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Virginia Board of Education, Work Session, Wednesday, April 22, 2026

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- Official meeting video (VDOE, YouTube): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nCujwl7zyE>
- Board of Education meetings, agendas and minutes (VDOE): <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/state-board-data-funding/virginia-board-of-education>

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-22. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:15:44] convene our meeting. Please make sure your microphones are on. Good morning. My name is Michelle Ashen. I am president of the board and happy Wednesday, April 22nd. Though it feels cold outside, it is spring. With that, I am going to ask Dr. Northam to go ahead and read the motion for this morning. I move that the Virginia Board of Education convene

[00:16:23] in a closed meeting for the following purpose: discussion or consideration by the Board of Education of information relating to the denial, suspension, or revocation of teacher licenses subject to the exclusion and subdivision 11 of Section 2.23705.3 pursuant to Section 2.23711840 of the Code of Virginia and consultation with counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice pursuant to Virginia code section 2.23711 of the code of Virginia and that legal counsel to Virginia Board of Education and staff whose presence will aid in the board's consideration of this matter

[00:17:02] participate in the closed meeting Thank You Dr. Northern I will take a roll call for us to move to closed session for our licensure cases Ms. Reinhardt yes

[00:17:13] Dr. Bridges. Aye. Ms. McPherson. Aye. Dr. Northern. Aye. Dr. Wilson. Aye. Mr. Robinson. Aye. Mrs. Kilgore. Aye. And Chair Rhoads. Aye. Okay. We will now go into closed session. That's it. Correct. All right. You would turn your microphones on.

[02:23:51] We convened today in a closed meeting pursuant to a recorded vote on the motion above and in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, Section 223712 of the Code of Virginia, requires that the Board certify that, to the best of each member's knowledge, one, only public business matters lawfully exempt from open meeting requirements under this chapter, and two, only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed, or considered.

[02:24:21] Any member who believes there was a departure from these requirements shall so state prior to the vote, indicating the substance of the departure that, in his or her judgment, has taken place. The statement of the departure will be recorded in the minutes. So now, we'll go through each one.

[02:24:43] Is that right? Thank you. Okay, board members, again, please make sure you have your microphones on. In case number 2026-09, the chair will entertain a motion to issue the license.

[02:24:59] so moved second great Miss Reinhardt aye Dr. Bridges aye Ms. McPherson aye Dr. Northern aye Dr. Wilson aye Mr. Robinson aye Ms. Kilgore aye and chair votes aye thank you in case number 2026-08 the chair will entertain a motion to revoke the license of Harold Bradley Dalton so moved is there a second

[02:25:32] second. Second. Ms. Reinhardt? Aye. Dr. Bridges? Aye. Ms. McPherson? Aye. Dr. Northern? Aye. Dr. Wilson? Aye. Mr. Robinson? Aye. Ms. Kilgore? Aye. And chair votes aye. In case 2026-10, the chair will entertain a motion to deny the license to Kevin Ernest Palmer. So moved. Second. Second. Ms. Reinhardt? Aye. Dr. Bridges? Aye. Ms. McPherson? Aye.

[02:26:12] Dr. Northern? Aye. Dr. Wilson? Aye. Mr. Robinson? Aye. Ms. Kilgore? Aye. And chair votes aye. In case 2026-13 the chair will entertain a motion to issue the license. So moved. Is there a second? Second Ms. Kilgore thank you. Ms.

[02:26:34] Reinhart? Aye. Dr. Bridges? Aye. Ms. McPherson? Aye. Dr. Northern? Aye.

[02:26:40] Dr. Wilson? Aye. Mr. Robinson? Aye. Ms. Kilgore? Aye. And chair votes aye. In the case of 2026-14, the chair will entertain a motion to issue the license. So moved. Second. Second. Thank you. Ms. Reinhart? Aye. Dr. Bridges? Aye. Ms. McPherson? Aye. Dr. Northern? Aye. Dr. Wilson? Aye. Mr. Robinson? Aye. Ms. Kilgore? Aye. And chair votes aye. Thank you.

[02:27:18] That concludes our licensure hearings. I will now turn it over to Superintendent Conway. Good morning, Board President Ashton. Good morning, members of the board. Thank you for joining us this morning.

[02:27:33] We have two items on the work session. The first is an orientation on how early childhood works in Virginia since we've had some recent legislative changes and operational changes that have moved oversight of all birth to five care and education outside of the home to under the auspices of the Board of Education and the Virginia Department of Education. This will be a primer in preparation for tomorrow's item on changes to VQB5. With

[02:28:06] that, I would ask Deputy Superintendent Carroll to come to the mic on the team. I would also ask, And I know that I am very familiar with the set of leaders, but I would also ask the deputy superintendent to introduce the team to the board so that as we do this work, this small but mighty work over the course of the next few years together, that you understand the leaders that are supporting this in partnership with our 3,300 early childhood sites across the Commonwealth.

