted observational measures of teacher-child interactions to children’s learning gains, both academic and socio-emotional.<sup>9</sup> Virginia should embrace such an approach to measuring quality and supporting continuous quality improvement, being sure to prioritize those measures that are shown to support positive child outcomes.

## **BUILDING TOWARDS A UNIFIED EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM**

Since the creation of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) in 1994, Virginia’s state and local leaders have worked in a collaborative, bipartisan manner to strengthen Virginia’s public-private early childhood system. Through joint efforts across the General Assembly, stakeholders, and local and state leaders, Virginia has taken many steps to build a more unified public-private early childhood system. A few key milestones include:

***Launch of Smart Beginnings Network - 2005:*** Through the establishment of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) a regional network of Smart Beginnings coalitions are formed, improving readiness, conditions, and policies for children and families. Smart Beginnings continues to grow to include a network of 17 public-private coalitions across the state, supporting early learning in all settings.

***Pilot a Statewide Kindergarten Readiness Assessment - 2013:*** The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) was initiated by Elevate Early Education (E3), a bipartisan, issue-advocacy organization. In partnership with UVA, a three-phase approach to create a statewide comprehensive kindergarten readiness assessment was launched to facilitate research, trial, and expansion of the now statewide assessment.

***First Preschool Development Grant - 2014:*** Virginia received a three year federal grant to support improvements in preschool quality, access, and impact by integrating best practices in high-need communities. This grant established VPI+, a grant funded preschool program that included a greater focus on coaching, evidence-based curriculum, and family support.

***Establishment of the Joint Subcommittee on VPI - 2015:*** Formed to assist in the reform of VPI and consider strategies for increasing accountability and clarity in the state’s role and policy relating to providing a preschool experience. This subcommittee assisted in recommendations for expanded mixed-delivery pilots, expanded VPI+, and the establishment of the School Readiness Committee.

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<sup>9</sup> Bassok, D., & Markowitz, A. (2020.). *The value of systemwide, high-quality data in early childhood education*. Brown Center Chalkboard.

***Establishment of School Readiness Committee Established - 2016:*** The School Readiness Committee was designated as the State Advisory Council (SAC) under the Head Start Act. Since its initiation, the committee has formed several workgroups to engage experts and develop recommendations, with a particular focus on the early childhood workforce. The School Readiness Committee has oversight of Virginia’s Needs Assessment and Strategic plan, formed as a part of the Preschool Development Grant Birth-to-Five in 2018.

***JLARC Report on Virginia’s Early Childhood Development Programs - 2017:*** This report highlighted the need for additional investments and state alignment across early childhood initiatives. As a result, several key actions were taken during the 2018 session to improve school readiness outcomes in Virginia measuring kindergarten readiness through the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program and creating and monitoring a unified measure of quality in all Virginia Preschool Initiative classrooms.

***Preschool Development Grant Birth-to-Five and Virginia Needs Assessment and Renewal Grant - 2018 and 2019:*** Virginia was awarded both an initial and renewal Preschool Development Grant Birth-to-Five (PDG). The initial version of this grant (awarded in 2018) required the development of a Virginia Needs Assessment and a Preschool Development Grant Birth-to-Five Strategic Plan to set the goals for the grant, and for building a more unified public-private system.<sup>10</sup> The Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan evaluated the status of all publicly-funded programs, including Head Start/Early Head Start, child care, family day homes, and public schools. Both the needs assessment and strategic plan were integral in calling for further investigation and study through Executive Directive Four. In 2019, Virginia was awarded the PDG Renewal Grant, which will be funded through 2022, and is supporting many of the goals outlined in the PDG Strategic Plan.

***Statewide Implementation of VKRP - 2019:*** The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program was implemented statewide in fall 2019 for all kindergarteners, at the direction of the Virginia General Assembly. This allowed the first ever comprehensive examination of kindergarten readiness, and provided important insight into the unmet needs of Virginia’s young children related to school readiness.

***Early Childhood Legislation - Executive Directive Four - 2019 and Legal Establishment of the Unified Early Childhood System and Requirement for Measurement and Improvement - 2020:***

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<sup>10</sup> PDG B5 Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan can be found in full here: <https://www.vecf.org/federal-preschool-development-grant-b-5/>



With the issuing of ED4<sup>11</sup> and as part of the 2020 General Assembly, SB578/HB1021 was introduced with the aim of achieving three key goals:

- 1) Establish a unified public-private early care and education system that is administered by the VDOE and Board of Education
- 2) Create a unified quality measurement and improvement system for all early childhood programs that receive public funds
- 3) Move oversight and licensure of care and education entities to the VDOE and Board

This legislation was successfully passed and signed into law in July 2020, requiring all publicly funded providers to participate in the new unified measurement and improvement system starting in the fall of 2023.<sup>12</sup> Early childhood programs that do not receive any public funds will have the option to participate.

***VQB5 Practice Year 1 - 2021-2022:*** 1456 sites registered to participate in VQB5 Practice Year 1 which was available through 17 local PDG Communities, covering approximately 85% of the state. Participating sites receive two local CLASS observations, in the fall and spring, and enter information about curriculum use. Practice Year 1 ratings are calculated at the end of the academic year and will be shared privately with sites in the fall of 2022. (see Appendix A for additional VQB5 Fall 2021 Data).

***Establishment of Ready Regions - January 2022:*** In January 2022, Virginia announced the first ever Ready Regions<sup>13</sup> to enable the full statewide implementation of VQB5. Ready Regions were established to support coordination and accountability for early education programs in every community across the Commonwealth. Each Ready Region has a lead organization charged to partner with parents, school divisions, social and human services agencies, quality improvement networks, early childhood care and education programs, businesses, and other stakeholder organizations to coordinate and integrate critical services and resources for families with young children. A top priority for Ready Regions will be providing on-the-ground implementation support for VQB5. Ready Region organizations are selected through a competitive application process facilitated by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. In the 2022 State Virginia Assembly Session, HB389/SB529<sup>14</sup> was proposed to formalize the structure and role of Ready Regions.

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<sup>11</sup> Executive Directive Four - <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/executive-actions/ED-4-Establishing-The-Governors-Executive-Leadership-Team-on-School-Readiness.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Code of Virginia (§ 22.1-289.03) - <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter14.1/section22.1-289.03/>

<sup>13</sup> Virginia Early Childhood Foundation - <https://vecf.org/ready-regions/>

<sup>14</sup> Virginia's Legislative Information System - <https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?221+sum+HB389>

## PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

Virginia State Code directs the Board of Education to establish a unified quality rating and improvement system for all publicly funded providers. In June 2021, the Board of Education approved the first edition of this document, the [Guidelines for Practice Year 1 of the Unified Measurement and Improvement System](#). These guidelines established the protocols and requirements for Practice Year 1, which spans from July 2021 to June 2022, with participating programs receiving a privately shared rating in fall 2022. Practice Year 2 will take place during the 2022-2023.

This document builds on the previously approved Practice Year 1 guidelines by updating the guidelines and protocols for Practice Year 2 of the Unified Virginia Quality Birth to Five System (VQB5) based on data and feedback from Practice Year 1. The Practice 2 Year guidelines will be used to prepare for the full implementation of VQB5 in the fall of 2023. The document has been designed for review by the Virginia Board of Education and for review and implementation by publicly-funded programs as of July 1, 2022.

# SECTION 2: VIRGINIA’S UNIFIED MEASUREMENT AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM (VQB5)

## THEORY OF CHANGE - CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT ACROSS A UNIFIED SYSTEM

*All Virginia children should have the opportunity to participate in quality early childhood experiences that enable them to thrive.*

Virginia’s current public-private early childhood system does not prepare all of the Commonwealth’s children to succeed. As noted earlier, the kindergarten readiness data show that four out of ten children in Virginia do not have the opportunity to come to school ready. Moreover, even greater percentages of children who are Black, Hispanic, speak a language other than English at home, or have a diagnosed disability or developmental delay do not have the opportunity to begin school with the key readiness skills needed. Quite simply, the system fails to ensure that families have the opportunity to choose quality early childhood experiences that support their children to develop these key skills.

Under the new state law, Virginia has the opportunity to drive quality and improvement in all publicly-funded early childhood programs, which generally prioritize underserved children, including children in low-income households, children with disabilities, children who are Dual Language Learners and children who face other challenges (e.g., homelessness) that may limit their ability to fulfill their potential. If Virginia can 1) strengthen the quality of teaching and learning experiences in existing publicly-funded programs and 2) increase the number of children who can access these publicly-funded early childhood experiences in both public and private settings, then more families will have more choices. And more children will enter school ready.

Simply put, through the Unified Measurement and Improvement System (VQB5), Virginia will:

- **UNIFY** around shared and equitable expectations for quality.
- **MEASURE** and strengthen teacher-child interactions and curriculum in all publicly funded birth-to-five programs.
- **IMPROVE** supports for educators, prioritizing those who need it most.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In response to the unification law, the VDOE worked with stakeholders and collaborators to establish a set of guiding principles for the uniform measurement and improvement system. The Guiding Principles below set forth the priorities and practical realities for building a statewide unified measurement and improvement system.

<b>Guiding Principle:</b> <i>Virginia's new system must:</i>	<b>Explanation:</b>
1. Impact quality and result in improved school readiness for children.	The ultimate purpose of the unified measurement and improvement system is to improve school readiness for all Virginia's children through continuous quality improvement. Research shows that impacting school preparedness has long-term positive effects on child and societal outcomes. The system should be designed using research on what has a meaningful impact on child learning and school readiness.
2. Use measures that can distinguish levels of quality and demonstrate growth over time.	Teachers and program leaders benefit from feedback on strengths and opportunities. Classroom level change can be motivated by specific information that spotlights areas for growth, and identifies the behaviors that are needed to drive improved experiences for children. The measurement and improvement system must clearly articulate levels of quality and present a clear path for improvement.
3. Provide clear, actionable information, resources and incentives for improvement.	The measurement and improvement system must inspire action and offer coordinated resources and supports for improvement. The state should also consider formal and informal incentives that motivate community stakeholders, program leaders and educators. All stakeholders should find the information useful and meaningful and can understand why these things matter for young learners and their families.
4. Be affordable for providers and the state.	The unified measures must support measurement and improvement, without placing an undue burden on either the programs or the State. The unified measurements must be cost efficient and able to be used year over year.
5. Scale for use in over 6,000 programs and 10,000 classrooms.	The measurement and improvement system needs to reliably and validly measure quality in <u>every</u> publicly funded infant, toddler and preschool classroom, including family day homes. This must be achieved in a method that provides reliable and current information to every participating provider across the state.

<p>6. Increase opportunity for all children in 1) the outcomes that are measured, and 2) the process for making and using the system.</p>	<p>Virginia’s measurement and improvement system must ensure a level playing field and provide targeted funding to support all programs in meeting such standards, especially programs serving underserved communities and programs that have historically had less access to resources, including family child care. Including the voices and perspectives of all programs, including underrepresented groups, is essential to making sure the unified system serves all of Virginia’s children.</p>
<p>7. Serve as a resource for families</p>	<p>Families are children’s first and most important educators. Virginia’s new measurement and improvement system should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leverage the valuable insight of parents, guardians and families regarding the care and education their children need;</li> <li>2. Ensure families can access quality options that provide culturally and linguistically responsive programming;</li> <li>3. Enable deeper engagement in their child’s teaching and learning; and</li> <li>4. Be designed to inform and support family choice.</li> </ol>

## UNIFIED PROGRAM QUALITY STANDARDS FOR PRACTICE YEAR 2

Based on Virginia’s guiding principles and the Commonwealth's recent investments in quality measurement and improvement, Virginia selected two nationally recognized quality standard measurements for Practice Year 1 of VQB5. During Practice Year 2, VQB5 will continue to use Interactions and Curriculum to measure quality and inform improvement.

- **Interactions** - This standard measures the quality of teacher-child interactions and instruction in a developmentally-appropriate way, as measured by the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). All children benefit socially and academically from being in classrooms with high quality teacher-child interactions, including children from diverse settings, dual language learners (DLLs) and children with special needs.<sup>15</sup>
- **Curriculum** - This standard measures the use of a comprehensive curriculum in alignment with Virginia’s early learning and development standards to ensure that all areas of learning and development are being covered in developmentally appropriate ways. This standard will also help ensure that early childhood programs have curricula that provide guidance on how to individualize instruction based on needs, including children with disabilities, suspected delays, or other special needs.

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<sup>15</sup> Teachstone Training, LLC. (2020). *Research Validating CLASS® with Child Outcomes across Diverse Populations of Children.*

# RATIONALE FOR INTERACTIONS AND CURRICULUM

Interactions and Curriculum were selected for the Unified Measurement and Improvement System based on their close alignment to the Guiding Principles mentioned in the prior section. By focusing on teaching and learning in a simple, clear, and measurable way in every infant, toddler and preschool classroom, Virginia can motivate meaningful improvement in all publicly-funded birth-to-five early learning settings.<sup>16</sup>

The intent of the unified system is to strengthen teaching and learning across all early childhood settings - regardless of program type, program resources or educator background. These two measures will provide the clear and consistent information needed to understand the experiences occurring in every infant, toddler and preschool classroom. The practice years are a starting point; Virginia will focus first on strengthening interactions in every classroom and increasing the number of classrooms that are using a quality curriculum.

Teacher-child interactions form the foundation for all social and cognitive learning. Studies have shown that quality teacher-child interactions result in improved school readiness for all children. Over 200 research studies have demonstrated the connection between teacher-child interactions and academic and social outcomes.<sup>17</sup> All children benefit from improved teacher-child interactions, including children who are dual language learners and children with special needs. A focus on measuring teacher-child interactions translates into actionable feedback that educators in all early learning settings can implement, presenting opportunities for incremental improvement that motivates educators at every level of the system.

Along with interactions, VQB5 will support quality teaching and learning by promoting curriculum use in all settings. Using approved and effective curricula helps teachers support learning and development of critical learning skills in all early childhood programs and settings.<sup>18</sup> Identifying curriculum that is aligned with Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards helps ensure that all areas of children's learning and development is addressed.

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<sup>16</sup> Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M. R., Espinosa, L. M., Gormley, W. T., Ludwig, J., Magnuson, K. A., Phillips, D., & Zaslow, M. J. (2013, October). Investing in Our Future: The Evidence Base on Preschool Education.

<sup>17</sup> Teachstone. (2020). *Proving CLASS® Effectiveness— A Research Summary*.

<sup>18</sup> US Administration for Children & Families. (2020). *Criteria for Effective Curricula*. Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center.

## PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

Beginning in the fall of 2023, all publicly funded programs will be required to participate in VQB5<sup>19</sup>. Programs that do not receive public funds will have the option to participate, with the understanding that support for publicly funded programs will be prioritized.

In order to prepare Virginia’s publicly-funded birth-to-five programs, every program in all localities of the state will be offered the opportunity to participate in, and provide feedback on, Practice Year 2 (2022-2023).

According to Code of Virginia (§ 22.1-289.03), “Publicly funded provider” means any educational program provided by a school division or local government to children between birth and age five or child day program that receives state or federal funds in support of its operations that serves three or more unrelated children.

The definition is intended to capture funding sources that support direct early childhood care and educational services for young children. These public funding sources include:

- Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI)
- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE or IDEA Part B, Section 619 preschool)
- Title I Preschool
- Head Start/Early Head Start<sup>20</sup>
- Virginia’s Child Care Subsidy Program
- Local government child care assistance, such as Fairfax’s Child Care Assistance and Referral (CCAR) program
- Federal Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS)
- Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) Mixed Delivery
- Federal Department of Defense Military Child Care Fee Assistance (MCCYN)

The “publicly funded” participation requirement does not include:

- any program for which the sole source of public funding is the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service.
- programs for which the sole source of public funding is COVID-related relief funding that is not related to serving children directly (i.e, ARPA, CARES, PPP),
- publicly funded programs that only provide before/after school care or summer camps

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<sup>19</sup> Code of Virginia (§ 22.1-289.03) - <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter14.1/section22.1-289.03/>

<sup>20</sup> Head Start Programs have until Sept. 30, 2021 to comply with the state or local quality rating and improvement systems according to Head Start program guidelines.

- programs that are not operating full time (full-time refers to a program which operates at least four days per week for at least 128 days per year, with classes that operate for a minimum of 3.5 hours per day).



# SECTION 3: IMPLEMENTING THE UNIFIED MEASUREMENT AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM (VQB5)

VQB5 will be implemented through two practice years that provide every publicly-funded program (school-based preschool, Head Start/Early Head Start, and child care subsidy participating child care and family day home) the opportunity to practice being measured before results are shared publicly. The first of these two practice years took place from July 2021 through June 2022. The second practice year, described here, will begin in July 2022. The VDOE will continue extensive stakeholder engagement, including targeted outreach to diverse and representative populations of parents/families and providers, and data analysis to evolve the system as needed based on findings from the practice years.

## TIMELINE AND PROCESS FOR BUILDING THE UNIFIED MEASUREMENT AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM

Starting in 2018, the VDOE has conducted extensive stakeholder engagement regarding the unified system. Over the next two years, the VDOE will continue to work with the ECAC, parents/families of young children ages 0-5, birth to five providers, and other critical stakeholders in the field, to develop and scale the new system. This includes two years of practice with the new system, with all programs having an opportunity to participate in at least one practice year.

Below is a timeline overview, including activities to be completed prior to Practice Year 2.

<b>ITEMS COMPLETED - Preparing for Practice Year 1</b>
2020-2021 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developed proposals based on national research and current Virginia landscape</li><li>• Reviewed and modeled current quality data from Virginia</li><li>• Conducted stakeholder engagement webinars and presentations</li><li>• Hosted listening sessions and phone calls</li></ul>

- Conducted a statewide survey for input from the field
- Finalized proposed set of measures
- Used data from fall 2019-2020 to test the proposed set of measures
- Developed policy proposal based on feedback and data modeling
- Finalized Virginia Quality transition plan
- Launched VDOE [Building a Unified Early Childhood System](#) and [Quality Measurement and Improvement \(VQB5\)](#) web pages to share information about the new measurement and improvement system
- Launched Practice Year 1 with PDG Communities
- Completed fall data entry and classroom observations
- Held numerous webinars and presentations for the stakeholders about VQB5
- Provided regular communication updates about VQB5 through weekly [VDOE Readiness Connections newsletter](#)
- Developed VQB5 Implementation materials and improvement support resources
- Ready Regions identified through a competitive process facilitated by Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) and announced in December 2021.

