

Unifying Early Childhood In Virginia

*Role, Vision, and Priorities of
Chief School Readiness Officer*

Define the Opportunity

All Virginia children, regardless of background or zip code, are capable of and deserve to enter kindergarten ready.

Yet only 60% of Virginia children enter school fully ready with the literacy, math, self - regulation and social skills needed for school.

- *70% of disadvantaged children birth to five lack access to an affordable early childhood care and education option.*
- *30% of eligible children are served by publicly -funded programs – namely PreK, Head Start and Child Care Assistance - but quality varies greatly across programs.*
- *Programs have to navigate different regulations, rating systems and monitoring processes.*
- *Changing demographics mean more vulnerable children – from very low income families, with special needs and Dual Language Learners - who are less likely to access a quality program that prepares them for kindergarten.*

By 2022: What Success Looks Like

By 2022, more Virginia children will enter kindergarten ready.

More Virginia families have **affordable access** to early childhood care and education that supports learning across the **birth through 3rd grade** continuum and **meets their unique needs**.

With a **shared** definition of **school readiness**, Virginia families and early childhood programs work together to **ensure children thrive, developing the skills** needed for kindergarten and beyond.

Virginia has **unified quality standards** for all publicly-funded early childhood programs that are **indicative of child outcomes**. Virginia **measures and rewards** programs for performance, ensuring leaders and teachers are **well compensated** for their achievement.

Overall Virginia's early childhood system will be **more unified, transparent, data -driven and resource -effective**.

Role of Chief School Readiness Officer

To ensure more children enter ready, Virginia should unify and strengthen its early childhood care and education system, focusing on at-risk children served by public funds.

The Chief School Readiness Officer will:

- Design and implement a multi-year strategic plan to unify the early childhood care and education system and prepare all Virginia children for kindergarten;
- Unify key activities such as setting standards, measuring quality, monitoring health and safety, using data, supporting improvement, rewarding performance and sharing information with families;
- Work across agencies and with stakeholders in the field to brainstorm, plan and execute in a collaborative, dynamic and outcomes-oriented manner; and
- Reposition state government to better support communities to unify their local early childhood efforts and develop the innovative solutions that best meet the needs of their leaders, teachers, families and children.

Current Priorities

The Chief School Readiness Officer is working closely with elected officials, agencies, and diverse stakeholders.

In addition to developing the plan, the Chief School Readiness Officer is:

- Unifying and coordinating initiatives related to the JLARC Study and 2018 General Assembly investments in early childhood including implementing evidence-based instructional tools, measuring classroom interactions and supporting data-driven improvement and, in turn, for meeting higher expectations, integrating and increasing funding to programs that promote children's learning and development;
- Leading effort to apply for and implement federal grants such as the Preschool Development Grant – Birth to Five to achieve shared goals and bring additional resources to the Commonwealth;
- Convening Children's Cabinet workgroup to inform efforts to strengthen early childhood development and school readiness; and
- Working closely with the School Readiness Committee to build on recommendations and continually refine throughout implementation.