

The 2017 Recommendations of the *School Readiness Committee*

Presented to the
*Joint Subcommittee of the Virginia
Preschool Initiative*

Holly Coy, Deputy Secretary of Education
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Presentation Overview

- Committee structure, charge, processes, and timeline
- Target Population
- Identified Barriers and Approved Recommendations
 - Standards Subcommittee
 - Pathways Subcommittee
 - State Priorities Subcommittee

The School Readiness Committee

- Created by the General Assembly in 2016, inaugural members appointed by Secretary Holton
 - Chaired by Mark Gordon (Bon Secours Health System)
 - Vice-chaired by Gail Johnson (Rainbow Station)
- Subcommittees drafted recommendations for consideration by full Committee; inaugural recommendations approved in July 2017
- Their goal is simple: give at-risk children in Virginia the opportunity to receive an early childhood education that sets them up for future success. Research is clear that the single greatest factor in high-quality early childhood education is the skill level of early childhood professionals who interact with children.

Legislative Charge

The first goal of the Committee is to address the development and alignment of an effective professional development and credentialing system for the early childhood education workforce in the Commonwealth, including:

- i.** The development of a competency-based professional development pathway for practitioners who teach children from birth to age five in both public and private early childhood education programs;
- ii.** Consideration of articulation agreements between associate and baccalaureate degree programs;
- iii.** Review of teacher licensure and education programs, including programs offered at comprehensive community colleges in the Commonwealth, to address competencies specific to early childhood development;
- iv.** Alignment of existing professional development funding streams;
- v.** Development of innovative approaches to increasing accessibility, availability, affordability, and accountability of the Commonwealth's workforce development system for early childhood education teachers and providers.

SRC Subcommittees

Standards

- Co-chaired by Chris Chin (Robbins Foundation) & Irene Carney (Sabot School)
- *To what extent do Virginia's professional development standards and structures reflect current research and knowledge?*

Pathways

- Co-chaired by Sara Miller (Longwood) & Christine Schull (NVCC)
- *To what extent do professional development options provide a clear, stackable, affordable continuum for the early childhood workforce?*

State Priorities

- Co-chaired by Rob Krupicka & Walter Stosch
- *What are our state priorities for this workforce?*

A Note About Scope of Work

Specifically, the SRC is working to ensure quality among early childhood professionals who are:

- serving at-risk infants, toddlers, and preschoolers (ages 0 to age 5)
- employed in center-, faith-, and school-based early education programs
- providing services funded in part or in whole with public funds (state and/or federal) including child care subsidy, Head Start, Title I, and VPI
- serving as lead teacher, assistant teacher, and/or administrator in an early childhood program

Standards Subcommittee

*Subcommittee Co-Chairs:
Irene Carney and Chris Chin*

Barrier 1:

The lack of current and consistent professional competencies drives fragmented practice depending on the setting and specific skills of the practitioner.

Additionally, existing professional standards for Virginia have not been updated to reflect most current, research-based practice.

Recommendation A:

- An interagency and stakeholder workgroup should update the *Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* in order to create consistent professional competencies for all early childhood practitioners serving children from birth to kindergarten entry, in settings receiving public funding.
- VECF should provide for expert facilitation of this workgroup and it should include, at a minimum, VDSS, VDOE, higher education institutions, and an inclusive array of public and private providers, practitioners and stakeholders.
- These updates should reflect research and evidence-based practice, and should include, but not be limited to, the following: effective teacher-child interactions, trauma informed care, social-emotional development, special education inclusion, support for dual language learners, targeted instructional practices, diverse family engagement, and cultural and linguistic competencies.
- Draft standards should be provided to the SRC by December 31, 2017, with final consideration and adoption by the Virginia state boards of education and social services by March 1, 2018.

Barrier 2:

Content included in credential and degree bearing programs and in ongoing professional development and training is not aligned to a shared set of standards for the profession.

Recommendation B:

- Preservice and in-service professional development offerings, for the previously specified practitioners, will be aligned with these updated competencies.
- This should include alignment with existing requirements for ongoing annual training for VDSS licensing and VDOE teacher licensure and recertification.

Recommendation C:

- The updated professional competencies will serve as the foundational content of a cohesive career pathway composed of stackable and portable credentials accessible to any adults in the workforce.

Recommendation D:

- Virginia's professional development systems, built on the revised competencies, should have the capacity to support coaching and other evidence-based in-service supports for the workforce.
- Following the fiscal analysis underway by VECF, Virginia should consider repurposing and augmenting existing, relevant public funding to prioritize these supports which research has shown to be of primary importance to teacher effectiveness.

Pathways Subcommittee

*Subcommittee Co-Chairs:
Sara Miller and Christine Schull*

Barrier 3:

Not all early childhood education practitioners have the skills and competencies that research demonstrates improve student outcomes of young children.

Recommendation E:

- By December 30, 2017, the School Readiness Committee should utilize the results and analysis of the 2017 Early Childhood Workforce Survey now underway (*anticipated completion during the fall of 2017*) to set a measurable, ambitious goal for the number and type of credentialed early childhood practitioners to be phased in over a proposed period of time.
- In developing such a goal, consideration should be given to prioritizing the attainment of early childhood associate degrees. (*Very similar to State Priorities Recommendation B*)

Barrier 4:

Virginia's Community College System is well-positioned to provide affordable, targeted, and stackable experiences for early childhood practitioners; but barriers still exist for students trying to access programs statewide and translate CDA experience into community college coursework.