### **IN PROCESS - Completing Practice Year 1**

Jan-June 2022

- Gather feedback from participating sites and PDG communities about fall activities
- Review data and feedback from fall of Practice Year 1 to inform needed revisions
- Provide financial incentive (RecognizeB5) for eligible teachers participating in VQB5 Practice Year 1
- Hold VQB5 webinars for improvement partners and stakeholders
- Bring necessary revisions to the ECAC and Board of Education by July 2022 and prepare for Practice Year 2
- Complete spring local and external CLASS observations
- Award contract and work with new Third Party vendor to develop protocols for External CLASS Audits in Practice Year 2
- Work with Ready Regions to prepare for Practice Year 2
- Provide regular communication updates about VQB5 through weekly Readiness Connections newsletter
- Update VQB5 Implementation materials for Practice Year 2 and develop new improvement support resources

## WHAT'S AHEAD - Supporting Statewide Implementation

### July-Dec 2022

- Calculate Practice Year 1 ratings using measurement information gathered during the fall of 2021 and spring of 2022
- Share Practice Year 1 ratings privately with participating site-administrators
- Begin Practice Year 2 with Ready Regions
- Develop a new site quality profile to include rating and other program information
- Conduct fall data entry and complete classroom observations
- Provide financial incentive (RecognizeB5) for eligible teachers participating in VQB5 Practice Year 2
- Share routine updates on progress of the second practice year with the ECAC and other stakeholders

### 2023-2024

- Complete spring classroom observations
- Calculate Practice Year 2 ratings using measurement information gathered during the fall and spring
- Share site quality profiles, including the Practice Year 2 ratings, privately with participating site-administrators (gather feedback on profile to inform necessary revisions)
- Review data from Practice Year 2 to inform needed revisions and gather feedback on the unified system
- Bring any necessary revisions to the ECAC and Board of Education by June 2023 and prepare for full implementation of the new system
- Work with all publicly funded providers to prepare for the first full year of implementation
- All publicly funded programs are required to participate by fall 2023
- VDOE uses data from 2023-2024 to calculate quality ratings in Fall 2024

### 2024-2025

- Post site quality profiles, including quality ratings, publicly in the fall of 2024
- Begin the second year of full VQB5 implementation

## PURPOSE OF THE PRACTICE YEARS

The purpose of the practice year ratings are twofold. First, having multiple practice years will allow every publicly-funded early childhood program in Virginia to have an opportunity to

participate in the measurement system. This will allow teachers and program leaders to learn about the measurement process and identify areas where targeted improvements can be most useful. Site specific quality profiles, which will include practice year ratings, will be provided to programs for informational use only. Please note that there will not be any public sharing of practice year results. Programs have also inquired about consequences; there are *no* incentives or consequences attached to performance during the practice years. The document later details incentives for participation (not performance) for certain programs and educators.

Second, the practice years will allow the VDOE and Board of Education to evaluate and refine the system. The VDOE and Board of Education will conduct frequent and in-depth analysis of the results and feedback regarding the unified measurement system, ensuring accuracy and impact at all levels. Data and information gathered during the practice year will help enable the alignment of teacher preparation and professional development resources that are directed under the VDOE. Lessons learned from the practice ratings will guide the development of future guidelines and procedures for the full implementation of VQB5 in the fall of 2023.

Practice Year 2 will take place from July 2022 through June 2023, with practice results shared privately with sites in fall 2023. Again following practice year 2, the VDOE and Board of Education will consider any revisions or adjustments necessary to best meet the needs of all programs, teachers, and families.

Note that in the initial legislation there was only one practice year proposed. A revision to the timeline added a second practice year in response to COVID-19, and the acknowledgement that the early childhood system would be in recovery during Practice Year 1.

By fall 2023, all publicly-funded programs will be required to participate with results shared publicly in fall 2024.

## **ROLE OF THE PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT AND READY REGIONS DURING THE PRACTICE YEARS**

The federal Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five (PDG) is a multi-year federal grant awarded in 2018 to the VDOE to accelerate Virginia's development of an equitable early childhood system that delivers stable, affordable and quality early care and education to prepare more children for kindergarten. The PDG effort is supported by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) and the University of Virginia (UVA).

Virginia’s PDG grant has provided the opportunity for local communities to receive additional funding, resources, and support to unify and strengthen their birth to five early childhood care and education (ECCE) networks and systems since January 2019. The PDG grant has also provided the opportunity to pilot and grow a Teacher Recognition Program, now called RecognizeB5, which is a strategy for supporting, retaining, and rewarding talented yet undercompensated child care and family day home educators in publicly funded early learning settings, as part of Virginia’s effort to increase access to high quality early childhood care and education experiences for children, families and communities (see section 7 for additional information about RecognizeB5).

PDG has also allowed many ECCE providers an opportunity to prepare for the implementation of VQB5, as required by state law, by participating in the first practice year. Practice Year 1 was available in over 85% of Virginia communities, through the coordination of 17 local PDG Communities. Beginning in July 2022, VQB5 will be coordinated through a new statewide structure called Ready Regions. This will allow for 100% participation in Practice Year 2 funded by the Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five.

During Practice Year 2, the VDOE will use federal funds to support nine Ready Regions which will be responsible for coordinating early childhood care and education services, guiding quality improvement of such services and coordinated access to such services for families, and implementing the uniform measurement and improvement system (VQB5). The Ready Regions network covers all geographic areas of the state from the tip of Southwest Virginia to the Eastern Shore and all points in between. Each Ready Region has a lead organization charged to partner with parents, school divisions, social and human services agencies, quality improvement networks, early childhood care and education programs, businesses, and other stakeholder organizations to coordinate and integrate critical services and resources for families with young children.

Ready Regions brings public and private partners together to ensure Virginia’s early childhood system prepares children for success. This includes working across all publicly-funded birth-to-five programs within their region, including Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), Early Childhood Special Education, Head Start/Early Head Start, Child Care Programs participating in the subsidy program, and Family Day homes participating in the subsidy programs. Ready Regions also support non-publicly funded programs who opt to participate in VQB5 through Ready Regions as well.<sup>21</sup> This regional coordination will allow for 100% participation in VQB5 starting in Practice Year 2 and beyond.

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<sup>21</sup> Information about Ready Regions can be found at <https://vecf.org/ready-regions/>

## **VQB5'S DATA SYSTEM - LINKB5**

In order to measure quality and drive improvement at scale, Virginia has developed a data strategy and uniform data system (LinkB5) for collecting and analyzing measurement and improvement data across early childhood programs participating in VQB5.

Over the past three years, Virginia has designed, piloted and implemented an early childhood data system known as LinkB5. Working closely with the field and partners at UVA, Virginia engaged in multiple rounds of iterative system development, incorporating lessons and feedback from partnering with communities at all stages of the work. All VQB5 participants use LinkB5 in a consistent manner to provide information about their sites, classrooms, and teachers. Ready Regions coordinate and monitor the completion of all VQB5 data entry, including the entry of observation scores, and are then able to use the data to support participating educators and regional planning.

In addition, LinkB5 captures key access and enrollment characteristics, including information about publicly-funded children enrolled in participating sites, enabling Virginia to use this information to develop resources for communities and families in the future.

The LinkB5 system provides a secure environment for entering and storing data, as well as security protocols allowing end users to access their own data based on their user roles and credentials (e.g., a teacher can access his or her own data; a site director can access information on all teachers and classrooms at the site). The hosting environment that UVA uses for LinkB5 adheres to protocols in place from the Information Technology System department UVA for sensitive data and is at the same level of security as the PALS and VKRP systems, which house child-level sensitive data. The use of the data by stakeholders, including UVA collaborators, is guided by VDOE-UVA data sharing agreements, as well as the guidance of UVA's Institutional Review Board (IRB), designed to establish data-use protocols in service of protecting confidentiality of data and individual's anonymity.

With its strong buy-in, extensive field testing and state-approved security features, LinkB5 will continue to be used as the data collection and reporting tool for VQB5 Practice Year 2 coordinated through Ready Regions.

## **PRACTICE YEAR 1 PROGRESS UPDATE**

Practice Year 1 is well under way, beginning in 2021 and concluding in June 2022. Over 50% of Virginia's publicly-funded early childhood sites have opted to participate in Practice Year 1 of VQB5, presenting an important learning opportunity both for communities and for state partners. During the Practice Year 1 registration window in August-September 2021, 1457 sites completed

the registration process, including 669 childcare centers, 533 school based preschools and 255 family day homes from across the Commonwealth. During the fall, PDG Communities conducted over 4200 CLASS observations and feedback sessions in participating infant, toddler and preschool classrooms, including family day homes. Classroom data profiles, including information on the type of curriculum used, was entered in LinkB5 for 4724 classrooms. Data from CLASS observations and curriculum use gathered in the fall is being used to plan professional development and target resources for improvement support. All participating classrooms will receive a second CLASS observation in the spring, and will have the opportunity to update information about curriculum use. In addition, over 6000 child care center teachers and family day home providers are registered to receive a financial incentive of up to \$2000 for participating in the Preschool Development Grant and VQB5 through RecognizeB5 (see Appendix A for additional Fall 2021 data).

In January, an online survey was conducted to gather feedback from teachers and program leaders who are participating in VQB5 Practice Year 1, about their experiences with fall CLASS observations and curriculum use. The majority of survey respondents indicated they were satisfied with their VQB5 experiences this past fall. Comments, questions and concerns expressed in the survey, along with other stakeholder feedback gathered during the fall, were used to inform plans and enhancements for Practice Year 2 (see Appendix A for additional details from fall 2021 participant survey).

# SECTION 4: MEASURING THE QUALITY OF TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTIONS

## RATIONALE FOR USING THE CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT SCORING SYSTEM (CLASS)

The quality of interactions between teachers and children will be measured in Virginia’s new system using the nationally recognized CLASS tool. CLASS stands for **CL**assroom **A**ssessment **S**coring **S**ystem. The CLASS is a tool for observing and assessing the characteristics of interactions among teachers and children in classrooms developed at the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL).

The CLASS tool was chosen for use in Virginia’s measurement system because it provides a rigorous and consistent approach to observing and measuring teacher-child interactions during critical developmental periods, while still providing a context-specific and developmentally sensitive metric for each age group. In addition,

- The CLASS is the most researched and validated observation measure of early childhood teaching and classroom quality. Over 200 published studies show that students who attend classrooms with higher CLASS scores have better social and academic outcomes than their peers in classrooms with less effective interactions.<sup>22</sup>
- All children benefit socially and academically from being in classrooms with high quality teacher-child interactions as measured by CLASS.<sup>23</sup>
- Interactions, when measured by CLASS, promote incremental improvement that motivates educators at every level in the system. CLASS provides actionable feedback for every classroom and can be used with all educators, regardless of background, setting or credential.
- Virginia has a strong basis in using CLASS and is well prepared to ensure that every publicly-funded infant, toddler and preschool classroom receives CLASS observations and has the opportunity to demonstrate strengths and make improvements.

In Virginia, many educators are already familiar with CLASS as it had been utilized in the following publicly-funded settings prior to Practice Year 1.

- **Head Start:** Pre-K CLASS is used as a part of the federal Head Start monitoring process and as part of the system to determine whether Head Start programs qualify for continued funding, known as “designation renewal.”

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<sup>22</sup> Teachstone. (2020). *Proving CLASS® Effectiveness— A Research Summary*.

<sup>23</sup> Teachstone®. (2021). *Research*. Teachstone® Every student deserves life-changing teachers.



- **School-Based preschool (Virginia Preschool Initiative, Early Childhood Special Education, and others):** During 2018-2020, all preschool classrooms were legislatively required to receive an external CLASS observation, conducted once every two years by UVA through the Advancing Effective Interactions initiative (AEII). School divisions are also required to complete local observations in Virginia Preschool Initiative classrooms twice each year. Most school-based preschool classrooms in Virginia have had exposure to CLASS previously.
- **Virginia Quality:** Sites that chose to apply for the highest levels are observed with CLASS in a selection of infant, toddler and preschool classrooms every three years. This includes participating Head Start/Early Head Start, VPI, Private Child Care Centers and Family Day Homes.
- **Preschool Development Grant (PDG):** Sites that participated in the PDG pilot years (2018-2020) received a local CLASS observation twice a year in every infant, toddler and preschool classroom, including family day homes. During the fall of Practice Year 1 (2021), CLASS observations and feedback sessions were conducted in all participating infant, toddler and preschool classrooms, including family day homes, with another round of CLASS observations to be completed in all classrooms during the spring of 2022.

## USING CLASS IN ALL EARLY LEARNING SETTINGS

Using CLASS provides opportunities for every educator to improve their practice, regardless of background, educational preparation or setting in which they work. The CLASS has been used in classrooms and family day homes with diverse populations: Dual Language Learners (DLL), children from migrant families, tribal communities, children with special needs and children from diverse cultural backgrounds. Below is a summary of the research and recommendations from Teachstone related to Virginia’s population and needs;<sup>24</sup>

- **Culturally and Linguistically diverse settings** - Researchers found that the CLASS applies equally well across preschool classrooms with multilingual learner compositions. Although the studies noted that there may be additional learner-specific teaching strategies that could benefit multilingual children, these findings, underscore that warm, sensitive, well-organized, and cognitively stimulating interactions are a set of core practices that early childhood teachers can use to support the positive development of culturally and linguistically diverse children.<sup>25</sup> Teachstone recommends that there is a linguistic match between the observer and the primary language of instruction in the classroom when conducting observations in birth to five settings with dual language learners.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Hamre, B., Goffin, S., & Kraft-Sayre, M. (n.d.). Classroom Assessment Scoring System Implementation Guide. Teachstone.

<sup>25</sup> Downer, J., Lopez, M., Grimm, K., Hamagami, A., Pianta, R., & Howes, C. (n.d.). Measuring Teacher-Child Interactions in Linguistically Diverse Pre-K Classrooms. University of Virginia Center of Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning.

<sup>26</sup> Teachstone. (n.d.). <https://info.teachstone.com/hubfs/Job%20Aids/DLL-JobAid%20.pdf>

- **Classrooms serving children with special needs** - The types of teacher-child interactions measured by the CLASS are critical for all children. The CLASS describes what effective special education teachers routinely do in their classrooms. Data from classrooms with 50% or more of the children on an IEP/IFSP, found that the CLASS tool accurately captured classroom interactions at or above the levels of classrooms with a majority of typically developing children.<sup>27</sup> Teachstone recommends that an observer who is collecting data in a classroom that serves a large percentage of children with disabilities have a background in special education in order to understand the context in which the interactions take place.
- **Family Day Homes** - All CLASS age levels are predicated on the assumption that there is continuity in effective teacher child-interactions across age levels. While specific examples may vary based on children’s ages, there is an underlying similarity in the kinds of interactions that promote growth and development. The dimensions used in CLASS to define and assess effective teacher-child interactions are similar across the infant, toddler, and preschool periods. This allows for the use of CLASS in mixed-age settings, such as family day homes serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Recent efforts from other states have had promising outcomes after implementing professional development focused on CLASS in family day homes, with scores that were above national averages.<sup>28</sup> Teachstone recommends that an observer who is collecting data in a family day home have a background in working with family day home providers in order to understand the context in which the interactions take place.

***Continued Efforts to Evaluate the Implications of Using CLASS in All ECE Settings***

In line with its guiding principles to support improvement for all early childhood educations in Virginia, the VDOE has and will continue to consider the implications of using the CLASS tool consistently and accurately across diverse classrooms and settings. Although CLASS has repeatedly shown the importance of the quality of teacher-child interactions for all children, information about how individual children are treated may not be fully captured. In addition, who completes the observation and provides the feedback can also affect whether all educators perceive the tool to be fair and equitable across different programs and backgrounds.

Given its focus on ensuring that all children have access to high quality teacher-child interactions and ensuring all educators feel supported, the VDOE will continue to work closely with Teachstone to engage educators and families to fully analyze the how the CLASS tool is used in Virginia in Practice Year 2 to foster strong partnerships and to ensure that any concerns are addressed.

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<sup>27</sup> Teachstone. (n.d.). Recommendations for Using the CLASS in Inclusive Early Childhood Programs, Birth–Age 8.

<sup>28</sup> Teachstone. (n.d.). Family Child Care and CLASS.

## INFANT, TODDLER AND PRE-K CLASS

VQB5 will use the Infant, Toddler and Pre-K CLASS observation tools. Each tool is developed specifically to evaluate the classroom characteristics and teacher-child interactions needed to promote child learning and development within each specific age range. In Virginia's system, family day homes are considered as classrooms as they are places where children are supported to develop and learn (family day homes typically have one classroom).

- Infant CLASS is used to observe classrooms that serve birth-18 months
- Toddler CLASS is used to observe classrooms that serve 15-36 months
- Pre-K CLASS is used to observe classrooms that serve 3-5 year olds
- Mixed Age Settings, such as family day homes, use the CLASS tool that aligns with the age of the majority of children served.

In addition to using the appropriate age-level CLASS manual, Teachstone provides specific guidance for conducting observations in the following settings:

- Family Day Homes - [Guidance for Observing in Family Day Homes](#)
- Early Childhood Special Education - [Recommendations for Using the CLASS in Inclusive Early Childhood Programs, Birth–Age 8](#)
- Classrooms with Dual Language Learners - [Observing in Settings Serving Dual Language Learners, Birth to Five](#)

For each age-level, the CLASS tool organizes effective classroom interactions into broad categories or domains, which are further subdivided into dimensions. CLASS dimensions give common definitions of effective teaching across ages and content areas. These dimensions are based solely on observed interactions between teachers and children in classrooms; this system does not evaluate the presence of materials, the physical environment or safety, or the adoption of a specific curriculum. Observers using the CLASS tool must be trained and found reliable in each version of the tool prior to completing an observation.

In the charts below, each CLASS tool is broken down into the specific domains, dimensions and indicators that measure effective interactions for each age group in a developmentally appropriate way.

- Domains describe the broad categories of classroom experiences that best measure effective interactions.
- Dimensions describe the important aspects and features of effective interactions between teachers and children within each domain.
- Indicators describe observable behaviors within classrooms. Trained and certified CLASS observers use the CLASS to capture lower-quality and higher-quality behavior indicators that are demonstrated in the classroom for each dimension.

**Overview of Infant CLASS Domain Dimensions and Indicators:**

The Infant CLASS tool has one domain, Responsive Caregiving.

<b>Infant Domain</b>	<b>Infant Dimension</b>	<b>Infant Indicators</b>
<b>Responsive Caregiving</b>	<b>Relational Climate:</b> Reflects the connections, emotions, and respect conveyed by teachers as well as the infants’ responses to these interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Relational behaviors</li> <li>● Emotion expression</li> <li>● Respect for infants’ state</li> <li>● Lack of adult negativity</li> </ul>
	<b>Teacher Sensitivity:</b> Encompasses teachers’ awareness of and responsiveness to infants’ verbal and nonverbal cues, including availability to provide comfort, skill in resolving distress, and timeliness and contingency of responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Awareness and cue detection</li> <li>● Responsiveness</li> <li>● Infant comfort</li> </ul>
	<b>Facilitated Exploration:</b> Considers teachers’ facilitation of experiences and interactions in routine care and playtime to support infants’ engagement and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Involvement</li> <li>● Infant focused</li> <li>● Expansion of infants’ experience</li> </ul>
	<b>Early Language Support:</b> Captures the amount and effectiveness of teachers’ use of language-stimulation and language facilitation techniques to encourage infants’ early language development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teacher Talk</li> <li>● Communication Support</li> <li>● Communication Extension</li> </ul>

**Overview of Toddler CLASS Domains, Dimensions and Indicators:**

The Toddler CLASS has two domains, Emotional and Behavioral Support and Engaged Support for Learning.

