

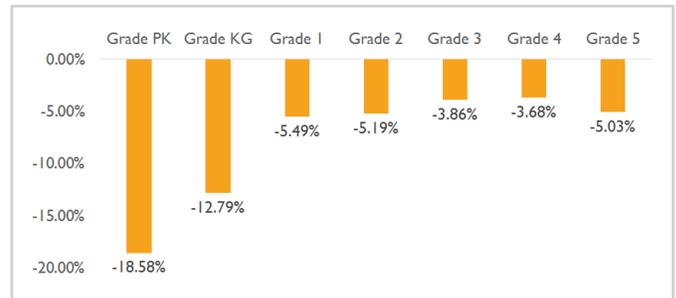


EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION BUDGET PACKAGE

Many of Virginia’s youngest learners—especially disadvantaged children—have missed out on early learning opportunities as a result of COVID-19. Additional investments are urgently needed to support young learners to develop the key literacy, math and socio-emotional skills needed to be successful. Virginia should act now to ensure all children have equitable opportunity to start school ready.

1. Too many children – especially preschoolers – are not enrolled in school this year.

- ✓ Approximately 18,000 fewer preschoolers and kindergarteners are enrolled this school year.
- ✓ Preschool drops were 4 times larger among children from economically-disadvantaged families and were larger among Black and Hispanic children as compared to white and Asian children.
- ✓ Preschool enrollment dropped by 20% in virtual-only divisions as compared to a 12% drop when some in-person was offered. Similar trends occurred in kindergarten.



To address this challenge, Virginia should:

- ✓ Increase access to the Virginia Preschool Initiative and Mixed Delivery in private settings.
- ✓ Continue to prioritize young learners for a safe return to in-person education.
- ✓ Continue to allow rolling enrollment for preschool as families feel safe to return to school.
- ✓ Increase flexibility for families to enroll children in the program or grade that meets their needs.

2. COVID has negatively affected young learners’ academic *and* social-emotional development.

- ✓ A greater percentage of Virginia children (45%) started kindergarten without having the key literacy, math and social-emotional skills needed to be successful.
- ✓ The drop in entering kindergarteners’ literacy skills represents the largest ever single year decrease (5 times that of any one-year change in the history of PALS since 1997).
- ✓ Virginia’s most vulnerable kindergartners fared the worst; a disproportionate percentage of Black, Hispanic, and disadvantaged children, as well as Dual Language learners are entering kindergarten with only the minimal early literacy skills necessary for school readiness.
- ✓ Kindergarten teachers reported greater concerns about children’s social-emotional well-being.

To address this challenge, Virginia should:

- ✓ Fully fund the Governor’s proposed budget to support educators to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of young learners with a special focus on literacy and mental health.
- ✓ Develop and implement a preschool version of VKRP to understand and address the needs of Virginia’s most vulnerable preschoolers.

EQUITY AND ACCESS

\$5 million to fully restore Teacher Recognition Grants (*Item 144.JJ*)

- ✓ *Study found a remarkable 23% increase in retention for teachers who received grants in 2019*
- ✓ *Step toward addressing inequities among the workforce + Children benefit from consistency*

\$444,000 to fully restore pilot for at-risk 3-year-olds (*Item 145 C.14.a.4)b*)

\$300,000 to enable same-year reallocation to eliminate VPI waitlists (*Item 145 C.14.g*)

\$642,000 for ratios and class sizes (*Item 145 C.14.j.*)

- ✓ *Could create slots for 2,000 additional children*

QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

\$9.7 million to fully restore increase to VPI Per Pupil Amount (PPA) (*Item 145 C.14.a.1.*)

- ✓ *Increases the PPA by another 10%*

[NEW] \$300,000 to expand the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Project (VKRP) to all Pre-K and Kindergarten classrooms in public schools (*Item 137 H. c; pg. 137*)

- ✓ *Data to understand and address needs of Virginia's most vulnerable preschoolers*

[NEW] \$161,000 to create a Deputy Superintendent for Early Childhood at the Department of Education (*Item 143*)

- ✓ *This creates sustained leadership at VDOE once transition is complete in July, 2021*

FLEXIBILITY AND COVID-RESPONSE LANGUAGE

Maximizing local use of VPI (*145.C.14.n; pg. 186*)

- ✓ *Allows any VPI appropriation that is not awarded in the fiscal year to be repurposed for any other VPI initiatives (wait-lists, add-on grants, class sizes, three-year-old pilot) can be used interchangeably based on local demand*

Establishing special education inclusion targets for VPI classrooms (*Item 145 C.14.a.4)e; pg. 182*)

- ✓ *Expands access to special education students by requiring classrooms to meet or exceed special education inclusion target*