



VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

# Early Childhood Education Workgroup on Quality

September 16, 2014

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Executive Director

# Mandate



- At its May 7, 2014 meeting, the Commission adopted a study plan to convene a workgroup to assess approaches for improving quality in Virginia's early childhood education programs.
- Staff is to provide an update on the workgroup's progress to the Commission on Youth prior to the 2015 General Assembly Session.

# Identified Issues



- The majority of a child's brain development occurs during the first five years of life.
- Children with access to quality early learning experiences are more likely to adapt to new learning and social environments and acquire the skills they need to enter kindergarten ready to succeed.
- High-quality early education programs support school readiness evidenced by:
  - Increased test scores;
  - Increased high school graduation rates;
  - Decreased rates of being held back a grade;
  - Decreased placement in special education among low-income children; and
  - Decreased crime delinquency rates.

# Identified Issues



- Virginia has a diverse array of early childhood education programs and initiatives located in public, private, home, and faith-based settings. Significant early childhood education programs and initiatives include:
  - Virginia Early Childhood Foundation,
  - Statewide Smart Beginnings Network,
  - The Virginia Preschool Initiative,
  - The Virginia Star Quality Initiative, and
  - Federal Head Start programs.
- Unlike K-12, there is wide variation in the delivery of early care and education programs, under the auspices of multiple agencies and authorizing entities, and are delivered in a variety of settings.

# Identified Issues



- Identifying and accessing high-quality programs can be challenging for families.
  - Not all early childhood education programs participate in Virginia Star Quality Initiative, which rates early childhood education programs and provides tools to participating programs so they can improve their quality.
- A workgroup on quality would help by providing information on components which are present in high-quality early childhood education programs.
- Identifying elements in high-quality programs such as environment, curriculum, class size, and teacher-child interaction can help enhance quality programming in Virginia.

# Study Activities



- Invite key legislators to participate as workgroup members
- Invite key stakeholders
- Plan workgroup agenda with national experts/speakers to provide information on the following:
  - Quality indicators in early childhood education,
  - Virginia’s quality improvement initiatives,
  - What program attributes influence quality/outcomes, and
  - Next steps.
- Convene workgroup
- Report results for discussion

# Identified Stakeholders



- Office of the Governor
- Office of the Lieutenant Governor
- Secretary of Education
- Secretary of Health and Human Resources
- Secretary of Commerce and Trade
- General Assembly Members
- Legislative Staff
- Business Representatives
- Workforce Development Representatives
- Virginia Department of Education
- Virginia Department of Social Services
- Voices for Virginia’s Children
- Private Early Childhood Education Providers
- Virginia Early Childhood Foundation
- Virginia Preschool Initiative
- Virginia Head Start Programs
- Virginia’s Infant and Toddler Specialist Network
- Virginia Association for Early Childhood Education
- Smart Beginnings Coalitions
- Representatives from Virginia’s Colleges and Universities
- Local Education Agencies
- Other Related Advocacy Organizations and Stakeholders



## Early Childhood Education Workgroup on Quality

**Hosted by the Virginia Commission on Youth**

*June 17, 2014.*

*House Room 3, The Capitol*



# WORKGROUP



## Workgroup Members:

- Senators Colgan, Lewis, Marsden, Miller, and Ruff
- Delegates R.P. Bell, Dance, Krupicka, Mason, Orrock, Peace, Plum, Pogge, Sickles

## Executive Branch Officials:

- The Honorable Terry R. McAuliffe, the Honorable William Hazel, the Honorable Anne Holton, Mrs. Holly Coy representing Lt. Governor Northam, Mr. Lawrence Wilder for the Honorable Maurice Jones

## Attendees:

- Representatives from the business community, child care providers, program administrators, educators, advocacy organizations, school officials, and social service organizations
- Approximately 120 attendees
- Dominion Power provided lunch

# WORKGROUP



## Agenda

### Welcome and Purpose

*The Honorable Christopher Peace, Chair, Virginia Commission on Youth*

### Review of the Research on Quality in Early Learning Settings

*Robert C. Pianta, Ph.D., Dean, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia*

### Virginia's Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives

*Christine Harris, Director, Office of Humanities and Early Childhood Education, VDOE*

*Barbara Newlin, Director, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Development, VDSS*

*Kathy Glazer, President, Virginia Early Childhood Foundation*

### Discussion/Questions and Answers

*Workgroup Members and Attendees (Facilitated by Vikki Barth, Leadership Metro Richmond)*