Recommendation F:

- VCCS, SCHEV, and VDOE should promote existing programs and expansion of early childhood education dual enrollment programs at the high school level.

Recommendation G:

- VECF should provide and promote support to community colleges to pursue the *National Association for the Education of Young Children - Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation (NAEYC ECADA)* to ensure quality of the degree programs via external review.

Recommendation H:

- VCCS should ensure that students receive 3 college credit hours for a current Childhood Development Associate (CDA) at any Virginia community college.

Recommendation I:

- VCCS should explore expansion of the early childhood certificates and early childhood associate degree programs to every community college or region, and report back to the SRC about expansion options by September 15, 2017.¹²

Barrier 5:

There are few baccalaureate programs in Virginia that are specific to preparing teachers with the skills needed to support the development of children ages birth to 5, and few of these lead to teacher licensure.

Recommendation J:

- The Early Childhood Articulation Workgroup should continue to take steps to ensure that the community college AAS in Early Childhood articulates seamlessly to baccalaureate programs at Virginia universities in early childhood; and should share findings and recommendations, including resources required to support participating institutions, with the SRC by September 15, 2017.

Recommendation K:

- The VDOE should explore necessary regulatory changes to ensure that students at Virginia universities have the ability to major in early childhood education and early childhood special education at the undergraduate level, and to earn PK-3 teacher licensure.

Recommendation L:

- Additionally, universities should be encouraged to increase competencies specific to early childhood (birth to 5) within preparation programs leading to PK-3 teacher licensure.

Barrier 6:

The cost of pursuing academic credentials is prohibitively expensive and time consuming for individuals working for minimal wages. Few early childhood education practitioners have the means to pursue higher levels of education.

Recommendation M:

- Virginia should continue to provide financial assistance for additional educational attainment, like the VDSS and Project Pathfinders scholarship programs.
- It should also support innovative approaches through apprenticeships, educational programs, and workforce systems to support individuals and providers whose staffs are working to attain higher level credentials, certificates and degrees.

State Priorities Subcommittee

*Subcommittee Co-Chairs:
Rob Krupicka and Walter Stosch*

Barrier 7:

There is an urgent need to increase the number of highly competent early childhood practitioners as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Recommendation N:

- Virginia should focus on building and maintaining a cohesive continuum of stackable, affordable, high quality PD and credentials for the profession to both facilitate recruitment of new professionals and enhance skills of incumbent practitioners.
 - i. To attract individuals into the field, Virginia should strengthen recruitment and marketing strategies (including through existing resources such as career coaches and high school guidance counselors sharing information about available career pathways and financial supports with potential students at all entry points).

Barrier 7 Continued:

Recommendation O:

- Virginia should discern and advance policies that incentivize parents, providers and businesses to select, encourage, and promote high quality early childhood practitioners and settings serving children from birth to age 5, particularly children most at risk of not being ready for kindergarten.
 - i. Specifically, Virginia should expand the definition of eligible students for the Education Improvement Scholarship Program to students attending high quality early childhood education settings (requires either VCPE accreditation or at least level 3 in VA Quality).
 - ii. Virginia should consider implementing a program standard (requirement) for any setting receiving public monies (as measured either by VA Quality or recognized high-quality accrediting organization (i.e. NAEYC, VCPE).
 - iii. Following ii, Virginia should consider developing financial incentives based on tiers of quality across all systems and settings (potential for budget impact).

Barrier 7 Continued:

Recommendation P:

- The *Virginia Preschool Initiative Joint Subcommittee* should consider a recommendation/ policy change that VPI funds can be spent in private settings on teacher salaries, even if the individual does not have a baccalaureate degree, as is presently required.
- Exceptions should be prioritized for individuals who hold a relevant early childhood AA/AAS degree and for programs in which at least one lead teacher or administrative leader on site has an EC-related baccalaureate credential.
- The allowance could be provided for a defined period of time that would allow for professionals to reach the goal of a baccalaureate degree once EC-related BAs are more accessible.
- No budget impact expected.

Barrier 8:

The issue of low compensation remains a stubborn challenge when attempting to increase the number of practitioners with competencies and skills that research demonstrates support brain development of young children.

Recommendation Q:

- The School Readiness Committee should create a subcommittee to examine and make recommendations about parity in compensation as related to the relevant early childhood credentials.
- These recommendations should consider regional differences inside Virginia as well as promising strategies underway in other states and communities.
- The preliminary recommendations from National Academy committee on ECE financing, the 2017 Workforce Survey, and census, retirement and workforce projections should help inform this discussion.
- Recommendations should be delivered by June 30, 2018, and should include strategies around recruitment, retention and advancement opportunities.
- The group should include expert resources outside the Committee's membership.
- With VECF providing for the facilitation of the subcommittee, no budget impact expected.

Barrier 9:

Programs, policies, funding and regulations governing early childhood care and learning at the state level are fragmented across multiple agencies and secretariats.

Recommendation R:

- The School Readiness Committee should create a subcommittee to examine governance of early childhood programs in the Commonwealth, and make recommendations on:
 - i. Alternative governance models that better align policies driving early childhood programs, funds and regulations to support high quality practitioners and quality settings to increase the school readiness of children;
 - ii. Quality standards alignment across agencies; and
 - iii. Any necessary cross-secretariat or cross-agency staffing changes that would be required to implement such recommendations.
- Recommendations should be delivered by December 31, 2017.
- The group should include expert resources outside the Committee's membership.
- With VECF providing for the facilitation of the subcommittee, no budget impact expected.

Questions?

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