

Recommendations and Options: Improving Virginia's Early Childhood Development Programs

RECOMMENDATION 1

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending Title 22.1 of the Code of Virginia to require all school divisions to participate in the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program. The purpose of participation would be to administer a multi-dimensional kindergarten readiness assessment to all kindergartners in Virginia public schools. The requirement could be phased in over a three-year period. The General Assembly may wish to consider appropriating sufficient funding. (Chapter 2)

Recommendation 1	
Category	Cost
	\$175K (annually)


RECOMMENDATION 2

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to direct the Virginia Department of Health, with the assistance of the Departments of Social Services, Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Education, and the University of Virginia, to develop a plan to improve the state's information on at-risk children and families. The plan should be submitted to the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees by July 1, 2019. (Chapter 2)

Recommendation 2	
Category	Cost
	TBD

RECOMMENDATION 3

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to direct the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, Department of Health, and Department of Social Services to transform Project LINK into an evidence-based, well-designed, consistently implemented home visiting program to improve child development outcomes by reducing maternal substance abuse. The General Assembly may wish to consider appropriating sufficient funding. (Chapter 3)

Recommendation 3	
Category	Cost
	\$3.3M* (annually)
*Cost savings generated through improved Project LINK expected to cover added costs.	

RECOMMENDATION 4

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to designate Early Impact Virginia as the lead entity to (i) determine and systematically track key outcomes; (ii) conduct systematic needs assessments; and (iii) support continuous quality improvement, training, and coordination across state-supported voluntary home visiting programs. The General Assembly may wish to consider appropriating sufficient funding. (Chapter 3)


Recommendation 4	
Category	Cost
	\$600K (annually)

RECOMMENDATION 5

Recommendation 5	
Category	Cost
	Minimal

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to direct Early Impact Virginia to identify potential additional sources of funding for Virginia's voluntary home visiting programs. The assessment should consider other states' approaches and funding sources, including but not limited to Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, lottery funds, and other dedicated sources of revenue. The assessment should consider the effect on funding stability and the advantages and disadvantages of each potential revenue source identified. Early Impact Virginia should report its findings and recommendations to the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees by July 1, 2019. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 6

Recommendation 6	
Category	Cost
	Minimal

The Virginia Department of Education and the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning should use the results of multi-dimensional kindergarten readiness assessments to determine how well the Virginia Preschool Initiative promotes readiness in all key developmental domains. (Chapter 4)

RECOMMENDATION 7

Recommendation 7	
Category	Cost
	\$250K (annually)

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to require all Virginia Preschool Initiative provider classrooms to have the quality of their teacher-child interactions assessed through a rigorous and research-based classroom observational instrument (such as the CLASS observational instrument) at least once every two years. The General Assembly may wish to consider appropriating sufficient funding. (Chapter 4)

RECOMMENDATION 8

Recommendation 8	
Category	Cost
	Minimal

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to direct the Virginia Department of Education to establish a statewide minimum acceptable threshold for the quality of teacher-child interactions for the Virginia Preschool Initiative. The threshold should be established with the assistance of the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, using a rigorous and research-based classroom observational instrument (such as the CLASS observational instrument). (Chapter 4)


RECOMMENDATION 9

Recommendation 9	
Category	Cost
	Minimal

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to direct the Virginia Department of Education to (i) work with the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning to develop a list of approved research-based early learning curricula that align with the state's early learning standards; (ii) update the list at least every three years; and (iii) require providers to select and use curricula from the list of approved curricula as a condition of receiving funding through the Virginia Preschool Initiative program. (Chapter 4)


RECOMMENDATION 10

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to require all Virginia Preschool Initiative teachers to annually receive individualized professional development from professional development specialists to support quality teacher-child interactions and effective curriculum implementation. The Virginia Department of Education should work with the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning to hire and train specialists to provide this professional development. Professional development resources should be targeted to providers as identified through formal classroom observation (using an observational instrument such as CLASS). The individualized professional development should count toward existing requirements. The General Assembly may wish to consider appropriating sufficient funding. (Chapter 4)

Recommendation 10	
Category	Cost
	\$926K to \$1.4M* (annually)
*Depends on extent and duration of professional development provided.	

RECOMMENDATION 11

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending Title 22.1 of the Code of Virginia to require the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to ensure that high-quality preschool is provided through the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI). On an ongoing basis, VDOE should (i) monitor the quality of teacher-child interactions; (ii) ensure the use of evidence-based curricula; (iii) facilitate individualized professional development and direct more resources to programs that do not meet expectations for quality; and (iv) report to the General Assembly on the extent to which VPI funding supports high-quality pre-K experiences across the state. (Chapter 4)

Recommendation 11	
Category	Cost
	None

RECOMMENDATION 12

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to direct the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to develop a plan to ensure high-quality preschool is provided through the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI). The plan should detail how VDOE will (i) monitor the quality of teacher-child interactions; (ii) ensure the use of evidence-based curricula; (iii) facilitate individualized professional development and direct more resources to programs that do not meet expectations for quality; and (iv) provide the General Assembly with useful information about how VPI funding supports quality pre-K experiences for children across the state. The plan should include details on the number of staff and additional funding needed to carry out these new responsibilities. VDOE should submit its proposal to the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees by November 1, 2018. (Chapter 4)