[02:28:44] Is it on now? okay uh thank you superintendent conway and members of the board for having us here this morning we're very excited to share this presentation with you as superintendent conway was indicating we're really going to do a few things this morning hopefully gearing us up for another discussion tomorrow we want to take the first portion of this presentation to really provide an overview of the birth to five system in virginia and all of the features that we think

[02:29:20] really contribute to making this a premier system across the country and one of those key programs and features is bqb5 so the second half of the presentation will really focus on bqb5 which you will learn is our quality measurement and improvement system many key leaders on our team contribute to these efforts and some of them are here today so you will hear from me again i'm aaron carroll deputy superintendent of early childhood care and education you will also hear from chris myers our director of quality measurement and improvement and i also have three other phenomenal

[02:29:59] leaders here with us today we have jeff williams right there he is our assistant superintendent of child care health and safety this is the team that does the regulating and monitoring of health and safety of 7,000 or so sites across the 5,000 rather sites or so across the Commonwealth and you can see some of the very distinct features of that team on one of the handouts we provided we wanted to especially feature that work because it is a huge part of what the video we does

[02:30:39] but very distinctly different than some of the other functions of our agency we also have Rebecca Ulrich our assistant superintendent of access enrollment innovation and policy hopefully I got that right close okay you know we're we're trying and becca leads our work related to access and policy she oversees our child care and development block grant and our child care subsidy program among many of the programs and initiatives that we take to expand access and really collect and share excellent data related

[02:31:16] to that and then speaking of data master of all things data we have tiara west our director of early childhood analytics and technology the leader of the data work on our team she oversees the collection and dissemination of data as well as all of our early childhood data systems including the very exciting VA connects data system which I believe we will share a little bit more on today so with that we can jump into the next slide so we again I'll be really covering two

[02:31:56] areas today I'm gonna cover this first chunk about why school readiness matters and what we're really talking about when we're talking about the birth the 5 system in Virginia and then I will turn it to Chris Myers to take us through the VQB 5 101 that'll really set us up for a good conversation on the proposed revisions for tomorrow next slide so we always like to start with just a step back when we are digging into these kind of meaty and heavy presentations to

[02:32:33] really remind ourselves ground ourselves in what it is we are trying to achieve here and what is the shared vision when we talk about this diverse and dynamic set of early childhood providers that support Virginia's birth to five population and ultimately we are working towards the goal that all children are able to enter school ready to succeed and thrive this requires many things it requires that we have affordable and accessible choices for families it requires that we have a system for measuring recognizing rewarding

[02:33:08] programs that are succeeding and and supporting children's development and growth and it requires that parents have choices that meet their needs so that they can do what they need to do during the day. We know that that is a key part of what we are providing here and so making sure that the choices

are plentiful and flexible enough for families to do what they need. Always at the center of this is our North Star is school readiness and making sure that we are collecting the information we need and providing the experiences that will

[02:33:48] prepare children to be successful next slide so what does this look like in Virginia we're really talking about a diverse system of early childhood programs this slide gives us an overview of what this looks like but again this is family child care homes licensed licensed child care centers public schools religiously exempt child care centers and Head Start grantees it is a large system that is both publicly and privately funded and enrolls children of

[02:34:24] all ages throughout the Commonwealth next slide and so and I know the baseline is here already but this system does function differently in some ways than k-12 and one thing that is very important to highlight here is the way that public funding works in the early childhood birth of five space which is different than the public school k-12 space public funding is really essential to this system it is of course heavily reliant on both public and private funds

[02:35:04] but public funds are essential for keeping our options both affordable and accessible particularly to those families that we know really need and rely on care so very differently and this is a given though we don't always think about it this way children are not guaranteed a spot in a birth of five or preschool program this really works in more of a market demand and what is available type of economy and that really impacts the way that opportunities

[02:35:39] fluctuate and are available across the state. It is through these, oops, got like very light, through these public funds that go to public and private settings, the families are able to choose the options that meet, that's okay, we got it, okay, that are able to meet their unique needs for that. So through that, our goal through this unified system is to really create a

[02:36:17] set of unified expectations. This looks like working on streamlining and updating our expectations for health, safety, and quality, which we will talk about today, working on how we support enrollment across all of our programs, and then, as we will also cover today really improving and refining the way that we capture data to demonstrate the impact of early childhood on those k-12 experiences next slide so again we