<b>Toddler Domain</b>	<b>Toddler Dimension</b>	<b>Toddler Indicators</b>
<b>Emotional and Behavioral Support</b>	<b>Positive Climate:</b> Reflects the connection between the teacher and children and the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and nonverbal interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Relationships</li> <li>● Positive affect</li> <li>● Respect</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Negative Climate:</b> Reflects the overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom. The frequency, quality, and intensity of teacher and child negativity are the key to this scale.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Negative affect</li> <li>● Punitive control</li> <li>● Teacher negativity</li> <li>● Child negativity</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Teacher Sensitivity:</b> Encompasses the teacher’s responsiveness to and awareness of children’s individual needs and emotional functioning. The extent to which the teacher is available as a secure base (being there to provide comfort, reassurance, and encouragement) is included in this rating.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Awareness</li> <li>● Responsiveness</li> <li>● Child comfort</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Regard for Child Perspectives:</b> Captures the degree to which the teacher’s interactions with children and classroom activities emphasize children’s interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage children’s responsibility and independence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Child Focus</li> <li>● Flexibility</li> <li>● Support of Independence</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Behavior Guidance:</b> Encompasses the teacher’s ability to promote behavioral self-regulation in children by using proactive approaches, supporting positive behavior, and guiding and minimizing problem behavior.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Proactive</li> <li>● Supporting Positive Behavior</li> <li>● Problem Behavior</li> </ul>
<b>Engaged Support for Learning</b>	<p><b>Facilitation for Learning and Development:</b> Considers how well the teacher facilitates activities to support children’s learning and developmental opportunities. How the teacher connects and integrates learning into activities and tasks should be included in this rating.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Active facilitation</li> <li>● Expansion of cognition</li> <li>● Children’s active engagement</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Quality of Feedback:</b> Assesses the degree to which the teacher provides feedback (in response to what children say and/or do) that promotes learning and understanding and expands children’s participation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Scaffolding</li> <li>● Providing Information</li> <li>● Encouragement and Affirmation</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Language Modeling:</b> Captures the quality and amount of the teacher’s use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques to encourage children’s language development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Supporting Language Use</li> <li>● Repetition and Extension</li> <li>● Self and Parallel Talk</li> <li>● Advanced Language</li> </ul>

**Overview of Pre-K CLASS Domains, Dimensions, & Indicators:**

The Pre-K CLASS tool has three domains, Emotional Support, Classroom Organization and Instructional Support.

Pre-K Domain	Pre-K Dimension	Pre-K Indicators
<b>Emotional Support</b>	<b>Positive Climate:</b> Reflects the emotional connection between the teacher and students and among students, as well as the warmth, respect, and enjoyment communicated by verbal and nonverbal interactions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Positive Affect</li> <li>• Positive Communication</li> <li>• Respect</li> </ul>
	<b>Negative Climate:</b> Reflects the overall level of expressed negativity in the classroom; the frequency, quality, and intensity of teacher and peer negativity are key to this scale.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative Affect</li> <li>• Punitive Control</li> <li>• Sarcasm/Disrespect</li> <li>• Severe Negativity</li> </ul>
	<b>Teacher Sensitivity:</b> Encompasses the teacher’s awareness of and responsivity to students’ academic and emotional needs; high levels of sensitivity facilitate students’ ability to actively explore and learn because the teacher consistently provides comfort, reassurance, and encouragement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Addresses Problems</li> <li>• Student Comfort</li> </ul>
	<b>Regard for Student Perspectives:</b> Captures the degree to which the teacher’s interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students’ interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage student responsibility and autonomy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility and Student Focus</li> <li>• Support for Autonomy and Leadership</li> <li>• Student Expression</li> <li>• Restriction of Movement</li> </ul>
<b>Classroom Organization</b>	<b>Behavior Management:</b> Encompasses the teacher’s ability to provide clear behavioral expectations and use effective methods to prevent and redirect misbehavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear Behavior Expectations</li> <li>• Proactive</li> <li>• Redirection of Misbehavior</li> <li>• Student Behavior</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Productivity:</b> Considers how well the teacher manages instructional time and routines and provides activities for students so that they have the opportunity to be involved in learning activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximizing Learning Time</li> <li>• Routines</li> <li>• Transitions</li> <li>• Preparation</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Instructional Learning Formats:</b> Focuses on the ways in which the teacher maximizes students’ interest, engagement, and ability to learn from lessons and activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective Facilitation</li> <li>• Variety of Modalities and Materials</li> <li>• Student Interest</li> <li>• Clarity of Learning Objectives</li> </ul>
<b>Instructional Support</b>	<p><b>Concept Development:</b> Measures the teacher’s use of instructional discussions and activities to promote students’ higher-order thinking skills and cognition and the teacher’s focus on understanding rather than on role instruction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis and Reasoning</li> <li>• Creating</li> <li>• Integration</li> <li>• Connections to the Real World</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Quality of Feedback:</b> Assesses the degree to which the teacher provides feedback that expands learning and understanding and encourages continued participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scaffolding</li> <li>• Feedback Loops</li> <li>• Prompting Thought Processes</li> <li>• Providing Information</li> <li>• Encouragement and Affirmation</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Language Modeling:</b> Captures the quality and amount of the teacher’s use of language-stimulation and language-facilitation techniques.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent Conversation</li> <li>• Open-Ended Questions</li> <li>• Repetition and Extension</li> <li>• Self- and Parallel Talk</li> <li>• Advanced Language</li> </ul>

**OBSERVING AND SCORING WITH THE CLASS TOOL**

CLASS provides specific directions for observing classrooms, including family day homes as outlined in the manual for each age-level tool. Each cycle of observation consists of a 20 minute period during which the observer watches classroom interaction (mostly focused on the teachers) and takes notes followed by a 10 minute period for recording scores. Observation cycles are only 15 minutes in Infant CLASS.

CLASS requires the observer to derive one score for each dimension per observation cycle based on the degree to which certain behavioral markers characterize the classroom during that cycle.

A score from 1 (minimally characteristic) to 7 (highly characteristic) is given for each dimension and represents the extent to which that dimension is characteristic of that classroom.

Virginia will require four observation cycles for all CLASS observations, resulting in a total of 80 minutes of observed teacher-child interactions in preschool and toddler classrooms, and 60 minutes of observed interactions in infant classrooms.

In accordance with the manual, CLASS observers capture lower quality and higher quality behaviors that are demonstrated in classrooms. Scores are assigned using the following scale for each dimension.

- **Low scores (1-2)** are assigned when behaviors associated with a dimension were demonstrated in a low-quality manner, were lacking, or were rarely present in the classroom interactions.
- **Mid scores (3-5)** are assigned when the classroom interactions associated with a dimension were somewhat present during the classroom observation or a part of some children’s experience.
- **High scores (6-7)** are assigned when the classroom interactions were highly characteristic of a dimension during the observation. High-range behaviors are those that are meaningful, consistent, sustained, and reflective of everyone’s experience in the classroom.

To get composite scores across cycles, individual cycle scores for each dimension are averaged across the four observation cycles for a dimension level score. Once all of the average dimension scores are obtained, the composite domain scores can be calculated.

## TYPES OF CLASS OBSERVATIONS IN VQB5

There are two types of CLASS observations conducted in VQB5; local and external observations. These observations have different purposes and frequencies during the annual measurement and improvement cycle as described below.

VQB5	Local Observations	External Observations
<b>Purpose</b>	Primary method for gathering classroom level information about the quality of teacher child interactions and providing feedback in VQB5.	Secondary method to gather information about the accuracy and consistency of local observations across the Ready Regions and to provide additional feedback in VQB5.
<b>Definition</b>	Coordinated and scheduled at the local level through Ready Regions, with results recorded in Link B5. Conducted by locally identified	Coordinated, scheduled, and recorded by an external organization. Conducted by externally identified reliable observers.



	reliable observers.	
<b>Annual Cycle</b>	In VQB5, all birth-to-five classrooms will get two local observations each year. One in the fall and one in the spring.	In VQB5, only some birth-to-five classrooms will get an external observation. All sites will receive external observations in at least one of their classrooms.

## **MEASURING INTERACTIONS WITH THE CLASS TOOL IN PRACTICE YEAR 2**

During Practice Year 2, VQB5 will use local CLASS observations to measure the quality of teacher-child interactions in infant, toddler and preschool classrooms, including family day homes, twice a year. Local CLASS observation data will be reported via the LinkB5 data portal.

- The fall observation window will be from August 22, 2022 to December 23, 2022
- The spring observation window will be from January 23, 2023 to June 9, 2023

Fall and spring local observations will be coordinated, scheduled, and recorded by the Ready Region assigned to each site.

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR LOCAL OBSERVERS**

In a local CLASS observation, certified observers from the local community (such as principals, site directors, early childhood coordinators or instructional specialists) conduct observations of the early childhood classrooms within their community. Beginning in Practice Year 2, local observations will be coordinated by Ready Regions.

In order to complete a CLASS observation, an individual must participate in a rigorous observer training and test to become “reliable” through Teachstone. Local observers must successfully complete observer training and pass the reliability test to receive an official observer card and certificate from Teachstone for each age group tool they will use. Observers must maintain their certification each year by taking an online recertification test. If more than a year has lapsed, observers need to take the CLASS Observer Training and certification again. Individual observers must become reliable for each version of the tool they observe with (Pre-K, Toddler, Infant).

Ready Regions will have discretion on who can perform local observations. Local observers may have working relationships with the sites and/or teachers they are observing. Note however that Ready Regions are encouraged to not allow observers to observe teachers that they have a direct personal relationship with, such as a spouse or other relative.

While the CLASS reliability training is time-intensive and in depth, Virginia continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to strengthening the understanding of the CLASS tool and building local observer capacity through local and state sponsored CLASS Observer Trainings. Since the start of the Preschool Development Grant in 2019, the number of certified observers has increased significantly, from around 400 in 2019 to 1200+ in 2022. During Practice Year 1, approximately 65% of the certified observers in Virginia are conducting local observations in PDG Communities (see Appendix A). With the number of participating sites expected to grow significantly over the next two years, VDOE will continue to work with Ready Regions to increase the number of certified observers in the Commonwealth.

When building a plan to train, support and schedule local CLASS observations, Ready Regions are expected to keep the following assurances in mind:

- Develop a deep bench of CLASS trainers and observers, with emphasis on building a diverse group of trainers and observers across all three relevant age groups: infant, toddler, and Pre-K.
- Be mindful of experience needed to observe certain program environments, such as inclusive settings or children with disabilities and Family Day Homes.
- Ensure a linguistic match between the observer and the primary language of instruction in the classroom.
- Develop regional policies and practices to support observer consistency and effectiveness of resulting feedback, such as establishing calibration and double-coding protocols and providing training/support group meetings for local observers to review observation and feedback protocols with their peers.
- Establish regional policies and practices that reduce opportunities for perceived bias, including process for reviewing and identifying any concerning trends, as well as any state established policies regarding personal relationships that are not allowed for observers (e.g., family member observing another family member).

## **PROCEDURES FOR LOCAL CLASS OBSERVATIONS**

The following procedures are to be followed for all local CLASS observations.

### **BEFORE THE OBSERVATION**

<p><b>Determining Which Tool to Use</b></p>	<p>Local observations will be conducted in all infant, toddler and preschool classrooms in sites participating in VQB5 using the following developmentally appropriate tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Infant CLASS should be used to observe classrooms that serve birth-18 months</li> <li>● Toddler CLASS should be used to observe classrooms that serve 15-36 months</li> <li>● Pre-K CLASS should be used to observe classrooms that serve 3-5 year olds.</li> </ul> <p>For observations in mixed-age classrooms and family day homes, the following guidelines are to be used to determine the appropriate age-group tool.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If the classroom contains a mix of infants, toddlers, and Pre-K aged children, use the tool that matches the majority of the children. For instance, if a classroom includes 1 infant, 1 toddler, and 5 Pre-K children, use the Pre-K CLASS tool.</li> <li>● If there are an equal number of children across age groups, use the Toddler tool. For instance, if a classroom includes 3 toddlers and 3 Pre-K children, use the Toddler CLASS tool.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Scheduling Observations and Notifying Teachers</b></p>	<p>Ready Regions must create a schedule to ensure all classrooms will be observed at least twice a year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The fall observation window will be from August 22, 2022 to Dec. 23, 2022</li> <li>● The spring observation window will be from January 23, 2023 - June 9, 2023</li> </ul> <p>Ready Regions are not required to notify teachers when observations are taking place. Ready Regions may provide teachers with a predetermined window of time during which unannounced observations may take place or they may decide to tell teachers the exact time and date.</p>
<p><b>Health &amp; Safety Procedures</b></p>	<p>Local setting (e.g., school-based, community-based) procedures and requirements for volunteers and visitors should always be followed (e.g., health &amp; safety; background check, identification presented). Observers should ask about these procedures prior to the observation.</p> <p>Additional health and safety guidance during COVID-19.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Observers need to verify the date and time of the observation and learn what procedures the site has in place to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Observers need to understand additional health and safety COVID-19 requirements for being onsite and obtain appropriate personal protective equipment.</li> <li>● Observers need to follow site-level required vaccination, mask-wearing and sanitizing procedures upon entering the classroom and maintain the suggested or required physical distance from others, both adults and children, at all times.</li> </ul>
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**DURING THE OBSERVATION**

<b>Length of Observations</b>	<p>Pre-K and Toddler Observations include four 20-minute observation cycles with a 10-minute coding session following each cycle (approximately 2 hours total).</p> <p>Infant CLASS observations include four 15-minute cycles with a 10-minute coding session following each cycle.</p> <p>There are a few circumstances where it is allowable for a cycle to be less than 20 minutes, such as a fire drill or sudden illness of the teacher that occurs in the middle of an observation cycle. In these situations CLASS codes can still be assigned provided that at least 10 minutes of observation have occurred. Local observers should use the guidance in Chapter 2 of each age-level CLASS manual, in the section on "<i>Rules for What to Observe and Terminating a Cycle</i>".</p>
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<b>Activities to Observe</b>	<p>Observers should ask about the typical classroom schedule prior to the observation to ensure that both structured and unstructured times of the day can be observed.</p> <p>Activities, transitions and routines, including snacks and meals, in the morning or afternoon may be observed (mornings are typically preferred).</p> <p>Time periods that should not be observed include: when the whole group leaves the classroom for “specials” which are taught by a different teacher (such as PE, music, art).</p> <p>Observation of outdoor activities varies by age-level. Observers should follow the guidance in each age-level manual to determine whether or not outdoor activities should be included in the observation cycle.</p>
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<p><b>Adults to Observe</b></p>	<p>The lead teacher should be present. Long-term substitutes may be observed (e.g., typically any lead teacher present in the classroom for 10 consecutive days). Short-term substitutes for the lead teacher should not be observed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A director or floater teacher who has led instruction for 10 <u>non-consecutive</u> days within the observation window, can also be observed)</li> </ul> <p>CLASS observations provide a classroom-level score that includes overall teacher-child interactions including children’s interactions with the lead teacher and any other adults (e.g., instructional assistant). Observers should follow the CLASS manual, which states that observers watch children’s interactions with all teachers/adults in the room/area.</p>
<p><b>Observer Interactions</b></p>	<p>Observers should use a gaze that appears to float over the teacher, child or group rather than directly staring at individuals for long periods of time.</p> <p>If children approach the observer, observers should only acknowledge their presence with a warm smile or a nod. More engagement than this may cause the observer to distract from classroom processes being observed, and potentially disrupt the classroom and observation results.</p>
<p><b>Scoring Cycles</b></p>	<p>For the 10-minute coding sessions following each 20-minute observation cycle, observers may select to remain in the classroom or leave the classroom to complete coding.</p> <p>Observers do not conduct observations during the 10-minute coding sessions.</p> <p>Observers do not conduct more than four cycles of observations.</p>
<p><b>AFTER THE OBSERVATION</b></p>	
<p><b>Determining Scores</b></p>	<p>When determining CLASS scores, observers follow the guidelines on the appropriate pages of the CLASS manual and CLASS Scoring Summary Sheet.</p>
<p><b>Submitting Scores</b></p>	<p>Local observation scores are entered into the <a href="#">LinkB5</a> data portal following the procedures outlined in the Link B5 CLASS Score Entry Instructions.</p>

	Scores for Toddler and PreK Negative Climate should be entered in LinkB5 as the raw score (not reversed).
<b>Record Keeping</b>	<p>Scoresheets with notes from local observations must be saved as back-up documentation for at least two years after the observation.</p> <p>After the observation and feedback form has been completed, observers send their CLASS score sheets to the Ready Region lead agency. It is also acceptable for scoresheets to be stored securely by the observer as long as they are easily accessible if requested for an audit by the Ready Region Lead and/or the state.</p>
<b>ADDITIONAL OBSERVATION GUIDANCE</b>	
<b>Observation Guidance during COVID-19</b>	<p>Observers are to use the following dimension level COVID-19 guidance provided by Teachstone when conducting in-person observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Pre-K COVID in-person observation guidance</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Toddler COVID in-person observation guidance</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Infant COVID in-person observation guidance</a></li> </ul>
<b>Resources and Information</b>	<p>Additional observation resources, COVID related information, as well as answers to frequently asked questions are provided on the <a href="#">AEII Conducting CLASS Observations Tools and Resources</a> website.</p>

## **ENSURING CONSISTENCY IN OBSERVATIONS DURING THE PRACTICE YEARS**

Reliable local CLASS observers must participate in routine practice to maintain consistency and avoid drift in their scoring. There are several important strategies that can be used to support observer consistency and accuracy, including:

- Annual recertification through Teachstone helps ensure continued accurate use of the CLASS observational measure.
- Double coding, also referred to as shadow scoring, occurs when two reliable CLASS observers conduct a CLASS observation at the same time to compare scores for and practice their skills. Observations conducted for double-coding would not be used for the official fall or spring observation.

- Teachstone’s online CLASS calibrations provide an avenue for observers to check themselves between annual recertification tests. Participants practice coding classroom videos online and receive immediate feedback on their scoring.

In addition to the strategies mentioned above, it is also important for local observers to engage in professional development on possible bias in early childhood education to learn how to avoid misinterpreting behaviors which can affect scoring.

During Practice Year 2, Ready Regions will develop and implement plans for supporting local observers to avoid drift and increase consistency. Regional plans should include the use of double coding and/or calibrations for new observers, as well as a selection of experienced observers, at least every 6 months.

