

**Virginia Preschool Initiative
Guidelines for the Virginia Preschool Initiative Application
2017-2018**

Title of Program:

Virginia Preschool Initiative

Issued to:

Commonwealth of Virginia City Managers, County Administrators and Division Superintendents

Issuing Agency:

Virginia Department of Education
Office of Standards, Curriculum, and Instruction
101 North 14th Street, 23rd floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219

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Virginia Lottery Funds

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VPI Guidelines:

The guidelines may be downloaded at:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/guidelines.pdf

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The School Superintendent must certify electronically that the data is correct by May 15, 2017.

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Program Overview

In January 1994, the Commission on Equity in Public Education adopted and endorsed four major programs as the core elements in their recommendations to the 1994 General Assembly. The recommendations, subsequently adopted by the General Assembly, focused on programs that had been shown to improve educational achievement. A preschool program for at-risk four-year-olds was one of those recommendations.

The 1995 General Assembly, through passage of the Omnibus Education Act (HB2542) and the Appropriation Act, reinforced all components of the 1994 package and provided for expansion of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI). As of 2005-2006, state funds are available to provide comprehensive preschool programs to 100 percent of Virginia's at-risk four-year-olds, as defined by VPI funding eligibility, and who are not being served by Head Start. Children at or below 100% of the poverty level should receive priority for Head Start enrollment. VPI should focus on children above that poverty level. Parental choice must be honored.

In FY 2012, the composite index value was capped at 0.5000 for purposes of calculating the estimated local match requirement for the VPI match. The 2016 General Assembly approved funding, subject to final approval by the Governor, calculated at an estimated \$6,125 per eligible child, with program costs shared by the state and local governments based on the composite index of local ability-to-pay.

Access to the application for school division personnel should be requested through the school division's SSWS account manager. Programs must operate on a full-day or half-day basis for the entire school year to receive the full state allocation. For a new program in the first year of implementation only, a program operating less than a full school year will receive state funds on a fractional basis determined by the pro-rata portion of a school year program provided.

The program will comply with the staffing standards required by Section 22.1-199.1C, *Code of Virginia*. The maximum class size will be 18 students. One teacher will be employed for any class of nine students or less. If the average daily membership in any class exceeds nine students but does not exceed 18, a full-time teacher's aide will be assigned to the class.

Scope of Services

The purpose of the grant is to reduce disparities among young children upon formal school entry and to reduce or eliminate those risk factors that lead to early academic failure (see Appendix A).

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

1. Provision for a quality preschool education;
2. Health services;
3. Social services;
4. Parental Involvement; and
5. Transportation.

Defining a Quality Program

The legislative intent of the initiative is to establish a high-quality preschool education program for at-risk four-year-olds. For the purpose of this initiative, a qualifying program is one that is supported through local dollars and meets, or can meet, the criteria for a quality preschool program for at-risk four-year-old children in the 2017-2018 school year.

PALS-PreK: Localities are required to use the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening instruments for pre-kindergarten students (PALS-PreK) for literacy screening during the fall and spring of each school year. The results of PALS-PreK assessments, both fall and spring, must be reported to the PALS office. The cost for PALS materials and access to the PALS Online Score Entry and Reporting System is a local responsibility unless the PALS office receives funds from the state to provide these services at no cost to the locality. This is an allowable expense in the local VPI budget (see Appendix B).

Foundation Blocks: The curriculum must align with *Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning*. The *Foundation Blocks* establish a measurable range of skills and knowledge essential for four-year-olds to be successful in kindergarten. The purpose of the *Foundation Blocks* is to provide early childhood educators a set of comprehensive standards with indicators of success for entering kindergarten derived from scientifically-based research. They reflect a consensus of children's conceptual learning, acquisition of basic knowledge, and participation in meaningful and relevant learning experiences (see Appendix C).

Curriculum Review Rubric: *Virginia's Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool* was developed to assist localities in identifying and choosing curricula that are based on scientific research and that align with *Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning* (see Appendix D).

Quality Indicators: *Virginia's Quality Indicators for Responsive Teaching: Creating a High Quality Preschool Learning Environment* is aligned to the Foundation Blocks and provides a checklist to help teachers and parents design environments, materials, and interactions that promote optimal motivation and engagement in learning (see Appendix E). Localities must implement the Quality Indicators to ensure the highest quality preschool experiences for each child and as a method for continuous program improvement.