### Next Steps

*Delegate Christopher Peace and Delegate Robert Krupicka*

# Review of the Research on Quality in Early Learning Settings



- Experimental and scaled-up programs reviewed
- “Educational” programs yield greater benefits (~30% long-term gap; 50% gap in one year)
- Abcedarian, Chicago, Perry
  - Long-term academic, social gains; Return on investment - \$3-\$15
- State scaled-up Pre-K programs
  - Oklahoma, Georgia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, North Carolina
  - .5-.8 standard deviation; larger impacts for poor (half the gap in one year)
  - Positive trends on state standards found consistently
- Head Start evaluations
  - Very few benefits in short term; by and large no effects

# Review of the Research on Quality in Early Learning Settings



- Virginia
  - Evidence of benefits (JLARC study of the Virginia Preschool Initiative)
  - No controlled evaluations
  - Quality, curriculum uneven
  - Lacking readiness assessments
  - Strong work on standards

# Review of the Research on Quality in Early Learning Settings



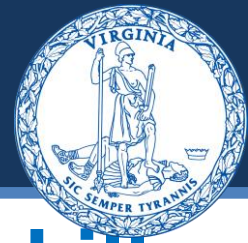
- There is no evidence that structural quality aspects (e.g., ratio, teacher credentials/degrees, etc.) drive student learning (several studies).
- The quality of the child's experiences in the classroom are demonstrated to impact learning. This includes:
  - teacher-child interactions, and
  - curriculum.
- Children from lower income families especially benefit from classrooms with strong instructional support.
- Children in Pre-K classrooms offering higher levels of instructional support displayed better language skills at the end of the kindergarten year.
- Kindergarten Instructional Support scores made an independent contribution to gains in children's language and math abilities.

