



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**Department of Education**

DATE: August 24, 2018

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: Virginia Preschool Initiative Classroom Observations and Professional Development – Seeking Forward-Thinking Partners to Begin Implementation**

As part of a broader statewide effort to unify early childhood – including pre-K, Head Start, and child care – Virginia is focusing on measuring and strengthening classroom interactions in 2018-2019. Young learners who benefit from high quality classroom interactions and instruction are more likely to enter kindergarten ready, putting them on track for success in school and beyond.

To support pre-K classrooms, the 2018 Virginia General Assembly appropriated funds through the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to the University of Virginia (UVA) to ensure that all Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) classrooms receive feedback as well as aligned professional development and training on the quality of their teacher-child interactions. The VDOE is now seeking volunteers to lead in implementation, working closely with the VDOE to inform policy and practice moving forward.

Starting in 2018-2019, all VPI classrooms will be assessed at least once every two years using the CLASS™ observational instrument, a nationally-regarded tool that was specifically developed for pre-K. The Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) at UVA in collaboration with the VDOE, will use this valuable information to provide targeted feedback and professional development to leaders and educators.

The VDOE, with CASTL, will first develop a plan to observe and strengthen all VPI classrooms. As part of this process, the VDOE, through CASTL, will seek regular input and feedback from stakeholders, including superintendents, preschool coordinators, principals and teachers. Stakeholders will weigh in on questions such as how to best provide feedback and what resources are needed for professional development. This plan will go to the state legislature November 1, 2018, for review.

The VDOE and CASTL are now seeking volunteer partners in VPI programs across Virginia who want to help shape this initiative. As a partner, you will be asked to:

- provide input in the development of the initiative's procedures and processes in fall 2018;
- pilot parts of the procedures and processes in the spring 2019; and
- provide feedback on the process to ensure usefulness and scalability as the initiative moves statewide.

Participating in this initiative is especially important now as Virginia is working to unify its early childhood system by strengthening classroom interactions and instruction across settings – PreK, Head Start and child care – whether through Virginia Quality, Mixed Delivery, VPI+ or new state and federal investments.

Forward-thinking school divisions interested in partnering should have their VPI coordinator complete the [VPI Partner Application](#) by September 14, 2018. Depending on the number of applications, divisions will be selected based on number of VPI classrooms, geographic location, and other information submitted in the application. The VDOE and CASTL may also select additional school divisions for required participation if needed to ensure adequate representation and diversity. CASTL will notify VPI program coordinators in October 2018 if selected.

For additional information, please see the attached Frequently Asked Questions Document. If you have questions about the CLASS™ observations and professional development initiative application or participation, please contact [castl@virginia.edu](mailto:castl@virginia.edu). If you have questions about requirements for participation in this initiative, please contact Dr. Mark R. Allan, Early Childhood Education Project Manager, at [Mark.Allan@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Mark.Allan@doe.virginia.gov) or (804) 225-3665.

JFL/MRA/lh

Attachment

- a. [Virginia Preschool Initiative CLASS™ Observations and Professional Development Frequently Asked Questions \(docx\)](#)