Parental Involvement and Family Engagement

Quality preschool programs have an intentional plan for implementing meaningful parental involvement and family engagement strategies in the areas of 1) building a community of respect that considers the various cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds of parents and caregivers, 2) promoting parenting skills and coaching parents as their children's first teacher, and 3) listening to parents feedback and building partnerships with them.

Health Services and Social Services (Comprehensive Services)

Quality preschool programs work to meet children's needs across all domains of development that support school readiness including: health, mental health, and nutrition. Staff works with families to build bridges to resources and community-based services by facilitating linkages for

obtaining needed resources for children. Screenings for hearing, vision, dental, health (including mental health) are facilitated, as needed, and provided onsite when appropriate and possible.

Inclusion of Students with Disabilities: Children with disabilities are intentionally included in VPI classrooms together with their peers without disabilities. Inclusion includes holding high expectations and promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations and using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development, friendships with peers, and sense of belonging. This may include the provision of special education and related services in accordance with the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or accommodations, supports, or services in the 504 plan. VPI staff work closely with the child's educational team to successfully include the child with a disability. They plan for a smooth and timely transition of the child from Part C of IDEA and from other environments, including ECSE classrooms. Further, VPI staff identifies children suspected of having a disability and in need of an IEP or 504 plan.

Support for Dual Language Learners: Children who are Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are those who are learning two (or more) languages at the same time, or learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language. Children who are DLLs come from homes where a language other than English is spoken. For some, both a language other than English *and* English may be spoken at home. Early childhood programs should be prepared to optimize the early experiences of DLLs by holding high expectations, capitalizing on their strengths-including cultural and linguistic strengths - and providing them with the individualized developmental and learning supports necessary to succeed in school.

Services for Homeless Preschoolers: Provide required services for VPI children experiencing homelessness according to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program of Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act effective October 1, 2016. For additional information visit the Project Hope-Virginia website at www.wm.edu or contact homless@wm.edu.

Transition Strategies: Transition to kindergarten is a process that is most successful when it is carefully planned out well in advance. Quality preschool programs implement transition strategies that may include collaborative meetings between preschool and kindergarten teachers to discuss students' progress in meeting the Foundation Blocks for Early Learning, student visits to kindergarten classrooms, parent meetings to communicate kindergarten expectations, transitioning to kindergarten toolkits for parents in their primary language, and providing engaging kindergarten registration/orientation meetings for parents taking into consideration their cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds.

Professional Development for Staff: Teachers and instructional assistants attend at least 15 clock hours per year of professional development focused on early childhood education topics including best-practices for implementing a high-quality preschool program.

Application Requirements

Authorizing legislation requires the chief administrator (city manager or county administrator), in conjunction with the school division superintendent, to identify a lead agency within the locality prior to submitting a proposal application.

Applicants must:

1. Demonstrate willingness to provide a quality preschool education program that conforms to the guidelines and criteria outlined in Appendices A-E;
2. Demonstrate collaboration and coordination with community agencies and groups identified by the lead agency as necessary for the successful delivery of comprehensive services to the children and their families;
3. Develop and utilize selection criteria based on the definition of at-risk. (Appendix A provides information on risk factors); and
4. Complete a grant application and submit it to the Department of Education.

Funding a Qualifying Program

Funds will be disbursed by the Department of Education 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.

State dollars may be used to:

1. Upgrade, complement, or expand an existing locally funded program to meet quality criteria;
2. Complement or expand a Title I or Head Start program to serve additional children; or
3. Establish a new program to serve additional children.

Programs must provide full-day or half-day and at least school year services. First year programs operating less than a full school year will receive state funds on a fractional basis determined by the pro-rata portion of a school year program provided. Children enrolled in the program must be four years of age on or before September 30 of the school year.

The Appropriation Act states that a local match of funds, based on the composite index of local ability-to-pay, is required to receive state funds for this program. In FY 2016, the composite index value was capped at 0.5000 for purposes of calculating the estimated local match requirement for the VPI match.

Local Funds

Cash Contributions

Cash contributions are defined as local dollars that are:

1. In a program that meets, or can meet the criteria for a quality preschool program for at-risk four-year-old children in school year 2017-2018; and/or
2. New dollars, which are used to implement a program in the 2017-2018 school year that meets the criteria for a quality preschool program for at-risk four-year-old children.

In-Kind Contributions

In-kind contributions are defined as cash outlays that are made by the locality that benefit the program, but are not directly charged to the program. The value of fixed assets cannot be considered as an in-kind contribution. In-kind contributions are:

1. Limited to no more than 25 percent of the total local match requirement;
2. Justified in the program plan as necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient implementation of the program;
3. Verifiable from the recipient's records;
4. Not included as contributions for any other federally-assisted or state-assisted project or program; and
5. Not paid by the federal government or state government under another award.