[02:36:55] have seen some really significant changes in public funding for early childhood over the last six or seven years this graph is pretty dramatic and it is a very dramatic change that has happened so since 2018 our overall funding has increased by 380 million or more in the last eight years and a huge portion of this is represented by an investment of state general funds so you

[02:37:29] can see that 261 percent increase and that was the result of some very responsive actions to need and demonstrated demand from parents around the Commonwealth that has taken place in the last eight years. As a result, more children than ever are attending a publicly funded program and more children than ever are having the opportunity to increase their school readiness and come in with those foundational experiences, which leads us

[02:38:02] to our next slide. So we're very proud of that increase in access and you know the reason for that again taking a step back and doing a little bit of grounding as to why all of this matters. We affectionately refer to this as the brain slide and you know I don't know what else one would call it to be honest But this slide really shows us just how much is happening in those first five years of life.

[02:38:37] I didn't mention this when I introduced myself, but I am the mother to an almost six-month-old and almost three-year-old, and this is evident every day, every morning. They are different people month to month, and it's amazing and scary sometimes, but amazing also.

[02:38:58] And those one million neural connections being formed every second are critical. And where those young children are during those years when this is happening matters. We know that. We have lots and lots of research to demonstrate that.

[02:39:15] And that powers our motivation and our passion for making sure that we are supporting those environments. Next slide. So we have one way that we, well, actually many ways, but one way that we look at this year over year in Virginia is through our statewide kindergarten readiness program.

[02:39:41] This is called the VKRP, Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program. This is an assessment that is given to every kindergartner at least twice in the fall and the spring and provides a very strong benchmark for us in understanding what kindergartners need coming in and what does that reflect about what they're getting before they get to kindergarten.

[02:40:06] So what you see here is the data from fall 2025 in which 43 percent of Virginia's kindergartners began the year still needing to build skills in one of the four areas we measure the areas we measure through the vkpr are literacy math self-regulation and social skills and so you can see in detail there was the most need still in literacy and math and then self-regulation and social skills looking similar again we track this number very closely we think it tells us

[02:40:45] both what our kindergartners teachers need to do but is also a incredibly important piece of information for our preschool and our early childhood community to be aware of as this changes the next slide will highlight some very exciting information here and an example of the way that we can use this data to really tell us what is happening in the virginia ecosystem So we are always incredibly excited to share this statistic, but when we compare our school

[02:41:23] readiness data from this year, from fall 2025, we see that it increased by six percentage points from fall 2024, and that's really huge if we think about what that means. that is our statewide overall every kindergartner attending public school participating in that really a significant amount of growth we saw the most growth take place in literacy the second most growth take place in math again exactly the areas where we're collecting data that we need additional

[02:41:59] focus we need additional attention and seeing that impact already importantly We saw this through all of the student subgroups that we keep special attention on. And then finally, you know, I think, you know, just to say it plainly, I think this really demonstrates if we think about, you know, these are our kindergartners who are coming in at five years old now, this attention to increasing access and focusing on quality and thinking about what is happening from those classrooms where you're talking about

[02:42:35] itty bitty babies all the way up to our you know three and four year olds that really we put a increased focus on that you know about five or six years ago right and so we really think that this is showing um some return on all of that time and focus on expanding access and talking about quality and so we are incredibly excited to see this data this year next slide um and again it is not only that we think it is great for kids to come into kindergarten ready to succeed. It is.

[02:43:14] We want them to come in and have those foundational skills and be able to jump right into the kindergarten standards and curriculum. But we also know that where kids are coming in sets the pathway

for where we expect them to be or where we find them to be later in life. So this slide really breaks down, and this is from data from when we were using PALS, but it breaks down in quintiles the scores that kids had at kindergarten entry, right, with the five

[02:43:52] being the higher and the one being the lowest, and shows where they were as far as proficiency in third grade literacy assessments. So really, you can see there that where the kids were coming in, in kindergarten, regarding literacy, followed through to third grade in a pretty dramatic fashion.

[02:44:15] And we all know that in third grade, where our literacy scores are, really matters for how kids will continue to learn going forward. So, again, really strong correlations there that make us really want to make sure that every kiddo is able to come with those foundational literacy skills.

[02:44:36] Next slide. All right. This last section, before we get into the meat of VQB5, we will talk a little bit about the part of early childhood that is also supporting families.

[02:44:52] So we've been talking about how critical early childhood is to neurological development, how we measure it, how important it is to later academic success. But we also know that early childhood experiences are critical for working families and for our economy.

