



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: W

Date: April 25, 2024

Title: First Review of Guidelines for 2024-2025 of the Early Childhood Unified Measurement and Improvement System (VQB5)

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

Purpose of Presentation

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

Executive Summary

Section § [22.1-289.05](#) of the *Code of Virginia* directs the Board of Education (“Board”) to establish a unified quality rating and improvement system for all publicly funded early childhood providers in order to improve school readiness in the Commonwealth. The *Code of Virginia* states that the quality rating and improvement system should be established by July 1, 2021, that there should be optional participation beginning in 2021-2022, and that participation becomes mandatory for publicly funded providers in the 2023-2024 school year with initial quality ratings published in the fall of 2024. The Board fulfilled these timebound requirements by establishing [Guidelines for VQB5 Practice Year 1](#) (approved in June 2021), [Guidelines for VQB5 Practice Year 2](#) (approved in June 2022), and [VQB5 Guidelines for 2023-2024](#) (approved in June 2023).

As of the 2023-2024 school year, VQB5 is now fully implemented and includes 3,288 birth-to-five programs, including public school-based preschools, Head Start/Early Head Start programs, and child care centers and family day homes that participate in the child care subsidy or other forms of public subsidy. Each of these programs is required to complete annual site, classroom and educator profiles, report on curriculum use and participate in local and external CLASS observations during the year. Quality profiles that include rating information from the 2023-2024 participation year will be published via a family-friendly website in Fall 2024.

VQB5 measures the quality of infant, toddler, and preschool teaching and learning based on two nationally recognized quality indicators: interactions and curriculum.

- **Interactions** - This indicator 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.
- **Curriculum** - This indicator 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.

The 2024-2025 VQB5 Guidelines largely reflect similar expectations and protocols for program measurement and improvement as compared to prior years. There are five shifts based on the learnings from prior years as the state continues to use its data to improve the quality of early childhood care and education to ensure all of Virginia’s youngest learners have the opportunity to enter school ready.

The 2024-2025 Guidelines continue to specify which sites are legislatively required to participate, explain the key activities that participating sites must complete, as well as the consequences for refusal to participate. The 2024-2025 Guidelines also provide updates to the following five key areas which will strengthen the VQB5 system and its impact on improved school readiness:

- **Require the completion of classroom lists (Section 3.2.3)**
 - The use of classroom lists in LinkB5 will allow the state to understand how classroom-level experiences impact school readiness and longer-term child outcomes. Parents will have the choice to opt-out.
- **Clarify guidance for CLASS tool selection (Section 4.2)**
 - Additional guidance will ensure that CLASS observations provide accurate and supportive feedback that meets the diverse needs of Virginia’s publicly-funded classrooms.
- **Expand support for score replacement (Section 4.7)**
 - Expanded support will help clarify the score replacement notification process and will provide additional guidance to strengthen regional efforts to support local observers.
- **Require improvement planning for Needs Support sites. (Section 6.1 and 7.3)**

- Prioritizes improvement resources and opportunities for sites that have demonstrated the most need.
- **Release public quality site profiles (Section 6.3)**
 - Online quality profiles will provide families and the general public with information about the quality and availability of providers as required by state law.

The VDOE received a full endorsement from the Early Childhood Advisory Committee for the proposed 2024-2025 VQB5 Guidelines. The 22-member committee convened for an in-depth discussion and review of the proposal on March 7, 2024.

This item supports Priority 1 of the Board’s *Comprehensive Plan 2024-2029* (to set and help every learner meet high expectations) by providing a framework to measure and improve the quality of early learning experiences.

Action Requested

Action will be requested at a future meeting: June 25, 2024.

Superintendent’s Recommendation

The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends that the Board of Education receive for first review the Guidelines for 2024-2-25 of the Early Childhood Unified Measurement and Improvement System (VQB5).

Previous Review or Action

No previous review or action.

Background Information and Statutory Authority

The Board’s general authority to establish regulation is found in § 22.1-16 of the Code of Virginia:

The Board of Education may adopt bylaws for its own government and promulgate such regulations as may be necessary to carry out its powers and duties and the provisions of [Title 22.1 of the Code of Virginia].

Section [22.1-289.05](#) of the *Code of Virginia* directs the Board to “establish a uniform measurement and improvement system designed to provide parents and families with information about the quality and availability of publicly funded providers.” The Board met this requirement by establishing VQB5 Guidelines, which outline the participation requirement details for the VQB5 Unified Measurement and Improvement System. Now that VQB5 is required for publicly funded early childhood programs, the Board must establish consequences

for providers who do not meet the expectations for participation or meet minimal quality standards. Establishing regulations will meet this requirement for the Board.