Coordination of Funds

Localities should coordinate other funding sources in planning programs for four-year-old children. Some sources of funds include federal funds for Title 1, Head Start programs, and child-care subsidy programs.

Local plans must provide clear methods of service coordination for the purpose of reducing the cost per child for the service, increasing the number of at-risk children served and/or extending services for the entire year. Examples of these include, but are not limited to:

1. **Wraparound services** combine funds such as child-care subsidy dollars, administered by local social service agencies, with dollars for quality preschool education programs.
2. **Wrapout services** use grant funds to provide health, social services, and transportation within a setting that currently provides quality preschool education (e.g., child-care settings or schools).
3. **Expansion of services** uses grant funds to purchase placements within existing programs, such as Head Start, which provide comprehensive services to at-risk four-year-old children.

Mixed Delivery

Mixed delivery means that school-based preschool program, Head Start programs, licensed child care programs, and community-based organization are eligible to partner and work together to provide services. Classrooms can be supported in public and private sectors.

Currently 45 % of participating eligible localities do not use all the available slots to due limited space and lack of local match. Please remember that partnerships with private providers is encouraged and permitted.

Using Appendices A-E to Complete the Application

Appendices A-E refers to information regarding the requirements of a quality preschool program and the Virginia Preschool Initiative.

Appendix A:

Student Eligibility Criteria, Page 8-9

Appendix B:

PALS-PreK, Page 9

Appendix C:

Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning, Page 10

Appendix D:

Virginia's Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool, Page 11

Appendix E:

Virginia's Quality Indicators for Responsive Teaching: Creating a High Quality Preschool Learning Environment, Page 12

Appendix A

Guidance on 2015-2016 Implementation of Student Eligibility Criteria for the Virginia Preschool Initiative Enacted in Chapter 665 (2015 Appropriation Act)

The amended 2014-2016 budget adopted by the 2015 General Assembly (Chapter 665) was signed into law by Governor McAuliffe on March 26, 2015, without any proposed amendments or vetoes. The enacted budget contains new eligibility criteria for students participating in the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI). Item 136 C.14. d.1 of Chapter 665 states:

“d.1) Local plans must indicate the number of at-risk four-year-old children to be served, and the eligibility criteria for participation in this program shall be consistent with the economic and educational risk factors stated in the 2014-2015 programs guidelines that are specific to: (i) family income at or below 200 percent of poverty, (ii) homelessness, (iii) student's parents or guardians are school dropouts, or (iv) family income is less than 350 percent of federal poverty guidelines in the case of students with special needs or disabilities.”

Further, the 2016 Appropriation Act enacted at the 2016 General Assembly Session included a budget language provision allowing “*up to 15 percent of a division’s [VPI] slots may be filled based on locally established criteria so as to meet the unique needs of at-risk children in the community.*” This provision is effective with fiscal year 2017 and allows school divisions and localities to fill up to 15 percent of the actual VPI slots used each year based on locally established at-risk criteria, in addition to the four criteria in d.1 above.

In the Fall Verification Report 2017 each school division must identify the total number of VPI slots used in each of the following income brackets.

- i. At or below 130%
- ii. Above 130% but at or below 200%
- iii. Above 200% but at or below 350%
- iv. Above 350%

In the Fall Verification Report 2017 each school division also must identify the total number of VPI slots used in each of the following criteria. **If a student meets the requirements based on multiple criteria, select the one that made the student most eligible by General Assembly requirements first. If the student does not meet one of the four mandated General Assembly criteria, then select the local criteria that made the student most eligible.**

- i. At or below 200% of poverty
- ii. Homelessness
- iii. Student’s parents or guardians are school dropouts
- iv. Family income is above 200% but at or below 350% of federal poverty guidelines in the case of students with special needs or disabilities
- v. Local criteria
 - Parent did not complete high school
 - Physical abuse and neglect, family abuse, substance abuse
 - Single family home
 - Foster care
 - English Language Learners (ELL)
 - Parent that is incarcerated
 - Military deployment
 - Student raised by relatives other than parents
 - Other than income or listed local criteria —(this would be a text box limited to 30 characters)

Additionally, Item 136 C.14 d.2 of Chapter 665 states:

“d.2) The Department of Education is directed to compile from each school division the

aggregated information as to the number of enrolled students whose families are (i) at or below 130 percent of poverty, and (ii) above 130 percent but below 200 percent of poverty. The Department shall report this information annually, after the application and fall participation reports are submitted to the Department from the school divisions, to the Chairmen of House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees. In addition, the Department will post and maintain the summary information by division on the Department's Web site in keeping with current student privacy policies.”