[02:45:13] You know, I am here today because somebody is taking care of my children. I'm not the only one in that situation. We need that for people to be able to go to work. We also know that the percent of families with two parents in the workforce is increasing.

[02:45:28] So today we have about 7 out of 10 of our families have both available or all available parents in the workforce in Virginia. So there is a need for care for about 70% of our kids. Next slide.

[02:45:47] Through the improved and detailed data tracking that we have been doing, and excuse me for bringing this complicated slide to you, just a little bit of a math problem. I'm going to do my best, but I'll just do our best with it.

[02:46:06] Jenna's laughing because she's a fan, but we are able to track and look at what early childhood program participation, early childhood wait lists look like in correlation with the labor participation rate.

[02:46:27] The key takeaway here, while the data is incredibly interesting, is that workforce participation has increased as early childhood participation has increased and then decreased when we hit the cap of what we could offer last year and began implementing wait lists again.

[02:46:51] So there was a period here, again, where we were dramatically expanding the number of children that are participating. If you look closely at those shades of blue, you can see that there was a huge amount of growth in the child care subsidy program and some continued growth in our other two programs that we have represented vpi and mixed delivery also and then in fy25 when we shifted to having a and fy26 when we shifted to having a wait list you can see that represented with the orange bars

[02:47:24] there the blue through line is the labor participation rate so really showing an increase in labor participation a flattening and then actually a little bit of a decrease which corresponded directly with when those wait lists went into place and the next slide is somewhat the inverse but this is looking at the unemployment rate so unemployment was decreasing as early childhood participation grew and then increased when waitlist went into effect so this

[02:47:59] is the same look at subsidy growth and program growth but it's mapping what unemployment looks like compared to that so you can see that it went way down in FY22 and then has ticked back up a little bit in more recent years all right so that was a true crash course in areas that I promised we could do hours and hours on but we won't do that today but I think and hope really sets us up

[02:48:38] well for the next section in which we will talk in depth about VQB5 and the quality measurement and improvement system that supports all of these publicly funded programs yeah Jenna Aaron as Chris is coming up let's open it see there's any questions yes sorry yes questions admire Deputy Carol's bravery there's nothing harder than presenting someone slides to them and so just a

[02:49:09] moment of recognition for that that is exactly yes Dr. Wilson thank you very much yeah just a question a definitional question available parents so the number of parents available to be in the workforce is that does that take into account those parents who may not choose to be in the workforce regardless of whether or not childcare is available was this the most recent play

[02:49:46] the definition of all available parents mean parents in the household so parents that reside with the child and who are available meaning they are incarcerated not otherwise unable to work so that that percentage would any child that doesn't have all available parents in the workforce that might include parents that are opting out or who otherwise are unemployed whether they choose to be or not thank you Mr. Robinson Mr. Robinson First to comment, the data on slide 9 is just incredibly inspiring in terms of the percentage of students overall

[02:50:26] and also for the students traditionally furthest from opportunity who are kindergarten ready thanks to the hard work of the team and so many educators across the Commonwealth. So I just want to first of all express gratitude and enthusiasm and what that means for our responsibility for continuing to raise expectations for what these students have choices to do given their readiness.

[02:50:46] so first of all just gratitude my question is on slide eight as we look at the readiness using the BKARP data knowing the different states have different measures you know I'd be interested not initially now but at some point a for the states that have the most comparable data how we compare to other states in student readiness yeah and we can certainly look at that and think about what would be the best way to share back it's a complicated question

[02:51:21] because very few states even have Virginia is unique and honestly very fortunate that we started we started with the VKRP kind of early in the focus on early childhood but many states use kind of a mishmash and this and that other but we would we would be happy to kind of summarize what we do know um on that i don't know if others have others to add yeah i just want to emphasize that first most states do not have for every single kindergartner entering a public school is a consistent set of indicators um many states only measure literacy and you can see from this graphic

[02:52:00] the shortcoming that that incurs i mean ready means ready in all four areas and so you see uh we often get asked this question well how does it go from 16 or 20 to 43 and it's that that full set of skills if you speak with a kindergarten teacher they will tell you that they can tell right that these are all kind of essential skills that they would love for more kids to have the opportunity to come in in in ready and i should also note and uh we are uh grateful for our partners at the university of virginia at the virginia kindergarten readiness

[02:52:35] program and at vowels that virginia now has one of the most rigorous literacy screeners in the country so previously it just focused on the literacy elements which is the things relating to decoding sound awareness it now actually includes language as well and that's when we we went from PALS to VALS, and that really means that we're looking at sort of holistically the extent to which kids have opportunities to not only develop some of those tactical skills

[02:53:11] related to literacy, but their underlying vocabulary, which we also know is highly predictive of future academic success. Great. Yes, Dr. Northern? I actually have two questions. The first is, did we, what did our widening of eligibility look like as a result of the increase we had in dollars?