## **EXTERNAL OBSERVATIONS DURING THE PRACTICE YEARS**

External classroom observations are conducted by a certified CLASS observer who is not employed by the program and has no relationship to the school, program or classroom. This reduces the risk of actual or perceived observer bias. In addition, external observers participate in regular training to maintain their observation skills. These requirements ensure external classroom observations are conducted reliably and consistently statewide for compatibility.

During VQB5 Practice Year 1 (2021-2022) external observations are being coordinated, scheduled, and recorded by Advancing Effective Interactions and Instruction (AEII). In Practice Year 1, up to 600-700 randomly selected birth to five classrooms are receiving an external CLASS observation, representing 20 percent of the total number of classrooms that are participating in Practice Year 1 of VQB5.

- As of March 2022, 202 external observations have been completed, with another 600 expected to be completed by June 10, 2022.
- An alignment analysis comparing local and external observation consistency will be completed by AEII in July 2022.

During Practice Year 2, VQB5 will be available to Virginia’s approximately 9,000 publicly-funded birth-to-five classrooms. The number of external CLASS observations needed will increase significantly to approximately 4,500 (or 50% of participating classrooms), with at least one external observation conducted at every participating site.

In November 2021, VDOE issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a vendor to coordinate and manage external CLASS audits for VQB5. The external CLASS observation vendor is expected to be announced in late spring 2022. VDOE will work with the third party vendor to conduct external observations on a selection of classrooms that are participating in VQB5 Practice Year 2.

The external vendor will be responsible for the following:

- Recruiting and training sufficient reliable infant, toddler and PreK observers to conduct external observations statewide. (Local Observers cannot serve as external observers within the same geographic region).
- Developing a conflict of interest policy to assure that there is no direct or perceived conflict of interest between the external observer and any provider the observer is scheduled to observe.
- Conducting ongoing reliability checks for external observers (i.e. double coding and calibrations) to ensure continued reliability to CLASS, including setting rigorous internal standards for reliability, inter-rater reliability and calibration.
- Ensuring observers are prepared to conduct observations in all age levels and program types.
- Conducting external CLASS observations for the number of classrooms determined by the State within the annual designated fall and spring observation windows.
- Reporting all external CLASS observation scores to VDOE through the LinkB5 data portal.
- Providing written feedback summarizing observation results by dimension to every teacher and site administrator receiving an external CLASS within 10 business days of the observation.

Information gathered from external observations during the practice years is used to support local observers, so that educators receive consistent observations and additional feedback. Local and external observation alignment data will be used by Ready Regions to develop and implement plans for supporting their local observers. This data will also be used by the state to guide the development of future guidelines and protocols for CLASS observation quality. During Practice Year 2, local observers and educators will receive feedback from external observations, however scores from external CLASS observations will not count towards the practice year ratings.

#### *External Observations in VQB5 Year 1 (2023-2024)*

Following the practice years, VQB5 will begin the first full year of implementation. In VQB5 Year 1 (2023-2024), all 9,000 publicly-funded birth-to-five classrooms will be required to participate in VQB5. Virginia intends to increase the number of external CLASS observations to approximately 6,500 (or 75% of classrooms), with every age-level at a site receiving at least one external observation. Doing so will provide sufficient data to ensure consistency and fairness across the state in all programs and age levels served. Similar to Practice Year 2, local observation scores will be compared to external scores completed within the same classroom to provide additional insight into the potential differences between local and external observers. However, it is expected that there will be more specific protocols to address significant



discrepancies between local and external observation results. As part of finalizing the guidelines for VQB5 Year 1 (2023-2024), the Board of Education, with recommendation from the [Early Childhood Advisory Committee](#) (ECAC), will establish these protocols for identifying inconsistencies, sharing that information with Ready Regions and local observers and adjusting results to ensure consistency and fairness statewide.

## **PREPARING EDUCATORS FOR CLASS OBSERVATIONS**

Before classroom observations are conducted, teachers and program leaders need to understand what is being measured and why. Ready Regions will be responsible for ensuring that all teachers and leaders are provided with foundational CLASS training. During foundational training, teachers and program leaders will view videos from real classrooms to view effective teaching practices in action in alignment with the domains and dimensions in CLASS. Foundational CLASS training also provides information about what teachers can expect when an observer comes to their classroom as well as an overview of the types of information they'll receive after an observation.

Foundational CLASS training for teachers focuses on the CLASS tool that covers the age level of the children in their classroom, including how the CLASS tool organizes interactions by domains and dimensions, for a specific age level. Foundational CLASS training for program leaders focuses on CLASS tools for different age levels in the program. Foundational CLASS training is different from reliable observer training in that it is much shorter and accessible via online and in-person options.

## **PROVIDING FEEDBACK TO SUPPORT IMPROVEMENT**

Providing teachers with quality feedback regarding their local CLASS observation is a critical component of the improvement practice. One of the largest benefits of local CLASS observations is that teachers can receive more frequent feedback on their practice, often from a local individual who already supports their practice (such as when the observer is a site leader or coach).

These [feedback protocols](#) should be used to prepare for and guide effective feedback sessions, which include:

- Starting with a general conversation and work to make the teachers feel comfortable.
- Orienting the teachers to the structure of the local feedback form.
- Reviewing domain level scores, calling attention to general trends.
- Highlighting areas of strength (focus on the positive) and then one area for growth by domain, unpacking specific examples.
- Working with the teachers to determine a dimension or one aspect of a dimension to be an area of focus.

- Discussing how the teachers can focus on this area of interactions in the coming weeks in his/her daily classroom interactions with children.
- Identifying specific strategies or action steps so that the teachers can practice teacher interactions in a targeted manner.

Additional guidance and resources for providing effective feedback are available in the [VDOE Local Observation Guidebook](#).

## **SUPPORT ON CLASS FOR ONGOING IMPROVEMENT**

Results from local observations administered twice a year through Ready Regions will be used by instructional leaders to inform ongoing professional development and assess growth in teacher-child interactions over time. Increasing capacity and knowledge of quality interactions at the local level promotes shared understandings of the strong principles of high-quality teaching in early childhood settings that are highlighted in the CLASS tool. Having program or school division leaders trained to reliability in CLASS enables them to bring the CLASS lens to every aspect of their work. External observations provide an additional opportunity for feedback and help ensure that observation results are used consistently to support improvement and assess growth over time.

Feedback providers and other professional development providers must ensure that teachers receive ongoing support to grow in areas of need through individualized professional development. This may include activities such as:

- Practice-focused professional development (in whole/small group sessions or online module formats) that introduce key knowledge pieces and then help teachers plan for and practice improvements.
- Action planning (in coaching or peer-learning communities) followed by regular feedback/analysis loops with colleagues (coach/admin/peer teachers) where teachers reflect on what worked in their classrooms and how to incrementally improve.
- Informal “walk-throughs” or “focused observations” targeted to specific action plan areas (e.g., one CLASS dimension) so that teachers can focus on improving one practice at a time and receive frequent feedback on that practice.
- Using CLASS data alongside other data sources (curriculum use, environment, child outcomes) to identify common needs. Research suggests that children benefit the most when interactions and instruction, guided by a strong curriculum, are maximized.

Additional information about continuous quality improvement for improving teacher-child interactions is provided in section 7.

# SECTION 5: MEASURING USE OF QUALITY OF CURRICULUM

## BACKGROUND ON EARLY CHILDHOOD QUALITY CURRICULUM

Use of curricula in an early learning program is a critical first step to supporting learning in every birth-to-five classroom. Professional support and ongoing training on using curricula effectively with diverse learners in mind is essential for successful implementation. Early data gathered during Practice Year 1 on curriculum use indicate significant disparities in site and classroom level access to quality curricula based on program type (see Appendix A). For this reason, the VDOE will continue to support classrooms in obtaining and implementing this foundational resource during Practice Year 2, with the goal of strengthening the implementation of curricular materials and content in future years.

## VIRGINIA'S BIRTH TO FIVE EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS - FOUNDATION FOR QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL TOOLS

A core component of a high-quality early education experience is that children are provided opportunities, experiences, and materials that allow them to engage deeply within developmental/early learning domains to build their school readiness skills. In 2020, a new set of unified birth to five early learning standards were created to replace the previous VDOE Foundation Blocks and VDSS Milestones of Child Development. [Virginia's New Unified Early Learning and Development Standards](#) (ELDS) are a foundational school readiness resource that, through effective implementation, help educators create conditions for the success of all of Virginia's youngest learners. All programs were expected to implement the new standards during the 2021-2022 school year.

The ELDS are designed for adults who care for and teach young children in a variety of settings including family day homes, center-based child care, Head Start classrooms, early intervention programs, private preschools, public early childhood programs, and Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) classes. The ELDSs provide all early childhood providers, inclusive of parents/families, teachers and program leaders, a resource for understanding what children should know and be able to do as they grow and change from birth until they enter kindergarten. **The ELDS are not intended to serve as a developmental checklist, an assessment, or a curriculum.**

These ELDSs organize information into five Areas of Development. While not reflective of the true, integrated nature of development, this organization aims to help educators know what to

encourage and what to look for as they support and keep watch over a child’s development and learning. The Areas of Development include:

- Approaches to Play and Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Communication, Language, and Literacy Development
- Health and Physical Development
- Cognitive Development (including Science, Social Science, Mathematics and Fine Arts)

Each Area of Development is organized further into Sub Areas and Focus Areas. Each Focus Area, in turn, details Indicators that describe a developmental progression of how we expect a child to change across six overlapping age-bands, from birth to age 5. When Focus Areas include skills that develop during the later years, the developmental progression will start at the appropriate age range leaving earlier columns blank. This organization aims to underscore the reality that, while development occurs along a general, expected trajectory, an individual child will not necessarily conform to an exact timeline for achieving milestones. Each child will also, by virtue of individual, environmental, and cultural differences, demonstrate a milestone in varied ways. The ELDS can be used by individual educators and early childhood programs to understand how children build skills and understanding, in different areas of development, from birth to five and discern whether a particular child is learning and growing according to general expectations.

## **DEFINING CURRICULUM FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD**

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), “curriculum” is the organized framework that delineates the content children are to learn, the processes through which children will use to achieve the identified curricular goals, what teachers will do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur.<sup>29</sup> Essentially, a curriculum identifies the “what” and “how” of the learning experiences children will have.

Curriculum, or the content of what children learn, is central to supporting and strengthening young children’s learning and development. According to NAEYC, educators and other stakeholders in young children’s lives have a shared responsibility to implement a curriculum that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, comprehensive, and likely to promote positive outcomes for all young children.<sup>30</sup> Quality early childhood curriculum uses a strengths-based approach to teaching that is rooted in respect for all children’s learning and development. Curriculum should support

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<sup>29</sup> Marjorie, K., Anne, S., Alice, W., & Michelle, R. (2018). *Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum: Best Practices in Early Childhood Education*.

<sup>30</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE). (2003).

interactions, learning experiences, and learning materials that support responsive early learning experiences for all children and families.

### *Infant Toddler Curriculum*

The development that occurs from birth to three, lays the foundation for all later learning.<sup>31</sup> To ensure an effective foundation for later development and success, infant/toddler experiences should be designed to meet the individual needs of each child. Because the developmental foundation built during this period has lifelong implications, the responsibility for children’s learning while in out-of-home care is too significant to be left to chance. An individualized curriculum provides a way for teachers to be intentional about the way they support development and learning with children under three and ensures that all aspects of development are being monitored and appropriately supported in a variety of ways.

## **INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALITY CURRICULUM FOR ALL**

Virginia must ensure that more educators have access to and are supported to use a quality curriculum. Currently, access and familiarity with quality curriculum tools varies dramatically across program types in Virginia. Nearly all school-based and Head Start programs already use an approved preschool curriculum. By contrast, family day homes and small child care centers are significantly less likely to have a curriculum in place, or to be participating in ongoing training and assistance in implementing this important resource.<sup>32</sup> In Practice Year 1, VDOE has begun to address this gap by ensuring information about quality curriculum options and support to access quality curriculum at low to no cost are available for all birth to five programs. New approved curricula options, including an open-sourced ‘no to low’ cost curriculum option (STREAMin3) training and implementation resources have been developed during Practice Year 1, and are being targeted to those site types who need it most, specifically focusing on family day homes and child care. Once all publicly-funded classrooms have affordable access, Virginia will consider any necessary adjustments for measuring and supporting effective use of quality curriculum.

## **MEASURING CURRICULUM IN PRACTICE YEAR 2**

Curriculum will continue to be measured in Practice Year 2 by evaluating whether or not an early childhood program is using a VDOE-approved curriculum option in at least one classroom. Curricula must be comprehensive, integrated and aligned to the VA-ELDS among other baseline criteria for quality early childhood curriculum. A quality curriculum will provide educators with the information and supportive guidance they need to be successful in the classroom.

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<sup>31</sup> National Infant & Toddler Child Care Initiative @ ZERO TO THREE. (2010). *Infant/Toddler Curriculum and Individualization*.

<sup>32</sup> Based on 2019-2020 data from PDG and Virginia Quality

## OVERVIEW OF CRITERIA OF EFFECTIVE BIRTH TO FIVE CURRICULA BIRTH TO FIVE

The following criteria from the National Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center’s [Curriculum Consumer Report](#) measure the quality of infant, toddler, preschool and family day home (mixed-aged) curricula. These criteria are based on early childhood education research, the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS), and other standards for high-quality curricula (e.g., National Association for the Education of Young Children, Division for Early Childhood).

In Practice Year 2, the following criteria will continue to be considered when reviewing birth to five curricula for quality.

Criteria	Definition	Description
Evidence Base for Child Outcomes	Evidence from research demonstrates that the curriculum has been associated with children's positive learning outcomes.	The curriculum has been implemented and directly studied in early childhood programs, and the research showed significant, positive effects on children's developmental outcomes. Evidence of effectiveness has been obtained in rigorous research studies, such as randomized controlled trials or regression discontinuity designs. Research studies on the curriculum have optimally included multiple, diverse groups of children and teachers.
Research Based Curriculum	The curriculum provides research-based content and teaching practices to support children's development and learning	A research-based curriculum is consistent with research on how children develop and learn. Specifically, it provides rich content, teaching practices, and learning experiences that research has shown to be effective in supporting children's development and learning. A research-based curriculum focuses on domain-specific, developmentally appropriate content and skills that contribute to children's long-range development in each domain.
Scope and Sequence	The curriculum includes an organized developmental scope and sequence to support children's	A scope and sequence outlines what the curriculum focuses on and how the plans and materials support children at different levels of development. The scope refers to the areas of development addressed by the curriculum; the sequence includes plans and materials for learning experiences that progressively build from less to more complex, with the goal of

	development and learning	supporting all children as they move through the developmental progressions. A content-rich curriculum ensures that sequences of learning experiences include multiple, related opportunities for children to explore a concept or skill with increasing depth. Sequences of learning experiences should be flexible to respond to individual children's interests, strengths, and needs.
Alignment with Applicable Early Learning and Development Standards	The curriculum, or curricula, covers all areas of children's learning and development	Aligning curriculum with early learning and development standards, such as Virginia's Early Learning Standards or the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework <sup>33</sup> , identifies the extent to which key areas of development are addressed in the curriculum. A curriculum that is fully aligned with early learning standards is comprehensive and covers all areas of children's learning and development. Combining curricula that address specific domains may also be considered if tools meet other criteria.
Learning Goals for Children	The curriculum specifies learning goals for children.	The curriculum's learning goals are objectives for children's development and learning across domains. Learning goals should be measurable and developmentally appropriate. Measurable learning goals focus on skills, behaviors, and knowledge that are observable; developmentally appropriate learning goals are consistent with well-established developmental progressions. Teachers should be able to use a curriculum's learning goals to individualize learning experiences for all children, such as children from diverse cultures, children who are dual language learners (DLLs), children who are learning tribal languages, and children with disabilities or other special needs.
Ongoing Child Assessment	The curriculum provides guidance on ongoing child assessment.	Ongoing child assessment is a process of gathering information to understand and support children's development over time. Information gathered through observation and documentation helps inform curriculum planning, teaching, and individualizing for all children. Ongoing child assessment can also be used to periodically complete standardized and structured assessment instruments to evaluate

<sup>33</sup> Virginia's Birth to Five Early Learning Standards have been aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework

		children's developmental progress.
Parent and Family Engagement	The curriculum promotes parent and family engagement.	Parent and family engagement is a collaborative and strengths-based process through which early childhood teachers, families, and children build positive and goal-oriented relationships. It is a shared responsibility of families and staff that is built on mutual respect for the roles and strengths each has to offer. The curriculum provides culturally and linguistically responsive strategies to communicate with families and to engage families in children's learning.
Professional Development Materials to Support Implementation	The curriculum offers professional development and materials to support implementation and continuous improvement.	Professional development includes gaining the knowledge and skills required for effective implementation of a curriculum. Standardized training procedures include initial and ongoing training to support education staff as they learn to implement a curriculum with fidelity. Standardized training procedures provide consistent content and delivery methods across training sessions. Curriculum materials to support implementation include resources that come with a curriculum to help education staff understand how to use it. The materials may also include resources to help education managers and coaches support education staff to implement the curriculum effectively.
Learning Experiences and Interactions	The curriculum promotes rich learning experiences and interactions to support development across domains.	Rich learning experiences support and extend children's knowledge, understanding of concepts, and skills across domains. As children actively explore their learning environment by manipulating objects and investigating concepts, teachers interact with them to extend their exploration, thinking, and communication. The curriculum offers children ample opportunities to engage in hands-on exploration and provides teachers with guidance on how to extend children's exploration, thinking, and communication.(This also reinforces higher quality teacher-child interactions.) Rich learning experiences should be culturally and linguistically responsive and inclusive of children with disabilities, suspected delays, or other special needs.
Learning Environments	The curriculum provides guidance	Rich learning environments are nurturing spaces that support the development of all young children. The



and Routines	on how to set up rich learning environments and developmentally appropriate routines.	curriculum provides guidance on how to design developmentally appropriate schedules, routines, and indoor and outdoor opportunities for choice, play, exploration, and experimentation. (This also reinforces higher quality teacher-child interactions.) Learning environments include age-appropriate equipment, materials, and supplies. They also reflect home cultures and are flexible to support the changing ages, interests, and characteristics of a group of children over time.
Cultural Responsiveness	The curriculum supports cultural responsiveness.	Cultural responsiveness is a strengths-based approach to teaching and caregiving rooted in respect and appreciation for the role of culture in children's learning and development. A culturally responsive curriculum prompts teachers to learn about each child's strengths, abilities, experiences, and interests as developed within the child's family and culture. The curriculum provides guidance on how to modify and enhance curriculum plans and materials to build on these strengths, abilities, experiences, and interests with the goal of incorporating each child's culture into the classroom.
Linguistic Responsiveness	The curriculum supports linguistic responsiveness.	Linguistic responsiveness refers to teaching practices that support the learning, development, and engagement of children from diverse linguistic backgrounds. It includes supports for continued development of children's home or tribal languages by authentically incorporating children's languages into the learning environment. Furthermore, linguistically responsive practices can facilitate English acquisition. The curriculum provides scaffolding strategies to support children at any level of English knowledge to fully participate in the curriculum's learning experiences.
Individualization for Children with Disabilities, Suspected Delays or Other Special Needs	The curriculum provides guidance on how to individualize for children with disabilities, suspected delays, or other special needs.	Individualization for children with disabilities, suspected delays, or other special needs includes providing more specialized supports for children to access and participate in learning, social experiences, and activities. The curriculum's guidance for specialized supports includes specific teaching practices and ways of interacting with children, as well as adaptations to daily schedules, learning activities, and the learning environment.