Appendix B

Use of PALS-PreK

All Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) programs are required to screen children with the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening instrument for pre-kindergarten students (PALS-PreK) in the fall and spring and submit scores to the PALS office.

The PALS office Web site can be found at: <http://pals.virginia.edu>.

Early diagnostic assessments are a useful tool to ensure immediate intervention for children identified of being at-risk of reading failure.

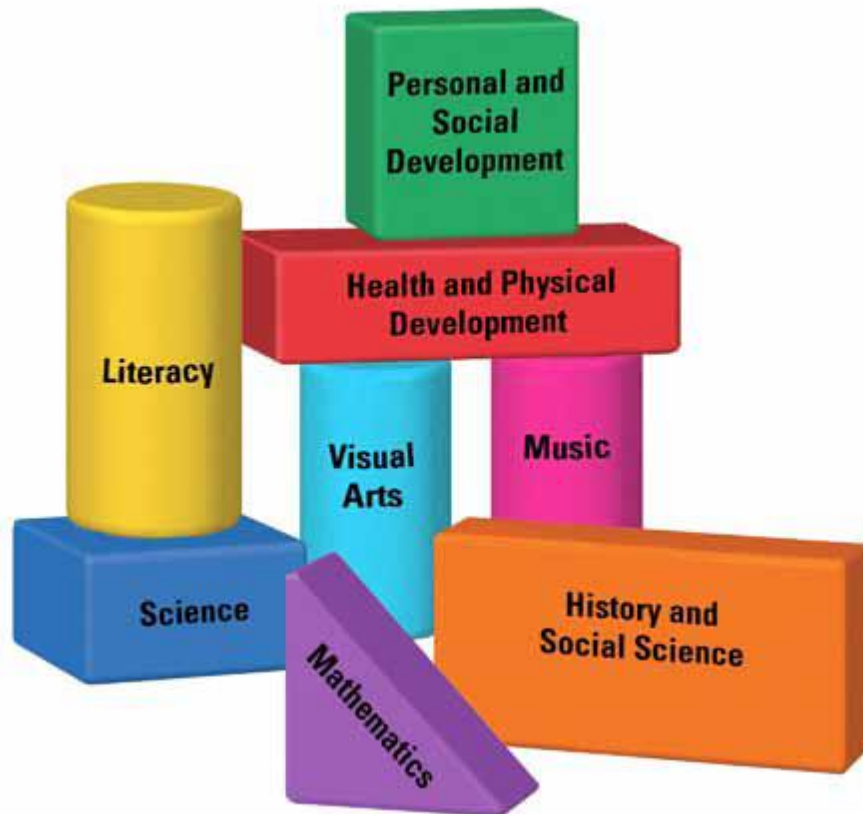
With support from the VPI, the University of Virginia developed the PALS- PreK and established a Web site for preschool teachers that link the results of the assessment with suggested ideas for classroom activities and instruction.

The PALS-PreK instrument assesses rhyme awareness, upper and lower case alphabet knowledge, beginning sound, verbal memory, print knowledge, concept of word, and name writing. Descriptions of each of the PALS-PreK tasks are available on the Web site.

Appendix C

Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning may be found at the following Web site:
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/foundationblocks.pdf

Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Comprehensive Standards for Four-Year-Olds