[02:53:31] So I don't know whether, you know, we were allowed, you know, how much we were able to raise the criteria for low income or change the criteria for special needs. So I'll pause there so you can address that one first, if you don't mind. Yeah, yeah, sure. So some of all of the above, there was a broadening of the criteria.

[02:53:51] looked different for different programs but with the with the child care subsidy program specifically Becca can recite this so prior to the the pandemic the eligibility for the child care subsidy program was sort of regionally based and it was based on whether you were a heavily rural suburban or more urban area um and the uh maximum income level ranged from 150 of the poverty level uh up to 250 of the

[02:54:26] poverty level though that 250 really just applied in fairfax county arlington county and alexandria city um and so most of the state had a maximum eligibility level about 185 percent of the poverty threshold which uh today for a family of four is like less than sixty six thousand dollars a year or so it was it was quite low um and uh during the pandemic the general assembly uh actually initially enacted emergency legislation that expanded that up to 85 percent of the state median income which now is a little over a hundred thousand dollars a year for a family of four

[02:55:04] um and uh also originally you had to be working or in school you could not be looking for work and as everyone knows it's very hard to get a job if you don't have child care and so as part of that expansion of eligibility the general assembly also directed us to include job search as an allowable activity for initial eligibility for the subsidy program and we were able to then it was initially kind of a temporary expansion of eligibility to address

[02:55:38] covid recovery we were able to leverage available covid dollars to maintain that expansion and then it was actually kind of codified into eligibility permanently for the subsidy program in the 2022 session and then as mixed delivery also expanded there were some sort of efforts to include parallel expansions in mixed delivery uh eligibility as well so inclusive of right there's some um parental activity requirements in mixed delivery but they mirror that of subsidy

[02:56:12] and then in vpi of course we also included um the uh categorical eligibility for kids with disabilities regardless of income and that applies in mixed delivery as well so mixed delivery eligibility is a little bit of a hybrid of vpi and uh and subsidy and it should be important that this has been uh uh expanding over time in close partnership with governors and legislatures of both political persuasion so it's been a bipartisan year-over-year effort that has been in real response to what the debate the data on parent demand looks like and then trying to thoughtfully

[02:56:51] expand eligibility with the core premise going back to what the deputy superintendent said is that if it is otherwise unaffordable if your take-home pay cannot cover the cost of childcare than it is out of reach and that the child loses out in terms of the developmental experience and the parent is unlikely to be able to participate in the workforce so our wait list Dr. Norton yeah yeah I was just gonna ask you so what percentage have we seen the wait list go down what relative to the expansion or now we got a bigger wait list because we've expanded the criteria about which so uh there's been some uh some fluctuation in wait lists over

[02:57:30] time so when eligibility was initially expanded we were running a wait list um of about i think that the the last number was around 3 000 kids statewide um but of course during covet enrollment also dropped um right as families were stepping back from the workforce or maybe just not comfortable sending their children to care. As we, you know, made those efforts to expand access, expand availability around the same time that we expanded eligibility.

[02:58:00] We also increased payment rates for child care providers, which was a really important rate. It's a little bit more of a provider sort of facing side of the program rules. But the extent to which we are adequately compensating providers for the care that they're providing right to meet health, safety and quality expectations it gives families more choices right because uh it incentivizes more providers to participate it means they're more willing to enroll more children um and so kind of the the collective of all of those changes we started to see right major increases in enrollment

[02:58:35] wait lists were uh reduced or more or less eliminated and then we received a directive in the 2022 session uh to use all available funds to continue to eliminate wait lists and so for a two year period, we did not run a wait list whatsoever. Every family that was eligible that came through the door and completed the application process received a slot that was largely supported with covid pandemic dollars that were of course time limited. And we so while there was that, you know, really significant increase in state general funds, what that allowed us to do

[02:59:13] was really to sustain all the growth that we had experienced over the course of the last several years but did not allow us to continue at that rate of growth because the state funding was effectively you know filling the hole that the federal pandemic money left and so since then we have had the ability to incur some growth over time but we our wait list was at around 10,000 kids toward the end of 2025. We've gone through several kind of really intensive technical kind of adjustment efforts to make sure that our local