		Individualizing for children with disabilities, suspected delays, or other special needs enables all children to access, participate, and thrive in early learning settings.
Individualization Based on Interests, Strengths and Needs	The curriculum offers guidance on how to individualize based on children's interests, strengths, and needs.	Individualization is a process of planning and implementing learning experiences that are responsive to each child's interests, strengths, and needs. Teachers reflect on their observations of each child and then plan the most effective ways to support each child's learning and development. When learning experiences are tailored to children's interests, they are more engaging and meaningful to children. Because children may vary in their developmental progressions, it is also important that the curriculum supports teachers in planning learning experiences that are responsive to individual children's strengths and needs. (This also reinforces higher quality teacher-child interactions.)

*Correlation between CLASS and Quality Curricula*

It should also be noted that some aspects of a quality curriculum help reinforce some of the quality measures and behaviors that are included in the CLASS tool, such as a curriculum that offers children ample opportunities to engage in hands-on exploration and provides teachers with guidance on how to extend children's exploration. A curriculum that offers guidance on how to individualize will help teachers be more responsive to individual children's strengths and needs. High quality teacher-child interactions are also supported by curricula that provide guidance on how to design developmentally appropriate schedules, routines, and opportunities for choice, play, exploration, and experimentation.

**CURRICULUM REVIEW PROCESS**

Through a comprehensive and expert-led curriculum review process, the VDOE will continue to help leaders identify quality curriculum during Practice Year 2. Programs that are participating in VQB5 Practice Year 2 will be prioritized for a curriculum review. Programs already using curriculum from the [VDOE approved list](#) do not need to request a curriculum review.

The chart below outlines the curriculum review process for the VQB5 Practice Years:

<p><b>Step 1: Program completes Curriculum Pre-Submission Checklist for Birth to Five Programs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programs first review their curriculum and the set of <u>baseline evaluation criteria</u> for review by completing the Curriculum Pre-Submission Checklist for Birth to Five Programs.</li> <li>● Curricula that meet the criteria will be considered by VDOE for a comprehensive review.</li> <li>● Curricula that <b>do not</b> meet the criteria outlined in the Curriculum Pre-Submission Checklist <b>will not</b> be moved forward in review.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 2: Program works with VDOE to facilitate expert review of curriculum and materials</b></p>	<p>Once VDOE reviews the Curriculum Pre-Submission Checklist for Birth to Five Programs from Step 1 and confirms all criteria have been met, a full curriculum review is initiated. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Working with the program to obtain copies of all resources included with the curriculum.</li> <li>● Completing an in-depth review of the curriculum and related materials using a rubric. This rubric is similar to the tool developed by the <u>National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning (NCECDTL)</u>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 3: Decision on curriculum is made</b></p>	<p>Curriculum is determined to be “Approved” or “Not Approved”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● This decision will be communicated to the requesting program via a letter. If approved, the curriculum will be added to the <u>Approved Curriculum List</u>.</li> </ul>

**LIST OF CURRENTLY APPROVED CURRICULUM**

The following curricula have been approved by the VDOE as of March 2022

- Infant, Toddler and Family Day Home (Mixed-Age) Curricula
  - Experience Early Learning/Mother Goose Time
  - Frog Street Infant
  - Frog Street Toddler
  - FunShine Express
  - High Scope Infant-Toddler Curriculum
  - PLAYWORKS
  - STREAMin3\*
  - The Creative Curriculum for Family Child Care, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition
  - The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition
  - The Gee Whiz Curriculum for Family Child Care

- **Preschool Curricula**
  - Big Day for PreK (\*retired)
  - Blueprint
  - Childtime Empowered Child
  - Connect4Learning
  - Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence
  - Curiosity Corner, 2nd Edition
  - Experience Early Learning/Mother Goose Time
  - Fairfax County Public Schools Pre-K Curriculum
  - Frog Street Pre-K
  - Frog Street Threes
  - FunShine Express
  - High Scope
  - KinderCare
  - LaPetite Academy Early Innovators
  - Learn Every Day
  - Opening the World of Learning (OWL; retired)
  - PLAYWORKS
  - STREAMin3\*
  - The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition
  - The InvestiGator Club PreKindergarten Learning System 2018
  - Three Cheers for Pre-K
  - Tools of the Mind
  - Virginia Beach Pre-K Curriculum
  - World of Wonders

\*Beginning in March 2022, the VDOE and the University of Virginia’s Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) is now offering open-source access to STREAMin3 as a low-to-no-cost curriculum option for all birth-to-five classrooms, including infant, toddler, preschool, and mixed-age classrooms such as family day homes. STREAMin3 will include training and professional development to support educators that choose to use the model in their programs. (More about STREAMin3 in Section 7)

## **PROCEDURES FOR GATHERING CURRICULUM INFORMATION AND ASSURING ACCURACY**

Curricula use will be reported at the classroom level for every site. This data will be reported via the LinkB5 data portal. In the fall of Practice Year 2, sites will first be asked to enter the curriculum information via LinkB5 site classroom profiles to document curriculum use as part of their annual LinkB5 site profile. Please note, however, that sites will have the opportunity to update the curricula used as of May 31, 2023. This allows additional time for the VDOE to

continue to review existing curriculum and to ensure access to resources for sites that may not currently have an approved curriculum.

The VDOE may conduct a site audit by requesting documentation to support the validity of the curriculum information submitted.

## **PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR CURRICULUM USE**

As noted above, an effective curriculum includes professional development resources and materials to support implementation and continuous improvement. Professional development includes gaining the knowledge and skills required for effective implementation of a curriculum to meet the unique needs of diverse learners. The professional development materials that come with the curriculum should be used by education leaders, trainers and coaches to provide both initial training and ongoing support for teachers to implement the curriculum effectively. Training on curricula is an iterative process that also requires program leaders' fostering of collaboration between experienced and new teachers around curriculum development to orient new teachers to their curriculum, helping them figure out what to teach and how to teach it.

Additional information about continuous quality improvement to support effective curriculum implementation is provided in section 7.

# SECTION 6: SETTING PROGRAM QUALITY MEASURES

Similar to Practice Year 1, all participating sites will receive an overall practice year rating at the end of Practice Year 2. Overall scores will range from 100-800 based on CLASS scores and the use of curriculum and correspond to one of three levels on the rating scale, ranging from Needs Support to Exceeds Practice Year Expectations. In addition, Practice Year 2 sites will receive a site quality profile, which will include information about each site, along with their practice rating results. (see section below for more info on the site quality profile).

For VQB5, a program is defined as one site based on the physical location. Each site (e.g., each public school location, each child care center, etc.) will receive one site quality profile, which will include their site's practice rating, based on the measures obtained during the practice year. This means each school, child care center or family day home will receive a rating specific to their physical location.

In a few situations where there are multiple programs with differing governing bodies located at the same physical location, and children from each program are served in different classrooms, programs may request to be rated separately (i.e. separate site quality profiles). VDOE will review the individual program policies and other related program documentation (such as classroom enrollment details or partnership agreements) to make this determination.

During the practice years, site level results will be private and there will not be any incentives or consequences based on the results. Rather, program leaders will use the practice year results to understand the close connection between teacher-child interactions, instruction and child outcomes as they work with local leaders and teachers to prioritize pressing needs. State level results will be used to ensure the system is equitable for all program types, and improve the system for future years.

## DEFINITIONS OF QUALITY LEVELS FOR PRACTICE YEARS

The following scale describes how well sites are meeting the quality standards during the practice years.

- **Exceeds Practice Year Expectations** - The site performing at this level demonstrates performance that consistently and considerably surpasses the established standard. This rating is reserved for performance that is truly exemplary and done in a manner that exemplifies the state's mission and goals for the practice years.

- **Meets Practice Year Expectations** - The site meets the standard in a manner that is consistent with the state’s mission and goals for the practice years.
- **Needs Support** - The site is performing below the established standard or in a manner that is inconsistent with the state’s mission and goals for the practice years. Sites that fall into this category within the practice years will be a priority for improvement support.

## DETERMINING SITE RESULTS (PRACTICE YEAR 2 RATING)

The annual site quality rating is calculated at the end of the annual data collection cycle (i.e. end of the academic year). The site results are based on measurement data collected from fall and spring Local CLASS observations entered into the LinkB5 system, and from classroom curriculum information collected from the LinkB5 site profile.

A site will receive a complete Practice Year 2 rating if:

1. They are registered in LinkB5 as of September 16th, 2022, and
2. All of their full-time\* classrooms have both fall and spring observations.

A classroom will be included in the site’s calculated complete Practice Year 2 rating if:

1. The classroom is registered in LinkB5 as of September 16th, 2022,
2. The classroom is observed in both the fall and the spring observation windows, and
3. The classroom is operating as full time\*.

A site will receive an incomplete Practice Year 2 rating if:

1. They are registered in LinkB5 as of September 16th, 2022, and
2. They have any full-time\* classrooms that are missing either a fall and spring observations or are missing both observations. This only applies to full-time classrooms added prior to September 16th deadline.

*\*Full-time refers to a site/classroom which operates at least four days per week for at least 128 days per year, with classes that operate for a minimum of 3.5 hours per day).*

New sites and/or classrooms, added after the September 16th registration deadline, will not be included in the Practice Year 2 Rating Calculation.

## CALCULATING INTERACTION POINTS

Interaction points are determined by using an overall CLASS average score for the site. This site score is calculated using the average CLASS scores from every eligible classroom including both

fall and spring results, based on classroom registration information as listed above. All age-levels are weighted equally and scores are averaged at the dimension level to provide a reflection of what is happening in the classroom.

Using classroom average scores at the dimension level allows for consistent quality measurement across the Infant, Toddler and Pre-K CLASS tools. In addition, using average classroom and site scores rewards incremental improvements as well as offers the most overall transparency and fairness in terms of ratings.

VDOE will use the following steps to calculate the overall site average at the end of the academic year, after both the fall and spring observations are completed.

1. Determine the dimension scores for each classroom observed.
  - a. Individual cycle scores for each dimension are averaged across the four observation cycles to determine the composite dimension level score.
2. Determine overall CLASS score for each eligible classroom in the fall and then again in the spring
  - a. Calculate average CLASS score for each classroom by summing the scores for each dimension and dividing by the number of dimensions for the specific age-level tool.
2. Determine average CLASS score for each age-level in the fall and then again in the spring
  - a. Calculate the average CLASS scores for each age-level (Infant, Toddler, Pre-K), by summing the overall scores for each classroom within the same age level and then dividing by the number of classrooms within the same age level.
3. Determine the overall average CLASS score for the site.
  - a. Calculate an overall average CLASS score for each age level by summing the fall and spring average scores and dividing by 2.
  - b. Calculate the overall average CLASS score by summing the age level average scores and dividing by the number of age levels served

All scores are rounded to two decimal places. If the digit in the thousandths place is greater or equal to 5, the hundredths digit is increased by one unit. For example, 4.6378 is rounded to 4.64

The average CLASS score for a site will be multiplied by 100 for the Practice Year 2 Rating, resulting in a maximum score of 700 points from the CLASS observation portion of the measurement.



## CALCULATING CURRICULUM POINTS

The site curriculum score is calculated using the classroom curriculum information entered each year. For Practice Year 2, this will include the following:

- Sites who are using an approved curriculum in at least one classroom are awarded 100 points for the Practice Year 2 rating.
- Sites who are not using an approved curriculum receive 0 points for curriculum.
- The VDOE will continue to partner with programs participating in Practice Year 2 to provide support in obtaining and implementing a curriculum, including providing access to the StreamIn3 curriculum to all programs. The goal for Practice Year 2 is that all VQB5 programs have multiple pathways to obtaining this valuable learning resource.
  - In order to fairly measure curriculum use during the practice years, this measure will be reflective of what is in place on May 31, 2023. In future years, it is expected this will be moved up to require the fall timeline.
  - Use of curricula in an early learning program is only a first step in ensuring appropriate learning and scaffolding is taking place in every birth-to-five classroom. Professional support and ongoing training on curricula use is just as essential for successful implementation. For Practice Year 2, the VDOE will continue to support classrooms in obtaining and implementing this essential and foundational resource, with the goal of increasing the importance of quality implementation of curricular materials and content in future years.

## COMPUTING THE OVERALL SITE SCORE FOR THE PRACTICE YEARS

The overall site score for during the practice years will be calculated by adding the interaction points and the curriculum points together. The total score will be out of a maximum of 800 points.

Practice Year ratings will be broken down by the following ranges:

- A score between 700 and 800 points results in Exceeds Practice Year Expectations rating
- A score between 400 and 699 points will result in Meets Practice Year Expectations
- A score between 100 and 399 points will result in Needs Support

<b>Interactions Points</b> (700 pts total)	Average of all CLASS scores from the fall and the spring ( <i>all classrooms</i> at a site) x 100 points
<b>Curriculum Points</b> (100 pts total)	Sites using an approved curriculum in <i>at least one classroom</i> will receive 100 points.

<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	Interactions Points + Curriculum Points = Total Points
<b>QUALITY RATING (Practice Year Rating)</b>	Exceeds Practice Year Expectations = 700 - 800 points Meets Practice Year Expectations = 400 - 699 points Needs Support = 100 - 399 points

*Practice Year Rating Example*

ABC Child Care Center	Fall CLASS Average	Spring CLASS Average	Overall Average	Approved Curriculum Used?
1 Infant Classroom	4.25	4.75	4.5	No
1 Toddler Classroom	4.10	4.17	4.14	No
1 Pre-K Classroom	3.82	4.35	4.09	Yes
<b>Site Total</b>	----	----	<b>4.24</b>	<b>Yes</b>

Overall Practice Year 2 Rating

Interactions Points = 4.24 x 100 = 424 points  
 Curriculum Points = 100  
 Total Points = 524 (Meets Practice Year Expectations)

**DEVELOPMENT OF SITE QUALITY PROFILES IN PRACTICE YEAR 2**

With input from the field, VDOE will develop a site quality profile prototype to include information about performance on measurements (i.e., practice rating results) and other topics of interest to families, policymakers and the general public to better prepare sites for the information that will be shared following the practice years. Note that the VDOE will lead an interactive process with families, practitioners and stakeholders to determine what other relevant information should be shared on these site-level profiles; this could include information such as improvement over time or information on key program elements (e.g., curriculum used). Note that this will be for informational purposes only; these elements will not affect the ratings.

- The Site Quality Profiles for Practice Year 2 would be shared privately with site administrators in the fall of 2023. These prototype profiles will not be posted publicly.

Feedback from the practice year site quality profile prototype will inform the development of the

public site quality profiles, to be shared in the fall of 2024. As part of finalizing the guidelines for VQB5 Year 1 (2023-2024), the Board of Education, with recommendation from the Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC), will review and approve the final version of the site quality profile.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF APPEALS PROCESS IN PRACTICE YEAR 2**

During Practice Year 2, VDOE will develop and provide a structured process for programs to request a review of decisions related to site/classroom eligibility, observation results, curriculum approval, practice rating or other applicable topic.

Information gathered during Practice Year 2 will help document the frequency and types of issues to inform the development of future guidelines and procedures, including the development of a formal appeals process in future years.

# SECTION 7: SUPPORTING CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

## QUALITY MEASUREMENT SUPPORTS IMPROVEMENT

Through the VQB5 system, Virginia will be primed to support ongoing quality improvement in all birth-to-five early learning classrooms.

All programs benefit from a shared vision for quality early teaching and learning. Identifying the core components of quality teaching and learning and aligning all improvement resources to these core components helps organize the system. Doing so helps ensure that each level of the system can create aligned targets for improvement and measure success in similar ways. Research has shown systems that focus on simple and consistent measures of quality can provide a feeling of control for educators, and can result in significant gains across all program types.<sup>34</sup>

Quality Improvement takes place on multiple levels within Virginia’s system: state, regional and local implementation partners, program leaders and classroom educators. Systems-level work to improve effectiveness and outcomes impacts—and is impacted by—change on the program and implementing partners’ levels.<sup>35</sup>

To improve child outcomes, Virginia’s system must continually improve supports for educators, prioritizing those who need it most. VQB5 must ensure that:

- **Educators**, including those in family day homes, centers, and school sites, receive consistent observations and frequent feedback on their teaching practice. Professional support and coaching will respond to what is known about their specific needs. Educators will have a foundational knowledge of quality, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices, and be provided assistance in making ongoing progress. Their commitment to improvement will be observable, and they will be confident that site leaders and improvement leaders will recognize their progress in measurable and consistent ways.
- **Program leaders**, such as child care directors, principals, or early childhood coordinators, receive frequent information about the strengths and areas for growth within their program(s). They will have access to improvement supports and professional

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<sup>34</sup> Bassok, D., & Markowitz, A. (n.d.). *The value of systemwide, high-quality data in early childhood education*. Brown Center Chalkboard.

<sup>35</sup> Billie, Y., & BUILD initiative. (2017). *Continuous Quality Improvement in Early Childhood and School Age Programs: An Update from the Field*.

development that are responsive to the specific behaviors or strategies identified by the consistent measures of teacher-child interactions and use of instructional tools. Progress resulting from commitments to quality improvement efforts will be reinforced through sustained measurement and feedback.

- **Improvement partners**, such as organizations that are contracted to provide technical assistance (coaching, mentoring, and consultation), training, professional development and other supports to early childhood programs, have accurate and current data to inform their work with each site and more specifically, each classroom. They will know that each educator and site leader has an understanding of the importance of teacher-child interactions and quality curriculum, and can begin from a place of a shared language and goals. They can use data to design improvement supports based on the detailed information known about each region, site, and classroom. The success of professional development intervention or initiative will be observable through the continual measurement and improvement process. Finally it will be easier to collaborate as everyone is working on similar efforts with a shared language and focus.

While VQB5's unified approach to measurement and improvement results in benefits for all programs and teachers, there will be a significant level of attention provided to those who most need improvement. VQB5 aims to ensure every child is receiving a quality early learning experience, and will intentionally focus on providing support to the educators who care for and teach children who are underserved or placed at the greatest risk of not fulfilling their potential.