# Review of the Research on Quality in Early Learning Settings

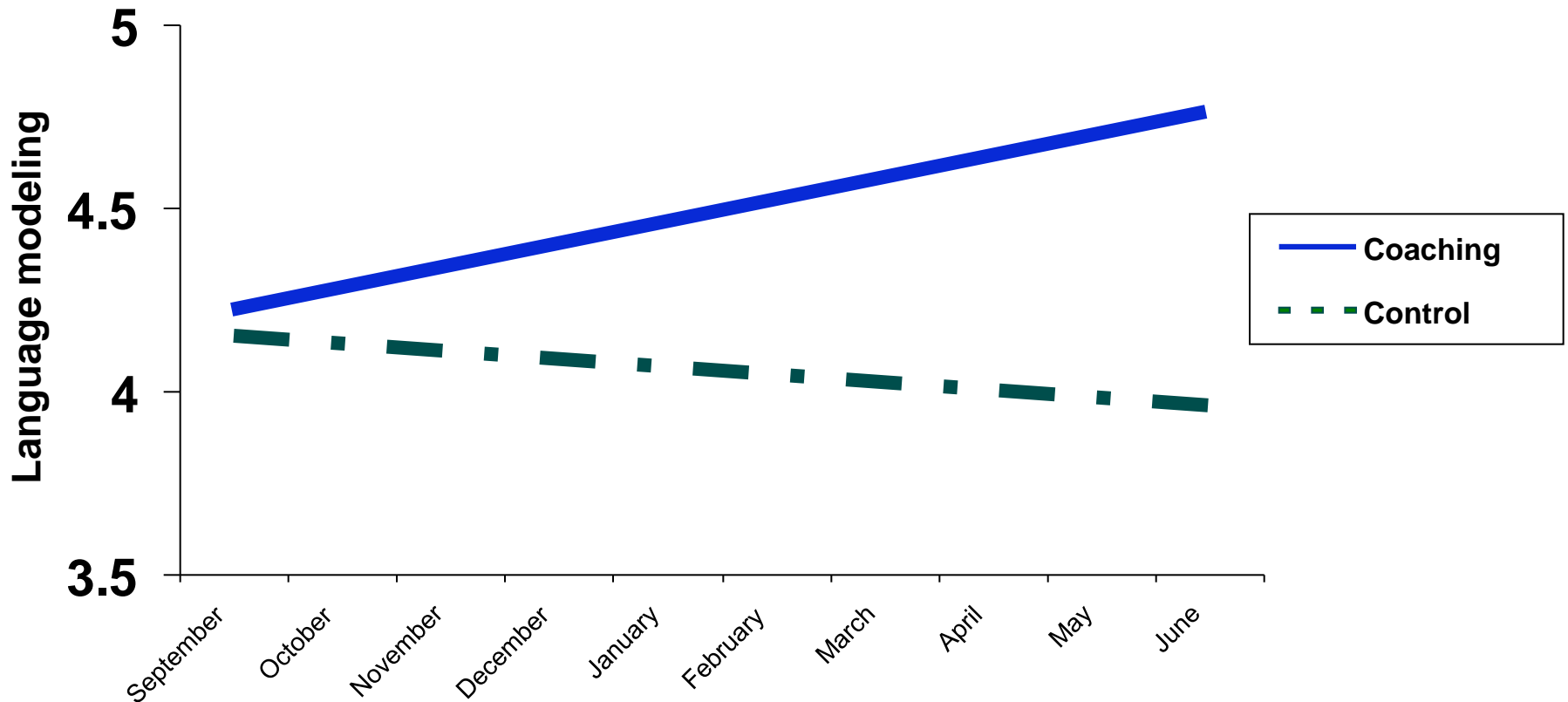


## What has been demonstrated to help teachers improve instructional support?

- Program design and professional development with focus on interactions, skills, and use of evidence-based educationally-focused curricula (this is least prevalent among preschool programs).
- Coaching – My Teaching Partner (MTP) model
  - MTP is a 3-credit college course which focuses on improving teachers' knowledge of effective interactions, their skills in identifying effective interactions, and skill application in the classroom.
  - Teachers with MTP coaches had:
    - more sensitive interactions with students,
    - increased student engagement, and improved language stimulation, and
    - high-poverty classrooms benefited more greatly and early career teachers benefit even more.
  - Children with MTP teachers had:
    - greater gains in tests/literacy,
    - lower levels of problem behavior, and
    - and higher levels of expressive language.



# MTP coaching improves language skills



Source: Pianta, R. (June 17, 2014). *Review of the Research on Quality in Early Learning Settings*. Presentation to the Virginia Commission on Youth Early Childhood Education Workgroup on Quality.

# Virginia's Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives – VDOE



## Virginia Department of Education Preschool Programs

State Funded  
Programs  
Administered by the  
VDOE

Virginia  
Preschool  
Initiative  
(VPI)

Federally Funded  
Programs  
Administered by the  
VDOE

Title 1  
Preschool

Early  
Childhood  
Special  
Education

Federally Funded  
Programs  
Administered by  
Head Start Offices

Head Start



# Virginia's Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives – VDOE



## VPI

- VPI serves four-year-olds who are at risk for school failure and not presently receiving services from Head Start.
- VPI is financed with state share funding projected on the state's share of \$6,000 per eligible child. The local share of cost is capped at 50%.
- The division-level free lunch eligibility percentage is used as the at-risk criterion in the funding formula.
- Of 135 localities, 131 are eligible for funding and 119 that participate. There are 24,629 eligible children in Virginia and 18,021 participating children.
- In FY 2015, \$71,976,297 was allocated for VPI.

# Virginia's Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives – VDOE



## VPI

To obtain state funding, localities must develop a written local plan for programs that includes:

1. Quality preschool education;
2. Parental involvement;
3. Comprehensive child health services;
4. Comprehensive social services; and
5. Transportation.

Funds disbursed to localities to:

1. Establish or expand quality, comprehensive preschool programs in public schools or community sites;
2. Purchase quality preschool education programs and services for at-risk four-year-old children from existing providers;
3. Expand existing quality programs to serve more children; and
4. Upgrade existing programs to meet criteria for comprehensive, quality preschool programs to include new, unserved children.

# Virginia's Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives – VDOE



## VPI

- **Teacher quality** – knowledge of both academic content areas and child development including social-emotional and self-regulation skills. Teachers funded with VPI must have a license from the Board of Education.
  - For VPI programs located in public schools, teachers must have a bachelor's degree according to the Commonwealth's teacher licensure standards. For VPI programs located outside of public schools, localities determine which credentials are needed for program personnel.\*
- **Professional development** – focus on improving teacher practice and child outcomes. VDOE provides support and resources.
- **Collaboration** – blended and braided services with agencies and partnerships as well as strong communication with families.
- **Accountability** – measuring student success including data-driven decision making using local resources and Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) Pre-K.

# Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening

Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Kindergarten Students Identified in Fall for Reading Intervention Services by Preschool Experience: 2013 Data

Preschool Program	Total Number of Students Screened	Students Identified as <b>Not Needing</b> Intervention Services		Students Identified as <b>Needing</b> Intervention Services	
		Number of Students	Percent of Total Number of Students	Number of Students	Percent of Total Number of Students
VPI	11,259	10,540	94%	719	6%
Coordinated Programs (VPI, Title 1, SPED, etc)	5,813	5,427	93%	386	7%
Other PreK	33,681	30,904	92%	2,777	8%
PreK Status Unknown	15,725	13,242	84%	2,483	16%
No PreK	14,477	10,754	74%	3,723	26%

# Virginia's Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives – VDOE



## VPI

- **Local variation** – each locality designs local program based on funding and need; eligibility determined by locality. Examples include student selection criteria based on poverty, homelessness, English language learners, and family stress.
- **Impact** – VPI participation is linked to a reduced likelihood of repeating kindergarten and better outcomes on the kindergarten literacy Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) assessment.
- **Challenges** – local match and insufficient classroom space are top two identified challenges. VDOE has one staff member to handle site management and professional development.

# Virginia's Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives – VDSS



- Virginia has over 8,000 child care providers with capacity to serve over 360,000 children
  - Licensed child care centers (2,468)
  - Licensed family day homes (1,342)
  - Local ordinance providers (1,878)
  - Religiously exempt child care centers (996)
  - Voluntarily registered family day homes (903)
  - Unregulated subsidy providers (802)
  - Other (76)
- The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) licenses child care programs per provisions in the Code of Virginia.

# Virginia's Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives – VDSS



- VDSS administers the Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF).
- Virginia's CCDF subsidy program is administered in conjunction with 119 local departments of social services.
  - Provides low-income families with financial resources to find/afford quality child care.
  - Participating families may select any legally operating child day care facility eligible to participate in the program.
  - In FY 2013, over 43,000 children were served, 82% in licensed care.
- The federal government establishes basic requirements for state CCDF subsidy programs. Federal regulations require activities in several areas:
  - Child Care Subsidy
  - Quality Improvement
  - Professional Development
  - Consumer Education

# Virginia Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives – VDSS



## Quality

**Virginia Star Quality Initiative**

**Local Quality Initiatives**

## Professional Development

**Child Care Provider Scholarships**

**Infant & Toddler Specialist Network**

**Distance Learning**

**Early Childhood Mental Health**

**Endorsements**

**Tiered Reimbursement Study (SJR54)**

**Child Care Professional Development Registry**

**Training/Trainer Approval System**



# Virginia's Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives – VDSS



- Challenges:
  - Quantity v. quality
  - Length of time needed to demonstrate return on investment
  - Data fragmentation (bringing VDSS data into longitudinal system)

# Virginia's Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives – VECF



- The Virginia Star Quality Initiative is Virginia's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)
- Administered through a public-private partnership between VDSS and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF)
- Participation is voluntary
- There are 341 classroom-based sites and 77 family child-care homes participating that serve more than 15,000 children.\*
- VECF is a public/private partnership envisioned by the business community; founded in 2007; focused on statewide network of Smart Beginnings to build local/regional capacity to support good health and school readiness of young children.

# Virginia's Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives – VECF



- The Virginia Star Quality Initiative was created to:
  - help parents and caregivers find high-quality child care and preschool options throughout Virginia; and
  - assist child care and preschool programs, regardless of their setting, with their efforts to provide high quality early care and education.
- Since 2008, partnerships have been established with over 500 child care and preschool programs to improve the early education provided to over 18,800 children.
- Virginia's star ratings use the most rigorous quality measurement tools based on research and objective observations.
- Each participating program is given a star rating, from 1 to 5 stars.
- The rating system evaluates centers on 4 standards:
  1. education, qualifications, and training;
  2. interactions;
  3. structure; and
  4. environment and instruction.

# Virginia's Early Learning Quality Improvement Initiatives – VECF



- Proposed revisions to Virginia's Star Quality Standards are in development. Potential revisions include the following:
  - Revise the education and qualifications standard to provide more emphasis on teachers' competencies.
  - Remove the ratio and group size standard from the rating process.
  - Add a standard to assess use of early learning guidelines.

# Key Findings from Workgroup



- The quality of the child's experience/quality of interaction with the educator has the greatest impact upon achievement gains in early learning settings.
- Coursework and coaching on interactions produces gains in teaching and in children's engagement, literacy, vocabulary, self-regulation, and math skills.
- Quality can be improved through teacher coaching and ongoing professional development. Focused teacher professional development and preparation can increase quality and children's school readiness – "gap-closing experiences".
- Technology can be used to provide meaningful professional development.
- While resources are in place, families have difficulty locating high-quality early learning programs. Multiple agency involvement is confusing to families. Moreover, families frequently assume any child care provider is licensed.
- Structural requirement must not be minimized because they can be critical to ensure safety, not an "either/or" situation.