[02:59:52] departments are effectively sort of offering slots at a rate that will enable the most number of families to accept a slot. I think the application process is time-consuming and typically when families are approaching a local department and submitting an application it's because they need care right then and so sitting on a wait list for a month three months six months rate the opportunity often then passes them by and so if we're waiting too long to offer them a slot by the time one comes around that job might be gone that opportunity to take a class might be gone and oftentimes they have to turn

[03:00:30] away that care we have reduced our wait list down now to about 4,000 children and we've increased enrollment by about 1,500 children in the last four months so we're seeing some turnaround based on that that kind of those technical adjustments that we've been working to make to keep the waitlist lower and keep processing moving but the the real lesson learned and we've got tons of data that

we can share with you all about waitlists in another another session we know that that the waitlist is just incredibly harmful for families and and

[03:01:05] has real uh economic and uh child development implications as well so if you take a big step back and to the point mr robinson earlier about the kind of comparison with other states very few other states did what virginia did which is you had this significant drop in workforce participation virginia i think was 38th in the nation in terms of parents particularly mothers opting out of the workforce right and it was then a vicious cycle in terms of how to get them back if there's not care school opportunities. What Virginia was said across all of its programs, the state pre-k known

[03:01:42] as Virginia preschool initiative, mixed delivery, child care subsidy, we're going to put sufficient funding to grow at the rate of demand with the idea being that we're also setting the eligibility criteria for those who otherwise cannot afford child care and are at kind of greatest risk.

[03:01:57] And what you then saw was VPI grew, mixed delivery grew, child care subsidy because of the large number of families who need full day full year care grew the most with some of our highest rates ever of demand from infant and toddler working families and so other states they've picked a sort of a select program or they've said this is a a pot or pie of money and we're going to divide it up virginia's approach was highly innovative and it said we're not going to do that we're going to sort of put enough funding out there to meet the demand and you saw year over year growth we

[03:02:33] We then hit a point where there was not sufficient funding to serve all of the children, and that has been a debate embraced by our governor and legislature the last three sessions, and we'll, in fact, again this week as they figure out how to balance.

[03:02:49] But this data that you see on slides 12 and 13 is truly nation-leading in terms of the kind of how you think about it. Most early child in other places is either universal or you're dividing up a narrow set of money And Virginia has chosen this kind of different path that is very focused on measuring and meeting parental demand Great, Ms. Reinhart Thank you, and thank you, Superintendent Conway That certainly underscores what was going through my mind What you just shared, and that was a phenomenal presentation Because I think about, I put my chamber hat on

[03:03:26] working with businesses and working to you know shore up our economy and our community and really the region and beyond that data is so profound and telling and I think about working with our business community and I mean the bottom line is you still have folks who think that these are sound bites sometimes like is there really a childcare or early childhood void is it really that important I mean that still exists to some degree so having that hard data is so critically important and seeing what Virginia has done we work with other chambers around the country and Virginia certainly is the leader in

[03:04:05] a lot of ways in this work I think too just thinking about you know how we focus on economic mobility for our families I mean it's it's an underpinning and core and I'm preaching to the choir I know but just it's so nice to see this data and all the work that's been done so kudos to you all for that work and and for sharing it because I look for opportunities now how can we share that how am I gonna go to my business community and tell some of these stories that gives them what they need and to again to our elected officials who are making funding choices so thank you just one comment

[03:04:42] from the chair which is I looked at data on slide 8 and I'm just really inspired by the data when it says 43% are not you know not on track I I failed kindergarten and that is actually true and so I would

have been in the 57% and I think about folks just focusing on literacy but seeing the comprehensive literacy self-regulation I know mine was for social skills so I just want to applaud the team for that I feel very inspired I think about I'm in

[03:05:17] superintendent Conway your part around bipartisan support around this is really important I think about you know these fit these kindergartners now and then being on the path to really accelerate their learning in five ten years from now is really gonna be the group of students that put Virginia first in the country and so just echoing the appreciation the data the lessons learned thinking about the what I what I was wondering about and I don't know if we have the data about our educators who need child care I know in the pandemic like that was part

[03:05:57] of the challenges we can't get teachers back because they're home with their kids and so I'm wondering do we are we able to pull out that data around education so one of the and huge thanks to the work of Becca and our partners at EVA we did good in the bad news is that when you apply for child care subsidy it's a manual open-ended form where you work so it requires I know that gives you like a heart attack so it requires analysis but basically one of the really one of the most powerful slides and we can

[03:06:35] get this to you board president is looking at where who are the employers of the participants on the child care subsidy program and nearly 100 of our 131 school divisions are listed as the employers, right? So the idea is we have bus drivers, janitorial workers, instructional aides at upwards of 70 to 80 percent of our school divisions who are able to be there because of child care assistance from the state. If you look at that list, it also lays out and outlines jobs that are essential in person and that are not going to go away with AI.