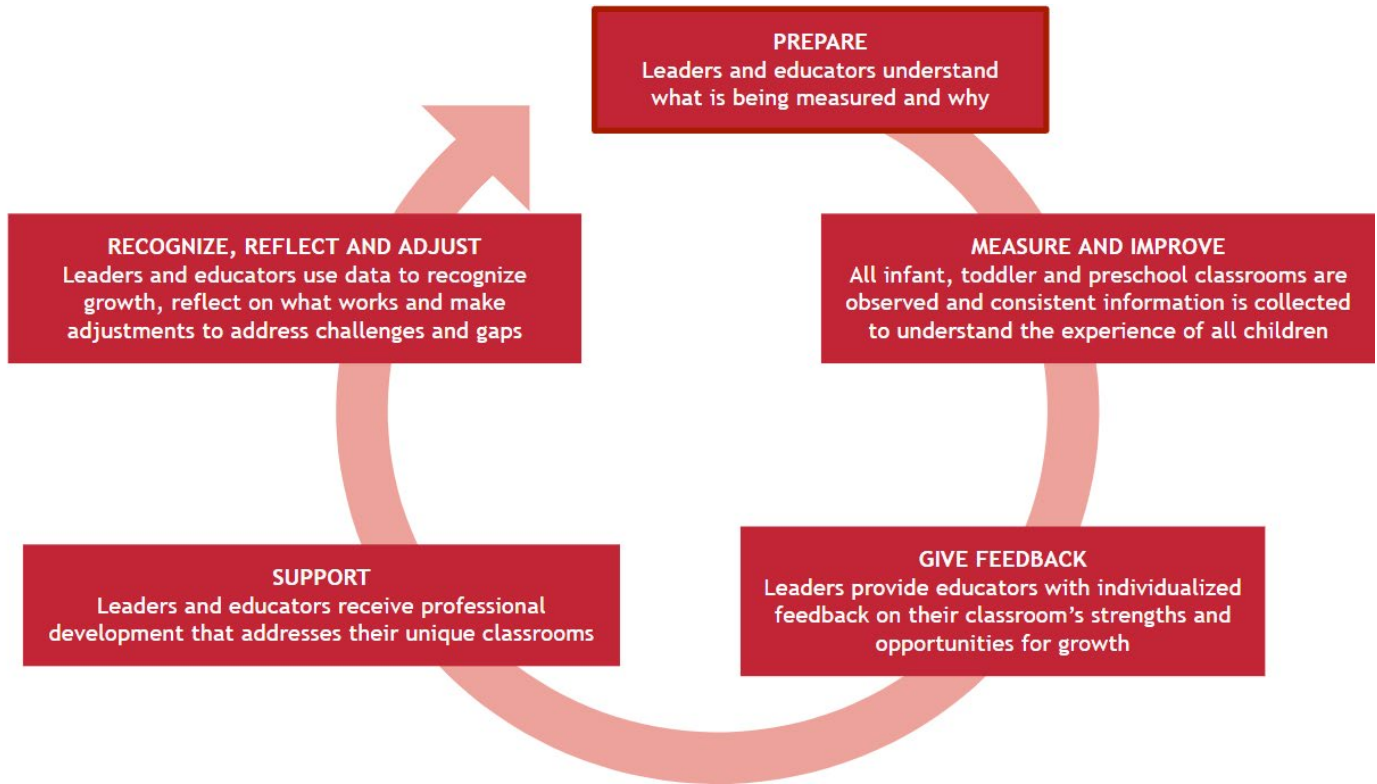
Through frequent measurement and feedback, the VQB5 will identify and intervene where needed, dedicating targeted interventions and state resources for programs and classrooms where support is most critical. Public resources will be targeted toward vQB5 programs in need of the most support or those with fewer resources which will likely include child care and family day home settings.

## **CYCLE OF CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

An important feature of VQB5 is that measurement, feedback, and supports are ongoing and frequent. Educators and leaders have opportunities to measure their progress multiple times a year. At the same time, reflection on data is embedded throughout the measurement cycle. This leads to continuous growth, year over year.

In VQB5, all educators and leaders begin by preparing for the annual cycle of measurement. This includes foundational training and guidance regarding the tools being used. Each classroom is measured throughout the year, with timely results shared with leaders and educators. Each time a classroom is measured, feedback is provided to the teacher(s) regarding the classrooms strengths and opportunities for growth. Leaders are able to identify professional development supports that respond to the unique needs of their program. Finally, as the measurement cycle for the year

closes and results are shared, educators at all levels reflect on the successes and challenges of the past year, and begin to prepare for the next cycle based on their reflections.



## **COORDINATING VIRGINIA'S EXISTING NETWORK OF QUALITY SUPPORTS IN PRACTICE YEAR 2**

Virginia is fortunate to have many quality improvement partners who are already providing professional support to birth-to-five educators in alignment with the goals and measured objectives of VQB5. In Practice Year 2, the VDOE will continue to strengthen the coordination and alignment of all state and federally funded quality improvement efforts to ensure VQB5 programs have the support they need. This includes ensuring supports are available consistently across Ready Regions.

The following list includes the current quality improvement partners that the VDOE works with and provides funding arrangements for through either federal or state funding sources. These providers are responsible for working with birth-to-five programs to provide training, coaching, or coursework intended to improve the early childhood system. Beginning in July 2022, Ready

Regions will work with these improvement partners to ensure there are professional development options, such as resources, coaching, training and learning communities, available to the VQB5 programs in their region.

*List of VDOE Quality Improvement Partners as of March 2022*

<b>VDOE Quality Improvement Partners: <i>Classroom and Program Support</i></b>	<b>Primary Purpose</b>	<b>Target Audience for Services</b>
Virginia Infant Toddler Specialist Network (vendor to be determined) (ITSN)	Improve the quality of care and education that infants and toddlers receive in child day centers and family day homes, by supporting success within VQB5, supporting education and competency, and supporting social emotional development strategies for infant and toddler caregivers, teachers, and directors.	Child care and family day home programs with children under 3, prioritizing supports for publicly funded infant and toddler programs participating in VQB5.
<a href="#">Advancing Effective Instruction and Interactions</a> (AEII)	Assist VQB5 programs (birth to five) in using data to improve the quality of teacher-child interactions, curriculum and professional development, focusing particularly on classrooms with demonstrated need.	All early childhood programs participating in VQB5, prioritizing supports for publicly funded programs.
<a href="#">Virginia Quality</a> Regional hubs (VQ)  <i>Note: VQ's current rating system ends in June 2022. All VQ levels will be frozen until new VQB5 site quality profiles are publicly released in the fall of 2024. (See VQ Transition Plan in appendix).</i>	Provide quality training and technical assistance to improve the quality of teacher-child interactions and curriculum for programs participating in VQB5, in collaboration with Ready Regions. Support Ready Regions with needs related to building and maintaining local observer capacity and local observation completion.	All early childhood programs participating in VQB5, prioritizing supports for publicly funded programs.
<b>VDOE Quality Improvement Partners: <i>Special Education Support</i></b>	<b>Primary Purpose</b>	<b>Target Audience for Services</b>

<a href="#">Training and Technical Assistance Centers</a> (TTAC)	Provide professional development, technical assistance, and resources to school divisions to improve the outcomes of students with disabilities.	School divisions providing special education services to young children with disabilities
<a href="#">VCU Autism Center for Excellence Early Childhood</a> (VCU-ACE)	Provide professional development, technical assistance, and resources to educators providing services to young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and to families raising and supporting young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.	School divisions providing special education services to young children Autism Spectrum Disorder and families with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder
<a href="#">Early Childhood Special Education Consortium</a> (ECSE Consortium)	Partnership with Radford University and Lynchburg University to provide coursework to Virginia preservice and in-service teachers pursuing a license and/or endorsement in ECSE.	ECSE teachers with provisional licensure, and other educators seeking ECSE endorsement
<b>VDOE Quality Improvement Partners: <i>Head Start Support</i></b>	<b>Primary Purpose</b>	<b>Target Audience for Services</b>
<a href="#">Virginia Head Start Association</a> (VHSA)	Provide training and advocacy support to enhance the growth of Head Start educators, agencies, partners and others who impact the lives of Head Start children and families.	Head Start and Early Head Start programs
<a href="#">Virginia Commonwealth University - Head Start Statewide Needs Assessment</a> (VCU)	VCU conducts an annual needs assessment for the Head Start Collaboration office that examines the relationships Head Start grantees have with state and community partners.	Head Start and Early Head Start programs
<b>VDOE Quality Improvement Partners: <i>Workforce Support</i></b>	<b>Primary Purpose</b>	<b>Target Audience for Services</b>



<a href="#">Child Care Aware of Virginia (CCA)</a>	Provide resource and referral services to connect families to high quality child care that is available and accessible in Virginia (family services, provider services, community), and to provide professional development opportunities.	Child care and family day homes, focusing on those who take public funding.
Virginia <a href="#">Child Care Provider Scholarship Program (VCCSP)</a>	Assists child care staff in completing undergraduate college courses required for a certificate or degree in early childhood education.	Child care and family day home educators.
<a href="#">Community College Workforce Alliance - Child Care Provider Training (CCWA)</a>	Distance learning courses to support completion of the Infant-Toddler and Pre-K endorsement programs.	Child care and family day home educators.
<a href="#">PD Essentials (previously called Virginia Cross-Sector Professional Development Team)</a>	Strengthen the skills of early childhood professional development providers to deliver high quality education, training, and technical assistance.	Early childhood professional development providers, and higher education staff.
Virginia’s Early Childhood Professional Development Registry ( <a href="#">IMPACT</a> )	Used to document and recognize the professional achievements of practitioners and trainers who work in early childhood education within the Commonwealth of Virginia.	Early Childhood educators in all settings and professional development providers.
<b>VDOE Quality Improvement Partners: <i>Early Childhood Mental Health</i></b>	<b>Primary Purpose</b>	<b>Target Audience for Services</b>
Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Pilot	Statewide consultation services that include collaborative, one-on-one coaching to help early childhood teachers and families promote young children's healthy social-emotional development based on identified needs.	Piloted in all types of publicly-funded center-based and school-based birth-to-five programs. Pilot is focused in particular areas of the state for FY23.

<b>VDOE Quality Improvement Partners:</b> <i>Focus on Principles of Early Learning and Development</i>	<b>Primary Purpose</b>	<b>Target Audience for Services</b>
Early Learning Standards Microcredential	Online training courses on the new learning guidelines for children ages birth to five, resulting in a microcredential	Pilot available to teachers in all birth-to-five settings, with a special focus on family day home and child care educators. Launch date Summer 2022.
<a href="#">Wolf Trap Early Childhood STEM Learning Through the Arts Initiative</a>	Provides on-site and online training in Early Childhood STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) and literacy.	Select school divisions, PK-1st grade
<a href="#">Literacy Lab</a>	Fellowship program that provides evidence-based literacy support to at-risk PreK students to diversify the educator pipeline, and assist fellowship participants in understanding the teacher education and licensure process in Virginia.	VPI and Head Start classrooms of participating local school divisions, and community-based early childhood centers. Currently offered in Northern VA (Metro DC area) and Central Virginia.
<b>VDOE Quality Improvement Partners:</b> <i>Health and Safety Support</i>	<b>Primary Purpose</b>	<b>Target Audience for Services</b>
<a href="#">Better Kid Care</a> - Penn State Extension	Online courses used to meet licensing & subsidy health and safety requirements.	Child care centers & family day home providers

In addition to the many quality supports listed here, Virginia’s early childhood landscape has a history of working with various early childhood accreditation organizations. These include organizations such as NAEYC, NAC, NAFCC, NECPA and Cognia, to name a few. While the function and requirements for each accreditation program varies, the primary purpose is to support professionalization and improvement. Accreditation organizations that provide

improvement supports related to quality interactions and curriculum will also be a key support for programs who have selected to seek accreditation.

## **SUPPORTING IMPROVEMENT PARTNERS**

The Quality Improvement Partners listed above are essential to the success of VQB5. With the most direct access into birth-to-five classrooms, ensuring ongoing support for quality interactions and curriculum through the coordination of these critical groups will be essential during the practice year.

During Practice Year 1, the VDOE launched several initiatives for Improvement Partners to collaborate and coordinate approaches for supporting VQB5 participating programs to be successful. These strategies will continue to expand during Practice Year 2, and will include:

1. **CLASS Coaching Collaborative** - Series of meetings to promote sharing/problem solving across different state improvement partners who provide coaching to VQB5 programs for improving the quality of teacher-child interactions (as measured by CLASS).
2. **Improvement Partner Webinars:** Quarterly webinars for professional development providers to increase understanding about VQB5 and how improvement partners can support programs participating in the practice years. Webinars also provide ongoing opportunities for improvement partners to provide feedback to VDOE on approaches for supporting improvement efforts.
3. **Development of New Resources:** As a result of the coaching collaboration, quarterly webinars, feedback from stakeholders and data, VDOE has supported the development of several new resources for VQB5 program leaders and improvement partners. This includes:
  - a. VQB5 Implementation Guide for Program Leaders (English/Spanish), along with a short overview Video to provide information about VQB5 measurement and improvement activities and resources.
  - b. CLASS Dimension Summary documents (English/Spanish) for the infant, toddler, and preschool age-levels, as well as a mixed-ages alignment summary document for use by programs who work with multiple age-levels, such as family day home providers.
  - c. Video tutorials, guidance documents and data worksheets designed to help site administrators and improvement partners access, understand and use site level CLASS data provided in LinkB5.
  - d. Crosswalks and correlation documents to help the field understand how different early childhood observation tools, resources and curricula align with VQB5 standards.
  - e. PD Toolkit (currently in development by AEII with input from coaching collaboration partners - VDOE, ITSN, VQ and TTAC). This toolkit will provide information and resources for program leaders and improvement partners who

support educators in Virginia’s Birth-to-Five programs, in alignment with the goals of VQB5.

In Practice Year 2, the VDOE will increase the opportunities for collaboration across improvement partners and VQB5 programs. The impact of improvement partners will be extended through the Ready Region Structure. Ready Regions are charged not with just supporting the measurement component of VQB5, but also supporting connections to the specific improvement resources programs need. With the new statewide Ready Region structure, all participating VQB5 programs will have a regional source for finding and connecting to the improvement partners that will best support them, based on their needs as established through VQB5. Finally, through a review of existing contracts and funding sources, the VDOE will continue to analyze any unmet needs or focus areas, and work with existing and new partners to design expanded services where needed.

## **VISION FOR ALIGNED SUPPORTS FOR VQB5 PROGRAMS**

Through Practice Year 2 and into future years, the VDOE will align improvement supports and initiatives to support the unified vision of quality reflected in VQB5. Working closely with Ready Region leads, VDOE will help ensure that this process is reflective of the needs and preferences of all educators and leaders. Ultimately, Virginia will achieve a set of directed intervention and improvement initiatives that are responsive to real time needs of educators through the use of VQB5 measurement data. The VDOE will work across improvement partners and data systems, such as LinkB5, to understand the effectiveness of various modes of intervention and support and practice a model of continuous reflection in dedicating resources towards targeted improvements.

While the areas for targeted support will evolve over time based on statewide data, the VDOE will ensure that there is appropriate focus on improvement for VQB5 programs who need targeted supports to improve the quality of teacher-child interactions and use of curriculum, as well as intervention supports to assist classrooms with specific needs.

### **TARGETED SUPPORTS FOR INTERACTIONS**

All programs in VQB5 will benefit from support related to teacher-child interactions. Training on the behaviors reflected in the CLASS tool will be an essential focus of professional development. This includes both foundational training on the importance of teacher-child interactions as well as ongoing targeted professional development and coaching to improve teacher practice in specific domains and/or dimensions of the CLASS tools.

Programs participating in VQB5 receive the following supports related to interactions:

- Training on the CLASS tool, including foundational CLASS and specific training on identified domains and dimensions (as available for free through the [Head Start In-Service Suite](#))
- Financial assistance in obtaining CLASS materials, such as Dimension Guides, CLASS manuals, online courses in multiple languages where needed
- Coaching on CLASS domains and dimensions (using Practice Based Coaching or similar coaching model) through new and existing coaching programs
- Tools to support self-assessment and action planning based on feedback from CLASS observations, facilitated by local supports
- Expanded local observer training, calibrations and support for recertification
- Professional Learning Communities on CLASS

Ready Regions will work with current improvement partners, such as Virginia Quality regional hubs, AEII, Infant Toddler Specialist Network, Head Start Technical Assistance Centers, and Virginia’s Training and Technical Assistance Centers to coordinate the implementation of interactions support activities.

## **TARGETED SUPPORTS FOR CURRICULUM**

Support in choosing, accessing and implementing an approved curriculum will be critical for Practice Year 2 of VQB5. Currently, access and familiarity with quality curricular materials varies amongst program types. Family day homes and small child care centers are significantly less likely to have a curriculum in place, or to be participating in ongoing training and assistance in implementing this important resource. For this reason, support for curriculum will be targeted at those program types who need it most.

Programs participating in VQB5 receive the following supports related to curricula:

- Assistance in choosing and obtaining approved curricula materials for the 32+ approved curriculum options
- Training on specific aspects of effective curriculum implementation (such as assessment, individualizing for children with special needs)
- Free access to the STREAMin3 curriculum and corresponding children’s books and training for programs who are interested in the STREAMin3 curriculum option (see below)
- Introductory training on implementing Virginia’s Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDs), Birth to Five Learning Guidelines and curriculum alignment.
- Virginia Early Learning and Development Standards micro-credential through the Radford University IMPACT Lab (Launching in Summer 2022)
- Training on curricula that align with CLASS (Crosswalk examples - Conscious Discipline; Creative Curriculum)

- Professional Learning Communities on Curriculum

Ready Regions will work with current improvement partners, such as Virginia Quality regional hubs, AEII, Infant Toddler Specialist Network, Head Start Technical Assistance Centers, Child Care Aware, and Virginia’s Training and Technical Assistance Centers to coordinate the implementation of curriculum support activities.

*Accessing Curriculum through STREAMin3 - Open Access Curriculum and Support*

The VDOE has partnered with STREAMin3 to provide a high-quality low-to-no-cost curriculum option to Virginia’s early learning programs. The partnership aims to:

- Provide access to a low-to-no cost comprehensive, birth-through-preschool, curriculum.
- Deliver free professional development (PD) to help programs adopt and use the curriculum.
- Develop sustainable resources so programs can use the curriculum and professional development resources beyond the initial rollout years at low-to-no cost.

Based on availability and need, publicly-funded classrooms in priority programs will receive the following at no cost:

- Printed curriculum guides and activities.
- A set of children’s books to use with the curriculum.
- Expanded professional development support through a cohort model.