# Key Findings from Workgroup



- There are 3 primary funding streams and there are challenges with blending and braiding funding due to regulatory and funding guidelines. The Commonwealth should develop strategies which reduce barriers between agency “silos” and improve access and collaboration.
- VDOE and VDSS efforts should be linked so that quality improvement activities are focused in low performing schools. A cross-sector committee that examines competency and standards would be helpful to achieve alignment.
- Families may assume that all early childhood programs are licensed and may not know how to access information about how to locate high-quality programs in their locality.
- Virginia must also support state efforts to expand the availability of quality, affordable community-based child care for military families, with a focus on National Guard and Federal Reserve families who are unable to access on-installation-based child care.



## ■ Establish a coordinating council to convene stakeholders/decision makers

1. Introduce legislation establishing a statewide early childhood advisory council to improve the quality, availability, and coordination of funding and services for children from birth to school entry. Membership shall include all impacted state agencies, institutions of higher education, local early childhood providers, business representatives, parents, Head Start agencies, the Department of Veteran Services, and members of the Virginia General Assembly. The Council, under the direction of the Secretary of Education shall make recommendations to the Board of Education and the General Assembly on (a) quality early childhood education programming, (b) availability of high-quality early childhood programs, (c) opportunities for and barriers to collaboration and coordination among programs and agencies responsible for early childhood education, and (d) professional development for early childhood educators.

- or -

2. Request the Governor's Commonwealth Council on Childhood Success to assess and make recommendations to improve the quality, availability, and coordination of funding and services for children from birth to school entry.



## ■ **Build quality by linking training/supports to teachers which emphasize their interactions with children**

1. Introduce legislation requiring individuals seeking initial licensure with an endorsement in early childhood/Pre-K education and persons seeking licensure renewal as teachers who have not completed such study to complete coursework in effective teacher-child interactions and social and instructional supports based on evidence-based curriculum guidelines developed by the Board of Education, in consultation with the Department of Social Services, relevant to the specific teacher licensure routes.
- or -
2. Request VDOE review professional support and in-service training programs for early childhood educators to ensure that such requirements include focus on teacher-child interactions that promote gains in children's social and academic development. Such a review will include the use of technology in delivering professional support and in-service training.
3. Request VDOE/VDSS re-assess licensure requirements to ensure the structural/physical plant requirements are not overemphasized over teacher licensure/training requirements that are proven to enhance quality.





- **Build quality by linking training/supports to teachers which emphasize their interactions with children (cont.)**
- 4. Request VDOE review *Virginia's Quality Indicators for Responsive Teaching: Creating a High Quality Preschool Learning Environment* to ensure that quality of teacher-child interactions and social and instructional supports are utilized as core competencies for early childhood educators.
- 5. Support VDOE's efforts to build capacity with private partners that emphasize hiring teachers with training on the importance of quality teacher-child interactions and social and instructional supports.
- 6. Support the proposed revisions to Virginia's Star Quality Standards which emphasizes those elements that best demonstrate success such as teacher preparation/professional development versus structural and/or physical plant components.



## ■ Improve Access and Quality to the Virginia Preschool Initiative

1. Request the Board of Education to review the funding formula and cost-per-child for VPI and make recommendations to address barriers to access such as local match and facility space to achieve a balance between program quality and easing access for children in all regions across the Commonwealth.

- or -

2. Request JLARC follow up on the previous study of VPI and review the funding formula and cost-per-child for VPI and make recommendations to address barriers to access such as local match and facility space to achieve a balance between program quality and easing access for children in all regions across the Commonwealth.

- or -

3. Direct/Request the Board of Education to develop a quality framework for any childhood program that receives VPI funding.
4. Allow private providers that meet the requirements for quality (QRIS and or the Quality Framework described above) to access VPI money.



## ■ Improve Awareness of Gaps in Virginia's High-Quality Early Childhood Education Programs

1. Request VDSS, in cooperation with VECF, to map all of the quality ratings for the participating early care programs across the state. Such mapping may help show regional gaps and help communicate the benefits of licensure to providers.



- **Address the lack of high-quality community-based early childhood education programs for geographically dispersed reserve and active-duty families.**
  1. Request the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security and the Secretary of Public Safety include access to high-quality early childhood education for Virginia's military families in all efforts seeking to improve services and programs for Virginia's military families.