Recommendation 12	
Category	Cost
	TBD

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Virginia Department of Social Services and the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning should use the results of a multi-dimensional kindergarten readiness assessment to assess how well the Child Care Subsidy Program promotes readiness in all key developmental domains. (Chapter 5)

Recommendation 13	
Category	Cost
	Minimal

RECOMMENDATION 14

Recommendation 14	
Category	Cost
	Minimal

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to direct the Virginia Department of Social Services and the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning to develop a list of research-based, age-appropriate curricula to be available as a resource for child care providers participating in the Child Care Subsidy Program. (Chapter 5)

RECOMMENDATION 15

Recommendation 15	
Category	Cost
	Minimal

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to direct the Virginia Department of Social Services to develop, publish, and maintain a list of professional development courses and providers to be available as a resource for child care professionals participating in the Child Care Subsidy Program. (Chapter 5)

RECOMMENDATION 16

Recommendation 16	
Category	Cost
	Minimal

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending § 2.2-5304 and § 22.1-214 of the Code of Virginia to require the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and Virginia Department of Education to develop and implement a plan to (i) ensure all Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education practitioners receive initial and ongoing training on the programs' scoring processes; (ii) regularly assess the validity of ratings through systematic and documented analyses; and (iii) use results of these analyses to improve technical assistance and systematically target assistance to programs that need it. (Chapter 6)

RECOMMENDATION 17

Recommendation 17	
Category	Cost
	Minimal

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending § 22.1-214 of the Code of Virginia to direct the Virginia Department of Education to develop and implement a process to regularly and systematically collect information about the use of evidence-based practices in local Early Childhood Special Education programs. The Virginia Department of Education should use this information, together with data on inclusion and outcomes, to identify low-performing local programs and systematically target technical assistance to those in need of assistance. (Chapter 6)

RECOMMENDATION 18

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act to direct the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of Health and Human Resources to convene a working group to (i) identify and assess the key barriers to serving Early Childhood Special Education participants in inclusive settings and (ii) develop a plan to increase the percentage of Early Childhood Special Education participants served in inclusive settings. Members of the working group should include state agency administrators of early learning programs, including the Virginia Preschool Initiative, Virginia Preschool Initiative Plus, Child Care Subsidy Program, and the Virginia Head Start State Collaboration Office. The working group should include representatives of other stakeholder groups, as appropriate. The findings of the workgroup should be submitted in a written report to the House Committee on Education, House Appropriations Committee, Senate Committee on Education and Health, and Senate Finance Committee by November 1, 2019. (Chapter 6)

Recommendation 18	
Category	Cost
	Minimal


OPTION 1

The General Assembly could include language in the Appropriation Act to direct the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning to provide training to school divisions on how to effectively use Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program data to improve instructional practices. Training should be prioritized for the school divisions that would most benefit from state assistance. The General Assembly could appropriate sufficient funding. (Chapter 2)

Option 1	
Category	Cost
	\$100K (annually)


OPTION 2

The General Assembly could include language in the Appropriation Act to direct the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning to incorporate a research-based assessment of physical and motor skills in the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program assessment. The General Assembly could appropriate sufficient funding. (Chapter 2)


Option 2	
Category	Cost
	\$500K (one-time)*
*To develop and incorporate new physical and motor skills assessment.	

OPTION 3

The General Assembly could include language in the Appropriation Act to direct the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (UVA CASTL) to design and implement a two-year pilot of a comprehensive research-based curriculum for the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI). The goal would be to offer the curriculum to localities free of charge. UVA CASTL could submit a report to the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees on the (i) results of the pilot and (ii) feasibility and costs to the state of offering the curriculum to VPI providers statewide. The General Assembly could appropriate sufficient funding. (Chapter 4)

Option 3	
Category	Cost
	<\$3.7M* (one-time)
*Estimated costs include two-year pilot.	

OPTION 4

Option 4	
Category	Cost
	\$910K to \$6M* (annually)
*Depends on design of pilot and ability of providers to reach higher quality levels	

The General Assembly could include language in the Appropriation Act to direct the Virginia Department of Social Services to establish and administer a pilot program to provide higher child care subsidy reimbursement rates for providers that demonstrate higher-quality care. The General Assembly could provide the Department of Social Services with additional funding for the pilot. The Virginia Department of Social Services should submit a report on the results of the pilot, along with options to modify and expand it, to the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees. (Chapter 5)

OPTION 5

The General Assembly could repeal § 58.1-322.03(3) of the Code of Virginia to eliminate the Virginia Child Care and Dependent Expenses Deduction. Available revenue could then be used to (i) fund improvements to state-supported early childhood development programs and (ii) serve additional families through effective voluntary home visiting programs and subsidize care for children 12 months or younger currently on the Child Care Subsidy Program waiting list. (Chapter 7)