All programs who request enrollment will receive access to:

- A web portal with a printable version of the complete curriculum (available in PDF format). This includes overview guides, activities, and other materials.
- An ongoing series of professional development webinars focused on getting to know STREAMin3 and getting started in your program.
- A professional development library of resources, available on the ECE Resource Hub. This, and other resources, are being expanded and will grow over time.

Programs will be prioritized if they are currently participating in VQB5 and not using a VDOE-approved curriculum, or if they are a publicly-funded child care center or family day home. The VDOE anticipates access to the priority supports will be available to most programs, with dedicated funding to provide priority supports to 4,000 classrooms over the next two years.

STREAMin3 is just one of many high quality curriculum options (see section 5 for the complete list as of March 2022). The VDOE will continue to work with all improvement partners to help sites identify the best curriculum option for their program’s needs, and to promote choice and options for birth-to-five programs in Virginia.

## **SUPPORTS FOR INTERVENTION**

Programs may demonstrate a need for intervention through a variety of means. This could include requesting assistance to manage a particularly challenging classroom, interpret concerning behaviors, or a response to particular CLASS or curriculum measures. Over time the VDOE will continue to evolve a robust set of targeted supports for classrooms needing interventions to assist with specific needs.

In Practice Year 2 the following targeted supports for intervention will include:

- Pilot of an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Model to address challenging behaviors
- Specific supports for teachers working with children that have identified special needs, including identifying needed resources and strategies to meet goals outlined in development plans
- Tiered Supports and coaching through Improvement Partners who have been tasked with responding to classrooms with identified low classroom interaction scores, or less developed professional development plans
- Funded interventions and trainings to focus specifically on infant toddler supports and the specific needs of teachers working with the youngest learners

Ready Regions will work with current improvement partners, such as AEII, Infant Toddler Specialist Network, Virginia's Training and Technical Assistance Centers, and Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Autism, Professional Development to assist with the identification of programs who demonstrate a need for intervention support.

## **SUPPORTS FOR INCLUSIVE PRACTICES**

Early childhood classrooms that serve diverse learners may need additional supports, resources, and tools to ensure all early childhood classrooms nurture active engagement and provide high quality teacher-child interactions for all children. For classrooms operating an inclusive model for children with identified disabilities, specific supports and training are necessary for the teachers (early childhood and early childhood special education) to ensure all children can access and participate in meaningful learning opportunities. It is important for teachers to present information and engagement opportunities in multiple ways and for children to be provided different ways to show what they know and can do, and how they are growing and progressing. Importantly, teacher-child interactions and engagement is not one-size-fits all, teachers must be flexible and adaptable with their approach to communication and sustained interactions. Finally, the classroom must be designed to be intentionally safe and supporting all children in the classroom, providing positive social-emotional supports to meet each child with the care they need.

The CLASS tool has been successfully used in inclusive early childhood classrooms nationwide and yields critical foundational information to teachers and site leaders on the quality of the teacher-child interactions taking place within a classroom.<sup>36</sup> However, some early childhood and special education experts have recommended using additional tools to measure the quality of inclusive classrooms. The Inclusive Classroom Profile (ICP) is a comprehensive, field-tested observational tool for classrooms serving children ages 2–5. It assesses 12 key practices with the strongest research base for supporting the education and development of young children in inclusive settings. In Virginia, the ICP has been used in many inclusive classrooms. Much of the current use of the ICP is facilitated through Virginia’s Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTAC). The ICP has been cross walked to the CLASS tool and aligns to several of the practices examined by CLASS.

In Practice Year 1, the VDOE worked with T/TACs to pilot the use of the ICP in some inclusive classrooms that were participating in VQB5 to examine and understand the alignment between the ICP and the CLASS. The pilot’s goals were to determine how the CLASS and ICP can inform the quality of daily classroom practices for children with disabilities in inclusive early childhood settings and to better understand how the CLASS and ICP can inform professional development to improve the quality of teacher-child interactions in early childhood inclusive settings. As of March 2022,

- TTAC conducted 29 ICP observations in VQB5 participating inclusive classrooms, and is expected to conduct another 29 ICP observations in the spring. Scores from fall and spring ICP scores will be compared to fall and spring CLASS observation results
- TTAC and VDOE developed ICP-CLASS correlations documents. These documents share the correlation between ICP and CLASS areas, providing educators and program leaders with examples of what effective interactions look like in the classroom.
- TTAC and VDOE conducted a teacher/ administrator survey to get feedback on use of ICP with the CLASS tool from the fall VQB5 pilot participants. Another survey will be conducted after the spring observations. Initial feedback indicated the following,
  - Most felt the ICP when used with the CLASS provided helpful information about teacher-child interactions and inclusive practices
  - There were mixed responses about when and how the ICP should be used in conjunction with the CLASS tool.

In June, VDOE will compare findings from the ICP to the VQB5 Practice Year information collected through CLASS observations and participant surveys to identify potential learnings for pilot continuation in Practice Year 2. The opportunity to participate in the pilot will also be offered through coordination with Ready Regions, with a goal of increasing overall pilot participation. The VDOE will use the collected information from the practice year’s pilot to

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<sup>36</sup> Teachstone. (n.d.). Recommendations for Using the CLASS in Inclusive Early Childhood Programs, Birth–Age 8



continue considerations for supporting improvement in inclusive classrooms in future years of VQB5.

## **PRIORITIZING SUPPORT FOR CHILD CARE AND FAMILY DAY HOMES**

Equitable opportunity and access to quality improvements is central to VQB5. Recent studies on Virginia’s early childhood workforce demonstrate key differences between the dedicated educators who work in child care and family day homes as compared to those in settings such as public schools. Nearly 40% of child care teachers have an annual household income under \$25,000, while this is true for only 1% of school-based early childhood teachers.<sup>37</sup> Child care centers and family day homes educators are more likely to experience indicators of financial insecurity and frequent turnover. COVID-19 has highlighted the significance of many of these disparities.<sup>38</sup>

VQB5 must recognize the inequities that exist in the early childhood landscape. When comparing resources and opportunities for professional learning and development, there are stark inequities in what is traditionally available for private programs, such as child care centers and family day homes. These sites, which serve our most vulnerable and youngest learners, are often less resourced. Investments and efforts related to improvement must prioritize access for Virginia’s child care and family day homes. Through the VDOE’s work with improvement partners, supports for the child care centers and family day homes most in need will be prioritized.

## **RECOGNIZEB5 - FINANCIAL RECOGNITION FOR VIRGINIA’S EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS**

Since 2019, Virginia has been providing financial incentives to eligible early childhood educators participating in the Preschool Development Grant and VQB5 through RecognizeB5. RecognizeB5 provides a financial incentive of up to \$2,000 to eligible teachers, with the goal of reducing teacher turnover in child care and family day homes, where wages are significantly lower than comparable settings. The program is open to both lead and assistant teachers working in publicly-funded child care and family day home sites that are participating in VQB5.

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<sup>37</sup> Bassok, D., Doromal, J., Holland, A., & Michie, M. (2020). Who Teaches Virginia’s Youngest Children? Sector Differences in the Racial/Ethnic Composition of Early Educators. Study of Early Education through Partnerships.

<sup>38</sup> Bassok, D., Markowitz, A., & Michie, M. (2020). COVID-19 highlights inequities in how we treat early educators in child care vs. schools. *Brown Center Chalkboard*.

### RecognizeB5:

- Provides up to \$2000 to eligible teachers who work at least 30 hours a week with birth-to-five children.
- Is solely intended to recognize educators for their ongoing efforts to improve Virginia’s ECCE system.
- Does not have to be used for work related expenses.

The first three years of the RecognizeB5 have demonstrated that a financial incentive of this size has the potential for big impact.<sup>39</sup> An initial study, using a randomized control trial (RCT), showed that this valuable incentive reduced turnover for child care and family day homes by half (30% to 15%).<sup>40</sup> Understanding the significant impact of teacher turnover on the child care industry, which has been exacerbated by the COVID pandemic, Virginia has committed to expanding the RecognizeB5 program for the past three years, now including both federal funds (PDG and COVID relief dollars) and state general fund investments.

Teachers employed by public school divisions are not eligible for RecognizeB5. This determination was made due to the limited availability of funds and a commitment to more fully supporting child care teachers who are far less financially compensated and more likely to experience high rates of turnover which can negatively impact teacher-child interactions.

Participation in RecognizeB5 has increased significantly year over year, with more teachers than ever before participating during Practice Year 1.

- In 2019-2020 (first year of PDG) nearly 2,000 educators participated and received up to \$1,500 with a total statewide investment of \$2.9 Million.
- In 2020-2021 (second year of PDG) over 2,600 educators participated and received up to \$2,000. This represented a statewide investment of \$4.9 Million.
- In 2021-2022 (Practice Year 1 VQB5) over 6,200 educators participated and received up to \$2,000. This represents a statewide investment of \$10.4 Million.

Virginia plans to continue to implement the educator incentive program during Practice Year 2 for continued study and analysis.

## INVESTMENTS IN IMPROVEMENT

During Practice Year 2, the VDOE will increase funding to build the new unified system and support improvement, prioritizing those who need it most. This includes funding Ready Regions

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<sup>39</sup> Eligibility is generally limited to child care, FDH and Head Start educators who work 30 or more hours/week with children in publicly-funded programs and are not school system employees. Eligibility is subject to change.

<sup>40</sup> Harvard University Center for Education Policy and Research. (2020, November 17). *Daphna Bassok - Teacher Turnover in Early Childhood Education: New Findings from Research Policy Partnerships in Louisiana and Virginia*. PIER Public Seminar Series (Archived).

to build relationships, conduct local CLASS observations and support educators who are participating in the second practice year. Virginia will also increase funding to existing programs to meet higher expectations, including increasing funding for VPI and the Mixed Delivery Grant, and developing methods to better reflect the true cost of care in child care subsidy rates while maintaining flexibility. Increasing the investment in each program's funding stream will be essential to support and continued investment in early childhood quality.

Programs that typically have fewer resources, such as child care and family day homes, will be a priority for investments in improvement in the unified system. Through the investment of state and federal dollars, the VDOE will expand current investments and initiate new projects where needed to support curriculum use, early childhood mental health, and coaching to programs who need it most. This includes the investment in providing an open-sourced 'no to low' cost curriculum option (STREAMin3) with training and implementation resources targeted to those site types who need it most, specifically focusing on family day homes and child care.

As noted earlier, one of Virginia's guiding principles calls for incentives for improvement within the new unified measurement and improvement system. More specifically, "the state should also consider formal and informal incentives that motivate community stakeholders, site leaders and educators." In Practice Year 2, Virginia will focus on incentives for participation in the system such as access to resources such as CLASS training or curriculum resources. Providing financial incentives directly to educators, through RecognizeB5, is another critically important part of Virginia's plan to support improvement.

Moving forward, Virginia will explore other formal and informal incentives to encourage participation and improvement over time. This may include expanding Virginia's tiered reimbursement payments which offer additional funding for child care subsidy programs that have improved quality. This could also include non-monetary incentives such as honor rolls that recognize improvement or achievement in specific areas such as infant care or inclusion classrooms. Virginia will work closely with educators, families and stakeholders to determine which incentives could help meaningfully support improvement while being sure to analyze the impact of proposed incentives, noting that some incentives inadvertently exacerbate inequities (see Appendix C).

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# APPENDIX A: VQB5 PRACTICE YEAR 1 PROGRESS UPDATE (MARCH 2022)

## Section 1. VQB5 Practice Year 1 Participant Data

**Table 1a.** Practice Year 1 Participation Data by Site Type – Fall 2021

	Number of Sites Participating by Type			Total Number of Participating Sites
	Centers	Family Day Homes	Public Schools	
<b>N</b>	668	253	535	1,456
<b>%</b>	46%	17%	37%	100%

**Table 2b.** Practice Year 1 Participation Data by Site Type & Locality – Fall 2021

Locality	Number of Sites Participating by Type			Total Number of Participating Sites
	Centers	Family Day Homes	Public Schools	
Accomack County	2	0	0	2
Albemarle County	11	5	13	29
Alexandria City	15	35	6	56
Alleghany County	1	0	2	3
Amelia County	0	0	0	0
Amherst County	4	1	4	9
Appomattox County	1	0	1	2
Arlington County	0	0	0	0
Augusta County	4	0	9	13
Bath County	0	0	0	0
Bedford County	2	0	9	11
Bland County	2	0	1	3
Botetourt County	3	0	6	9
Bristol City	4	1	2	7
Brunswick County	1	0	3	4
Buchanan County	0	1	4	5
Buckingham County	0	0	1	1
Buena Vista City	2	0	1	3
Campbell County	6	1	7	14
Caroline County	2	0	3	5
Carroll County	7	1	7	15
Charles City County	0	0	0	0
Charlotte County	1	0	0	1
Charlottesville City	5	4	6	15
Chesapeake City	10	1	20	31



Chesterfield County	31	10	22	63
Clarke County	1	0	0	1
Colonial Heights City	2	0	0	2
Covington City	1	0	1	2
Craig County	1	0	0	1
Culpeper County	3	2	6	11
Cumberland County	0	0	1	1
Danville City	8	7	2	17
Dickenson County	3	0	3	6
Dinwiddie County	4	0	3	7
Emporia City	0	0	0	0
Essex County	0	0	0	0
Fairfax County	64	111	73	248
Falls Church City	2	0	0	2
Fauquier County	0	0	0	0
Floyd County	4	0	3	7
Fluvanna County	2	2	1	5
Franklin City	4	1	1	6
Franklin County	8	3	12	23
Frederick County	1	0	0	1
Fredericksburg City	3	1	1	5
Galax City	1	2	1	4
Giles County	4	0	3	7
Gloucester County	1	0	5	6
Goochland County	1	1	3	5
Grayson County	2	0	2	4
Greene County	2	0	1	3
Greensville County	0	0	0	0
Halifax County	3	1	7	11
Hampton City	13	0	7	20
Hanover County	11	0	0	11
Harrisonburg City	3	1	4	8
Henrico County	40	11	0	51
Henry County	4	1	9	14
Highland County	1	0	0	1
Hopewell City	1	1	1	3
Isle Of Wight County	5	0	4	9
James City County	5	0	2	7
King And Queen County	0	0	0	0
King George County	1	0	1	2
King William County	0	0	0	0
Lancaster County	0	0	0	0
Lee County	1	0	9	10

Lexington City	2	0	1	3
Loudoun County	0	0	0	0
Louisa County	3	0	4	7
Lunenburg County	2	0	2	4
Lynchburg City	8	2	4	14
Madison County	0	0	1	1
Manassas City	0	0	0	0
Manassas Park City	0	0	0	0
Martinsville City	6	2	1	9
Mathews County	0	0	1	1
Mecklenburg County	6	0	4	10
Middlesex County	1	0	1	2
Montgomery County	15	3	7	25
Nelson County	0	0	2	2
New Kent County	2	0	0	2
Newport News City	29	1	4	34
Norfolk City	21	3	30	54
Northampton County	1	1	0	2
Northumberland County	0	0	0	0
Norton City	0	0	1	1
Nottoway County	0	0	2	2
Orange County	4	2	3	9
Page County	2	1	4	7
Patrick County	3	0	5	8
Petersburg City	5	1	1	7
Pittsylvania County	7	0	10	17
Poquoson City	0	0	1	1
Portsmouth City	17	4	3	24
Powhatan County	3	0	0	3
Prince Edward County	3	0	1	4
Prince George County	0	0	0	0
Prince William County	0	0	0	0
Pulaski County	4	0	5	9
Radford City	4	0	1	5
Rappahannock County	1	0	0	1
Richmond City	21	2	0	23
Richmond County	0	0	0	0
Roanoke City	23	8	15	46
Roanoke County	14	0	16	30
Rockbridge County	2	0	3	5
Rockingham County	5	1	14	20
Russell County	3	1	5	9
Salem City	5	0	2	7

Scott County	9	0	6	15
Shenandoah County	3	1	4	8
Smyth County	5	1	7	13
Southampton County	1	2	4	7
Spotsylvania County	14	2	12	28
Stafford County	17	1	2	20
Staunton City	1	0	1	2
Suffolk City	7	0	11	18
Surry County	0	0	0	0
Sussex County	0	0	0	0
Tazewell County	11	4	5	20
Virginia Beach City	23	2	0	25
Warren County	0	0	6	6
Washington County	9	1	7	17
Waynesboro City	1	0	1	2
Westmoreland County	0	0	0	0
Williamsburg City	0	0	0	0
Winchester City	6	0	4	10
Wise County	7	1	5	13
Wythe County	5	1	6	12
York County	3	0	7	10
<b>Virginia</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>535</b>	<b>1,456</b>

## **Section 2. VQB5 CLASS and Curriculum Measurement Data**

**Table 2a.** Local CLASS Observation Completions – Fall 2021

	<b>Had an Approved Observation</b>	<b>Did Not Have an Approved Observation</b>	<b>Total Classrooms</b>
<b>N</b>	4,289	669	4,958
<b>%</b>	87%	13%	100%

**Table 2b.** Local CLASS Observation Completions by Age-Level – Fall 2021

	<b>Had an Approved Observation</b>	<b>Did Not Have an Approved Observation</b>	<b>Total Classrooms</b>
<b>Infant Classrooms</b>	508 (13%)	73 (87%)	581
<b>Toddler Classrooms</b>	1,051 (17%)	212 (83%)	1,263
<b>Preschool Classrooms</b>	2,730 (12%)	384 (88%)	3,114
<b>Total</b>	4,289 (87%)	669 (13%)	4,958

**Table 2c.** Local CLASS Observation Completions by Site Type – Fall 2021

	<b>Had an Approved Observation</b>	<b>Did Not Have an Approved Observation</b>	<b>Total Classrooms</b>
<b>Family Day Homes</b>	235 (78%)	65 (22%)	300
<b>Public Schools</b>	1,403 (91%)	136 (9%)	1,539
<b>Centers</b>	2,651 (85%)	468 (15%)	3,119
<b>Total</b>	4,289 (87%)	669 (13%)	4,958

**Table 2d.** Approved Curriculum Usage – Fall 2021

	<b>Had Approved Curriculum</b>	<b>Did Not Have Approved Curriculum</b>	<b>Total Classrooms Reporting Data†</b>
<b>N</b>	3,134	1,590	4,724
<b>%</b>	66%	34%	100%

† Some classrooms did not report curriculum usage due to a data system error.

**Table 2e.** Approved Curriculum Usage by Age-Level – Fall 2021

	<b>Had Approved Curriculum</b>	<b>Did Not Have Approved Curriculum</b>	<b>Total Classrooms Reporting Data†</b>
<b>Infant Classrooms</b>	255 (47%)	286 (53%)	541
<b>Toddler Classrooms</b>	618 (52%)	573 (48%)	1,191
<b>Preschool Classrooms</b>	2,259 (76%)	730 (24%)	2,989
<b>Total</b>	3,134 (66%)	1,590 (34%)	4,721*

† Some classrooms did not report curriculum usage due to a data system error.