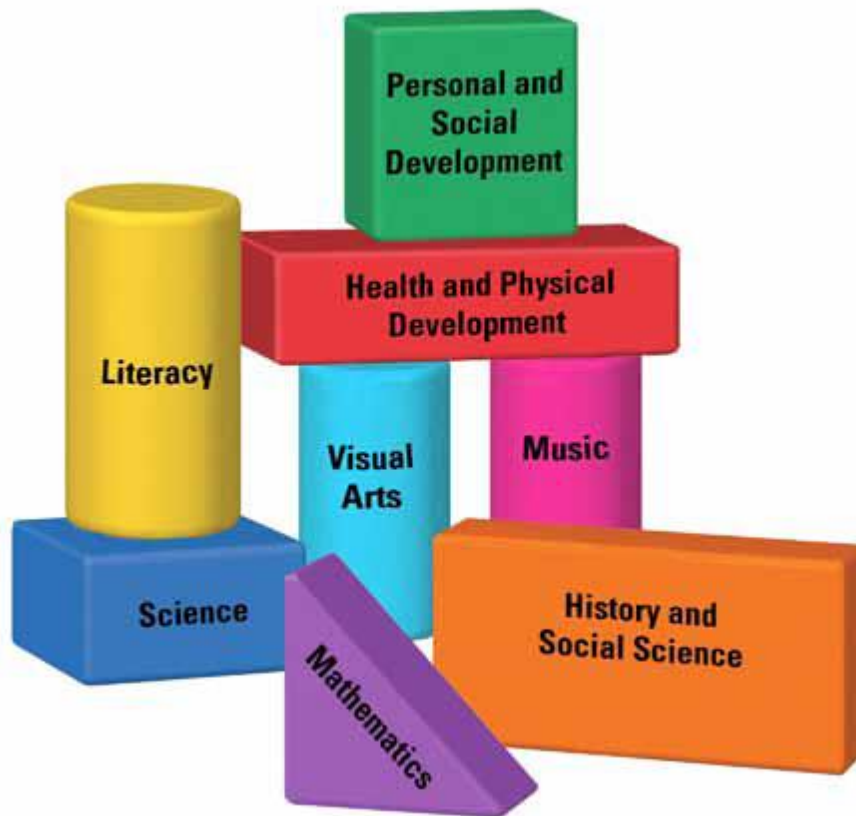
Prepared by
Office of Humanities and Early Childhood
Virginia Department of Education
2013

Appendix D

Virginia's Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool may be found at the following Web site:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/preschool_rubric.pdf

Virginia's Preschool Curriculum Review Rubric and Planning Tool In Support of Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning



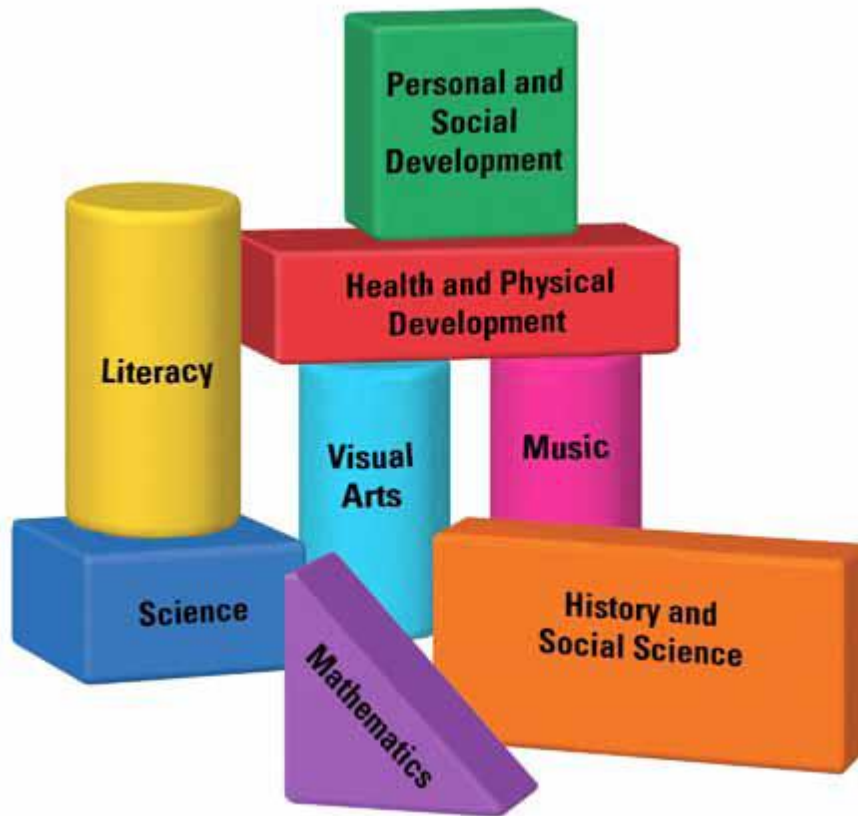
Prepared by
Office of Humanities and Early Childhood
Virginia Department of Education
2013

Appendix E

Virginia's Quality Indicators for Responsive Teaching: Creating a High Quality Preschool Learning Environment may be found at the following Web site:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/preschool_initiative/preschool_quality_indicators.pdf

Virginia's Quality Indicators for Responsive Teaching: Creating a High Quality Preschool Learning Environment



Prepared by
Office of Humanities and Early Childhood
Virginia Department of Education
2013