[03:07:15] It's, you know, everybody from our postal workers to folks who work in retail, who work in food services, health and hospitals are also up there. And so this idea of more and more children, young children having all available parents in the workforce and continuing to have a pronounced workforce need for in-person, essential, ostensibly lower wage, although, again, it's less about the sort of the wage itself than it is does your post-tax take-home pay for child care, and that is what is essential if you want to be able to participate in the workforce.

[03:07:55] Great. Thank you. And I was just reminded that this actually is summarized on slide 36. Oh, wonderful. We love an appendix that we forgot about, but it's there. Superintendent Kara, I think there are any other questions.

[03:08:13] Should we continue to the next section? Oh, my God, Ms. McPherson.

[03:08:17] I don't want us to overlook that because I think we've had those types.

[03:09:06] I noticed that self-regulation and social skills have remained steady. So I'm wondering, as it relates to the percentages that are on the graph, is that comparable to Nationwide or any of the data that you have?

[03:09:21] because, I mean, I understand it's young people trying to regulate themselves and trying to figure out social skills. Very big feelings. They're probably wiggling everywhere. So I'm just wondering, are we within the norm as it relates to self-regulation and social skills? We use a national tool for that, and so we can work with our partners at UVA to get an answer for you on how that compares to the rest of the country.

[03:09:44] That is a national tool, not the literacy and the math tool are Virginia-specific, developed by UVA, but the self-regulation and social skills are a national tool, so we can get a normal reference on that. I'd just be interested, because I understand that social environment and self-regulation can actually end up becoming factors, as I've looked at some data, that can prevent progress, and maybe if there's something that we need to do before these toddlers get further along, you know, in their progress, that we could put into place.

[03:10:21] I was interested in whether or not we have additional data regarding the percentage of funding that is going to households where there are parents who are looking for employment but are not yet in the workforce.

[03:10:36] What that percentage is as it relates to the subsidies that we are giving out to parents who are employed. And whether or not we need to begin to look at, now with post-pandemic, how we deploy that funding.

[03:10:52] And that's not to be a slight against people who are looking. This is to say that when there's limited funding, should we really be looking at that now? Yes, ma'am. So we do have that data. I don't have it in terms of the percent of funding, but in terms of the total caseload.

[03:11:10] So we have somewhere in the ballpark of 22,000 to 24,000 families that are enrolled in the subsidy program. Only 10% of them have one or more parents that are looking for work. And I believe it is only 5% or that is the only thing that they are doing for all available parents in that household.

[03:11:29] So parents can be eligible for subsidy through a combination of activities, right? So you might get to full-day, full-year care because you are working part-time, but you're looking for a full-time job. And so the part-time work plus your job search gets you to full-day care.

[03:11:49] And so, or, for example, you could be in school and you could be then looking for work, you know, kind of once your training or vocational program is completed. Or you could have a two-parent household where one parent is job searching and one parent is working.

[03:12:06] And so 10% of cases, again, have a parent that is looking for work. Just five is that the only approved activity for the case. now we did make a change to the job search policy in just this past fiscal year job search is now limited to 90 days so families have up to 90 days to find employment or another qualifying activity for their eligibility they can get up to one 90-day extension so say you're coming up on that 90-day period you're still interviewing maybe you got a job offer but you have to do a

[03:12:45] background check or a drug screening or something along those lines they can get and it is short term now yes yes that's exactly right and that and that came out of the work of the bipartisan Commission that yes landed on the exact same point which is that when you have thousands of families on a waitlist or children on a waitlist you've got to kind of think about those trade-offs and even prior to when that temporary policy was in place our data suggested that two out of every three households that was job searching by the next time they did their redetermination they were employed so the vast majority of those folks were ending up in employment any other questions

[03:13:24] yes dr northern so much good data i know right just one one table gives us all this good questions to ask um i'm on little bar chart eight two um page eight um i guess i'm just wondering so we're saying 72% and 80% of our kindergartners are meeting benchmarks and is the idea that this readiness is actually picking up the kids who are just struggling the most you know at the very like

[03:13:56] this is like big red warning sign yeah because that strikes me as kind of optimistic especially since we know I just looked it up because I was curious at 16% of our black and Hispanic kids at fourth grade are 16% are making proficiency on NAEP. So I'm just wondering, is there some idea that, okay, we're intentionally trying to get the really, you know, the kids who are just on life support here, for lack of a better word, and that was a terrible metaphor, and is there an idea that

[03:14:29] maybe we should be, you know, ratcheting this up gradually, or is it really just intended for the kids who are really needing it the most? Yeah, I mean, I think that's a great question. And so yes, the way we draw those readiness and not ready benchmarks is kind of a blunt instrument, right?