\*N=3 classrooms did not report an age-level.

**Table 2f.** Approved Curriculum Usage by Site Type – Fall 2021

	<b>Had Approved Curriculum</b>	<b>Did Not Have Approved Curriculum</b>	<b>Total Classrooms Reporting Data†</b>
<b>Family Day Homes</b>	122 (45%)	151 (55%)	273
<b>Public Schools</b>	1,397 (92%)	114 (8%)	1,511
<b>Centers</b>	1,615 (55%)	1,325 (45%)	2,940
<b>Total</b>	3,134 (66%)	1,590 (34%)	4,724

† Some classrooms did not report curriculum usage due to a data system error.

**Section 3. VQB5 Fall 2021 Participant Feedback Survey Summary**

**Purpose of Survey :** To hear from programs who are participating in VQB5 Practice Year 1 and those partners who support VQB5 programs, about their experiences with fall CLASS observations and curriculum use. 465 responses were collected in January 2022, representing all PDG Communities across Virginia.

**Table 3a.** Primary Role of VQB5 Fall Feedback Survey Respondents

<b>Role</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Classroom Teachers and Assistant Teachers	219	47%
Center Directors and Assistant Directors	117	25%
Family Day Home Providers	60	13%
PreK Program Coordinators and Administrators	47	10%
Other role	22	5%

**Table 3b.** Ages/Types of Children Served by Respondents to Fall Feedback Survey (respondents could select all that apply)

<b>Age-Level/Types of Children Served</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Infants	148	32%
Toddlers	186	40%
Preschoolers	372	80%
Mixed Ages	93	20%
Dual Language Learners	56	12%
Children with Special Needs	84	18%

**Table 3c.** Satisfaction Ranking with VQB5 Experiences (Scale of 1-5 where 1=not satisfied; 5=very satisfied)

<b>VQB5 Activity</b>	<b>Average Ranking</b>
Completing registration and fall data entry in LinkB5	4.14

Using CLASS to learn about quality interactions	4.24
Receiving feedback on CLASS Observations	4.19
Learning about quality curriculum options	3.98
Receiving support related to interactions and/or curriculum	4.10

In addition to the satisfaction ranking, participants were able to provide short answer responses regarding their experiences, questions and concerns. Here are the themes:

Positive Experiences with VQB5	Questions/Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualized feedback, that included strengths and specific areas to work on</li> <li>• Clarity in understanding the importance of interactions by using the CLASS tool</li> <li>• Receiving helpful ideas/strategies for improvement</li> <li>• Support and resources provided from local and state partners when assistance was needed</li> <li>• Financial incentive for childcare and family day home teachers</li> <li>• Having a unified approach across all birth to five programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity on participation requirements</li> <li>• More info about curriculum options</li> <li>• Eligibility for Recognition Incentive</li> <li>• LinkB5 data entry expectations/timeline</li> <li>• Clarification about Local vs. External Observation protocols</li> <li>• Increased mental health needs/challenging behaviors in the classroom</li> <li>• Teacher stress/staffing shortages</li> </ul>

#### **Section 4. Teacher Recognition Incentive (RecognizeB5)**

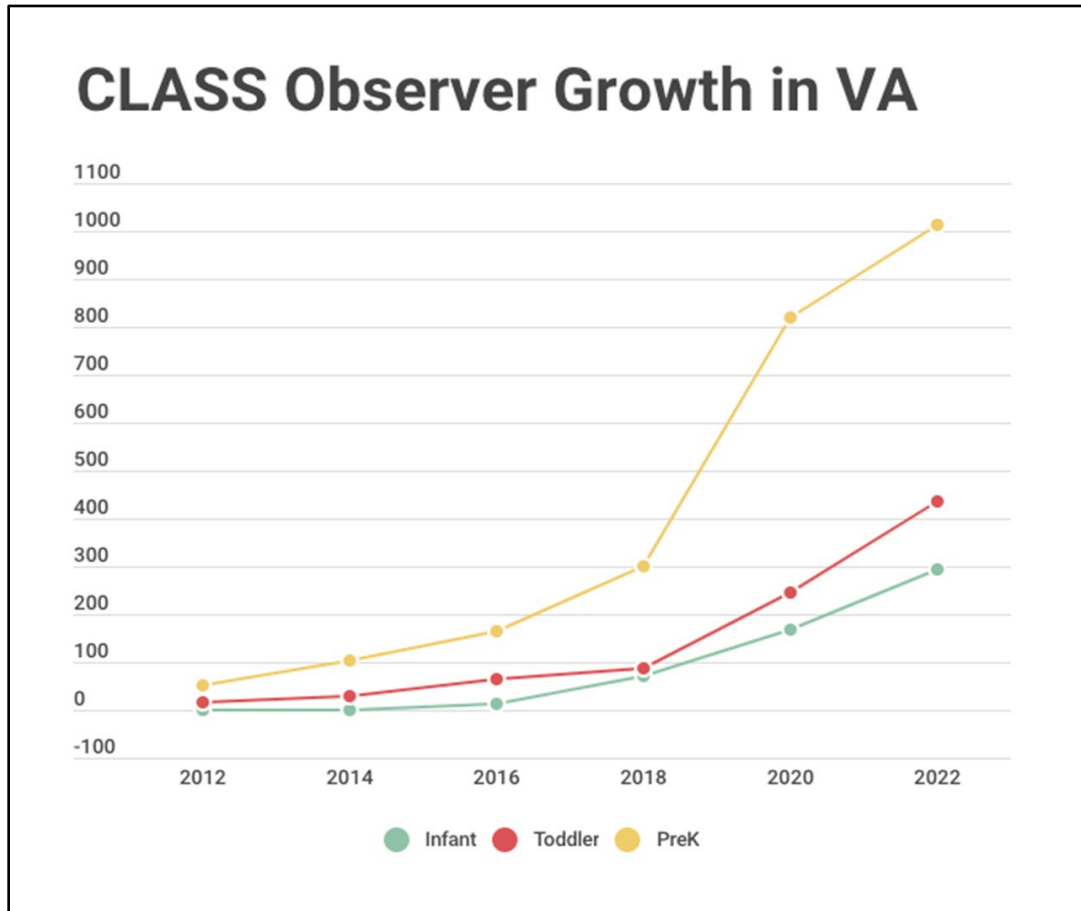
**Table 4a. Participation and Investment in RecognizeB5 by Year**

School Year	Number of Educators Participating	Total Investment
2019-2020 ( <i>Year 1</i> )	2,023	\$2,876,000
2020-2021 ( <i>Year 2</i> )	2,669	\$4,969,500
2021-2022 ( <i>Year 3</i> )	6,500	\$12,498,000*

\*Total investment for 2021-2022 is an estimate of payments based on the starting number of participants

**Section 5. CLASS Observer Data**

**Figure 5a.** CLASS Observer Growth - 2012-2022



**Table 5b.** Total number of Certified Observers - Winter 2022

CLASS Age-Level	Number in Virginia	Number in PDG Communities	Percent conducting Local Observations
Infant CLASS	295	223	76%
Toddler CLASS	437	331	76%
PreK CLASS	1014	645	63%
Total Combined	1203	774	64%

**Table 5c.** Growth in Local CLASS Observers in Preschool Development Grant Communities

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Local CLASS Observers</b>	<b>Number of PDG Communities</b>
2019-2020	130	11
2020-2021	611	16
2021-2022	774	17



## APPENDIX B: HISTORY OF QUALITY MEASUREMENT FOR EARLY LEARNING AND VIRGINIA QUALITY TRANSITION PLAN

A central challenge of early childhood accountability systems is that it is difficult as well as expensive to reliably and validly measure children’s growth and development at scale in a way that is developmentally appropriate for young children. Because assessing the academic growth and development of very young children is challenging, costly, time-consuming, and often unreliable, many states have increasingly turned to accountability systems known as Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) to improve the quality of early childhood settings<sup>41</sup>.

Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, QRIS awards quality ratings to early care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards. By participating in their State’s QRIS, early care and education providers also engage in a continuous quality improvement process.

[QRIS](#) are composed of five common elements: (1) standards; (2) accountability measures; (3) program and practitioner outreach and support; (4) financial incentives; and (5) parent/consumer education efforts.

QRIS standards are used to assign ratings to sites that participate in QRIS, providing parents and the public with information about each site’s quality. States typically use licensing standards as the starting point, or base of the system, on which higher levels of quality standards are built. Every QRIS contains two or more levels of standards beyond licensing, with incremental progressions to the highest level of quality as defined by the State.

QRIS ratings typically combine both structural and process quality measures, but states vary widely in how they define and rate quality, as well as how quality indicators are combined into a single rating. The most commonly used quality indicators include staff qualifications, staff-child ratios, curriculum use, assessment/developmental screening use, observed measures of environment and/or interactions quality, business/administration practices and family engagement (BUILD).

Nearly all state QRIS systems are designed as “optional” systems, meaning programs may be incentivized or encouraged to participate, but there is no requirement if a program opts not to engage in the system, which is often the case. This means that quality information is not known

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<sup>41</sup> Bassok, D., & Markowitz, A. (2020.). *The value of systemwide, high-quality data in early childhood education*. Brown Center Chalkboard.

for all programs, with an increased likelihood that those programs who are most disconnected and would most benefit from quality support are not opting in.

The first QRIS in the United States started in 1997, and as of 2019 forty-nine states either operate a QRIS or are in planning or pilot phases (BUILD). Virginia’s first QRIS, the Virginia Star Quality Initiative (VSQI) launched in 2008 and was revised and renamed [Virginia Quality \(VQ\)](#) in 2015. Both versions of Virginia’s QRIS have been voluntary.

This following timeline outlines the plan to support current Virginia Quality programs with the overall transition to the new VQB5 system.

### **VQB5 Practice Year 1 (2021-2022)**

VQ Regions provide quality improvement support to VQ programs and other programs participating in Practice Year 1 in collaboration with PDG Communities.

- July 2021 – VQ application closed for new programs.
- January 2022 – VQ Rating Extensions. All VQ programs in good standing will have their current rating automatically extended through fall of 2024.
- June 30, 2022 - Deadline for participating VQ programs to move up to Levels 2-5.

### **VQB5 Practice Year 2 (2022-2023)**

VQ Regions provide quality improvement support to programs participating in Practice Year 2 in collaboration with Ready Regions. *(Note - The geographic coverage area of VQ Regions will remain the same).*

- July 2022 - Virginia Quality Rating Levels will be “frozen” (no new VQ levels awarded)
  - All quality levels awarded as of July 2022 will remain valid and publicly available, until the new VQB5 ratings are released in the fall of 2024.
  - All VQ Programs are encouraged to register for Practice Year 2 via LinkB5 to receive support to prepare for the new VQB5 system.
  - The use of VQ websites will be phased out by December 2022.
- June 2023 – Regional Lead Agency Virginia Quality Contracts end.

### **VQB5 Year 1 (2023-2024)**

VQB5 Programs receive frequent feedback and targeted supports to help guide improvement in every classroom through a variety of improvement partners.

- July 2023 - All publicly-funded birth to five programs in Virginia will be required to participate in VQB5. Programs that do not receive public funds will have the option to participate.
- Fall 2024 - New VQB5 ratings will be publicly released. **(All VQ rating levels expire).**

## APPENDIX C: DETAIL ON CURRENT EARLY CHILDHOOD INVESTMENTS

Amount	How Funding Supports Improvement
~\$107 million*	Total Virginia Preschool Initiative funding for at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds, including an increase in the per-pupil rate and nearly \$5 million to support community or private providers who offer VPI
\$16 million*	Total Mixed Delivery Grant (MDG) funding for at-risk 3- and 4-year-old children at a higher per-child rate to support quality preschool in private settings
~\$177 million <i>estimated</i>	Federal funding through the Child Care and Development Block Grant for child care assistance to low income families and quality supports across the system
~\$9 million	Preschool Development Grant (PDG B-5) funding to support quality measurement and improvement efforts in PDG B-5 communities, Ready Regions and RecognizeB5
~\$204 million**	<i>Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021</i> funding to expand eligibility for and strengthen the child care subsidy program,, supporting RecognizeB5, bolster ECMHC services, and strengthen improvement supports for child care
~\$794 million**	<i>American Rescue Plan Act</i> funding including direct grants to providers, expanding access to child care, support improved data systems, funding to support Ready Regions and providing access to STREAMin3
<b>~\$1.3 billion</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>

\*based on FY22 – to be updated pending final FY23 budget approval

\*\*some funding is multi-year and chart does not include federal-to-local funding to support Head Start programs.

## APPENDIX D: EARLY CHILDHOOD OVERVIEW

Program Profile for <i>Virginia Preschool Initiative</i>	
<b>Eligibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Income at or below 200% of the FPL, or 350% if the child has a disability</li> <li>Families that are experiencing homelessness, or parents have not completed high school</li> <li>Locally-determined eligibility criteria for up to 15% of students (or more with a waiver)</li> </ul>
<b>Ages Served</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4-year-olds, and 3-year-olds for divisions electing to participate pilot</li> <li>A waiver for 2021-2022 allows 5-year-olds to attend if it is the best option for the child</li> </ul>
<b>Service Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typical school year calendar (180 days) at either full or half-day.</li> </ul>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>126 divisions are offering the program in 2021-2022</li> </ul>
<b>Funding Source(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State General Funds and local funds</li> </ul>
<b>Per-Child Rates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$7,655 per pupil for the full day, with the locality providing a contribution based on LCI (not to exceed 50%).               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional community provider add-on funds available based on regional costs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Typical Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2019-2020, there were 18,550 four-year-olds enrolled. \$115,607,641 dollars were dedicated to the program.</li> </ul>

Program Profile for <i>Early Childhood Special Education</i>	
<b>Eligibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children with a disability that falls within one of 13 eligible disability categories (<a href="#">outlined in federal and state regulation</a>)</li> </ul>
<b>Ages Served</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2-5 year-olds</li> </ul>

<b>Service Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Varies by child, and depending on needs identified in IEP. Many services follow that of a traditional school year schedule.</li> </ul>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All localities are required to provide services to eligible children</li> </ul>
<b>Funding Source(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal IDEA funds and local funds</li> </ul>
<b>Per-Child Rates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Varies significantly depending on locality and service provided</li> </ul>
<b>Typical Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2019-2020, there were 13,060 2-5 year olds receiving services as part of Early Childhood Special Education.</li> </ul>

<b>Program Profile for <i>Mixed Delivery Preschool Grant Program</i></b>	
<b>Eligibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Income at or below 200% of the FPL, or 350% if the child has a disability</li> <li>Families that are experiencing homelessness, or have not completed high school</li> <li>Locally-determined eligibility criteria may be used for up to 15% of students.</li> </ul>
<b>Ages Served</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3- and 4-year-olds</li> </ul>
<b>Service Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 months</li> </ul>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 regional grantees that are working with over 80 early childhood providers</li> </ul>
<b>Funding Source(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In FY22, a combination of State General Funds and COVID relief dollars</li> </ul>
<b>Per-Child Rates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funds range from \$12,000-14,000 per slot, depending on a tiered funding formula is calculated based upon jurisdiction.</li> </ul>
<b>Typical Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 2021-2022 program will enroll up to 1,250 children, with up to \$16 Million dedicated to support the program.</li> </ul>

<b>Program Profile for <i>Head Start and Early Head Start</i></b>	
<b>Eligibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on family income at or below the poverty level according to the federal <a href="#">Guidelines</a></li> <li>Children in foster care, in kinship care, experiencing homelessness, and children from families receiving public assistance (TANF or SSI) are eligible regardless of income.</li> </ul>
<b>Ages Served</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head Start: 3- and 4-year-olds</li> <li>Early Head Start: 0-2 year-olds</li> </ul>
<b>Service Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Typically Head Start programs operate on the school calendar (180 days), and Early Head Start programs operate year round services.</li> </ul>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>52 Recipient Agencies that operate 81 EHS/HS programs across Virginia</li> </ul>
<b>Funding Source(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head Start Funds, granted from federal government to the local Recipient Agency.</li> <li>Recipient agencies require a 20% non-federal match for their total budget.</li> </ul>
<b>Per-Child Rates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Between \$9,507 to \$17,911 for Head Start and Early Head Start. Rates vary based on locality and total funded enrollment.</li> </ul>
<b>Typical Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2018-2019 a total of 14,029 children were enrolled with a total of \$140,146,070 in federal funding provided for services.</li> </ul>

<b>Program Profile for <i>Child Care Subsidy Program</i></b>	
<b>Eligibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Income:</b> ranges by region, temporarily expanded to 85% of the state median income for families with young children</li> <li><b>Parental activity:</b> parents generally must be working or in school. Under expanded eligibility, parents searching for work are temporarily eligible.</li> </ul>
<b>Ages Served</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children up to age 13 (or up to age 18 for children with disabilities)</li> </ul>
<b>Service Duration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families are eligible for a minimum of 12 months of care</li> <li>Amount of care provided each week is based on parents' work or school schedules</li> </ul>
<b>Location</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Privately-operated child care programs, typically in centers or family day homes; may be businesses, non-profits or faith-based organizations</li> </ul>
<b>Funding Source(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal <b>Child Care and Development Block Grant</b> (~\$190 million annually in a typical year)</li> </ul>

<b>Per-Child Rates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vary by locality based on the prevailing market rate</li> </ul>
<b>Typical Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In FY19, 18,600 total (10,098 birth-five children; 8,602 school-age children)* participated.</li> <li>• In September 2021, over 25,000 children are enrolled</li> </ul>

## **APPENDIX E: COMMON TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AEII - Advancing Effective Instruction and Interactions  
CASTL - Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (at UVA)  
CCDBG - Child Care and Development Block Grant  
CLASS - Classroom Assessment Scoring System  
CQI - Continuous Quality Improvement  
DLL - Dual Language Learners  
ECAC - Early Childhood Advisory Committee  
ED4 - Executive Directive Four  
ELDS –Early Learning and Development Standards  
ICP - Inclusive Classroom Profile  
IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act  
IEP/IFSP - Individual Education Plan/Individualized Family Service Plan  
NAC - National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs  
NAEYC - National Association for the Education of Young Children  
NAFCC – National Association for Family Child Care  
NCECDTL - National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning  
NECPA - National Early Childhood Program Accreditation  
PDG - Preschool Development Grant  
QRIS - Quality Rating and Improvement System  
TTAC - Training and Technical Assistance Centers  
UVA - University of Virginia  
VA ITSN - Virginia Infant Toddler Specialist Network  
VECF - Virginia Early Childhood Foundation  
VPI - Virginia Preschool Initiative  
VPI+ - Virginia Preschool Initiative Plus  
VSQI - Virginia Star Quality Initiative  
VQ - Virginia Quality  
VQB5 - Unified Virginia Quality Birth to Five System  
VDOE - Virginia Department of Education