The Code also indicates that the Board must establish a set of regional entities that are 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. This requirement has been fulfilled through the establishment of Virginia’s Ready Regions in 2021.

Stakeholder Engagement

The VDOE continues to engage the program leaders, teachers, families and other interested stakeholders with the implementation of the VQB5. Since the initiation of VQB5 in 2021, the VDOE has conducted annual engagement on the development of VQB5 Guidelines through a variety of methods including facilitating in-person stakeholder meetings in all nine Ready Regions, posting weekly VQB5 updates in the Office Of Early Childhood’s Readiness Connections newsletter, hosting at-least quarterly webinars for early childhood program leaders, and meeting weekly with the leadership from Ready Regions through an office hours format.

As part of the end of the final practice year and launch of the first required year, numerous opportunities for stakeholder input and feedback were provided. The following provides information regarding the stakeholder engagement and feedback received about VQB5 which helped inform the proposed updates to the 2024-2025 VQB5 Guidelines.

VQB5 Stakeholder Engagement Events	Date/s	Number of Participants
Ready Region Central – Richmond	9/13/2023	50
Ready Region Chesapeake Bay - Williamsburg	9/18/2023	35
Ready Region West - Roanoke	9/21/2023	25
Ready Region Blue Ridge - Charlottesville	10/5/2023	17
Ready Region Southside - Danville	10/10/2023	65
Ready Region North Central - Fredericksburg	10/16/2023	47
Ready Region Southwest - Abingdon	10/26/2023	30
Ready Region Southeastern - Norfolk	11/1/2023	40
Ready Region Capital Area - Fairfax	11/6/2023	35
Improvement Partner Fall Webinar	11/29/2023	132
Ready Regions and Mixed Delivery Technical Assistance Virtual Meeting	1/9/2024	123
Local Observer Spring Refresher Webinar	2/6/2024	503
Mid-Year Updates for Program Leaders Webinar	2/13/2024	373
Improvement Partner Winter Webinar	2/27/2024	114

Virginia Association for the Education of Young Children Conference (VAAEYC) - 3 VQB5 Sessions	3/14 and 3/15/2024	95
Quality Profile Overview Webinar for the Early Childhood Field	3/19/2024	296

Production and Launch of Online Portal with Quality Profiles

As established by Section [§22.1-289.05](#) of the *Code of Virginia*, VQB5 must result in quality ratings that provide parents and families with information about the quality and availability of publicly funded providers. The 2023-2024 VQB5 Guidelines included information about the annual VQB5 Quality Profiles. Starting in fall 2024, all VQB5 participating sites will receive an annual VQB5 quality profile which will include information about performance on measurements (i.e., quality rating results) and other topics of interest to families, policymakers, and the general public.

The first VQB5 Quality Profiles, which will include site quality ratings, will be posted online starting in the fall of 2024 to provide families with information about quality options across all publicly funded birth to five program types. To prepare for the launch of the new VQB5 Quality Profile website, VDOE has developed “profile mock-ups” which are being shared with families and the field during spring 2024. Feedback from families and the field will be used to finalize the quality profiles which will be presented to the Board for review in June 2024.

Throughout the spring of 2024, VDOE will continue to engage the field on the proposed 2024-2025 Guidelines, including the development and feedback on draft quality profiles, which includes the upcoming planned engagement sessions:

Upcoming VQB5 Stakeholder Engagement Events	Planned Dates
Ready Regions Family Council Representatives	3/28/2024
Virginia Preschool Initiative Coordinators	4/9/2024
Head Start Directors/Association	4/12/2024
Mixed Delivery Coordinator Meeting	4/12/2024
Early Childhood Mental Health Advisory Board	4/16/2024
Ready Region Southside Stakeholders	4/16/2024
Ready Region Capital Area Stakeholders	4/16/2024
Ready Region Central Stakeholders	4/18/2024
Virginia Family Day Home Association	4/20/2024
Overview of Updates to 2024-2025 VQB5 Guidelines Webinar for the Field	4/23/2024
Ready Region Chesapeake Bay Stakeholders	4/25/2024
VA-Infant Toddler Specialist Network Webinar	5/2/2024
Ready Region West Superintendent Meeting	5/2/2024

Implementation and Communication

The *2024-2025 VQB5 Guidelines* will be submitted to the Board of Education for final review on June 25, 2024. 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 VQB5 system are supported through the federal Child Care Development Block Grant. Some State General Funds are projected to be used to support External Classroom Observations.