[03:14:52] It is yes or no. And actually, in our preschool version of the tool, we don't do that. We do it more on a graduated scale, somewhat to that point, right? It is not you did or you didn't, right? There is a lot of area in between, and something Superintendent Conway has always said is, okay, but what about the kids that are one point right above that, right, or really right there?

[03:15:19] And so we do look at that in our review of the data, and those are more available in terms of the reports that come out to teachers as far as, you know, what the actual scores and gradations are there, because you certainly would not want to be classifying a whole, you know, it sounds like a lot, right? 72% of kids are meeting that benchmark, 28% aren't. Like, that does not mean that those 72% are high flying and have no needs, right? There's a lot of differentiation that needs

[03:15:56] to be done in there, too, and, you know, we have looked at the tools every year. You know, we did, this is our second year using the revised version of the literacy assessment in kindergarten, so we used it, it was present in 2024, and now again in 2025, really in response to realizing that we needed an improved and more in-depth assessment that really aligns with all of the literacy practices that we're working hard to promote in later grades. And I think if you look, Dr. Northern, at sort of both 8 and 10, it's a

[03:16:35] helpful framing here. On the one hand, we want to be very careful. No one wants high-stakes evaluations for kindergarten, including Board President Ashton, because clearly that would not have worked. So there is a lot of fluidity in children's development and if you look at in particular the vows that group that is not meeting benchmark we are saying is at high risk of reading difficulty so it truly is you're sort of trying to thread a needle around saying we need to pay a lot of attention to these children that they are they are coming in not ready

[03:17:13] right and that and that that we know there is a subset of them that it relates to language and literacy and a subset that relates to mathematics if If you think about what we're trying to achieve on 10 is you really want kids to come in very ready, right?

[03:17:29] Because then across a big system, as you see, those kids who come in very ready, regardless of which school, across our 131 divisions, over 90% of them will be reading on time by third grade. In sharp contrast, those that come in least ready, right, who are that group in the orange back on eight it is truly a coin toss right across you know all of the work and investments of our incredible k-3 teachers it is just really hard to get kids there and so that's if you think about really these two slides together where you have to say on the one hand we recognize that it's a

[03:18:07] there's a lot of fluidity and development among young children on the other hand the readier we can get you the more likely we're going to uh when you come into our k-12 system get you to reading

um and doing math on level across across a big system so i think that's an important note um and you know we've also talked with our partners of eva how do you think about you know scaling this so it's not just this binary ready or not because there are subset and now on the vowels they do high risk moderate risk and low risk

[03:18:43] which was also a change we went from vowels to PALS and thinking about those folks in the middle who are at risk of not being a level when you get to third or fourth grade great okay super into Carol would you like to proceed okay so I'm very excited to reintroduce again Chris Myers Chris is the again the director of quality measurement and improvement for our team and has been instrumental in the development and launch of VQB 5 Virginia quality BRIT the 5 she will provide the background here and I will let her take it away

[03:19:22] again this is the content for which we will be proposing a set of revisions to for you tomorrow. Good afternoon, Superintendent Conway and members of the board. It is now afternoon, just a few minutes after. I am excited to talk with you. I want to thank my colleagues for all the great information that they shared, because having a strong access to early childhood experiences is so important to build the work that we're talking about, which is not just about

[03:19:58] having access to early childhood, but making sure those experiences are actually quality experiences my children are older now but my first job back in the 90s was as a kindergarten teacher and i can still remember how about 20 minutes into that first day i could tell which children were coming in ready and what that meant kind of down the road in the work that we had to do to help get them even you know further along so you can go to the next slide so when we started superintendent conway referred to the state law that unified early childhood under the Department of Ed. That state law from about five years ago, maybe six years now,

[03:20:37] also laid the groundwork for what became our VQB5 system. So it said that we had to establish a unified way to measure and improve quality in any publicly funded program. So that includes our VPI, our Head Start, our subsidy, mixed delivery, military subsidy. If you get public dollars the state law said you now have to participate in this system the state law also said that programs who don't receive public dollars have the option to participate although most of our sites as we'll talk about today are publicly funded so we developed and looked at

[03:21:13] the research looked at the data and developed what we believe is also a nation-leading system that we lovingly call vqb5 we also had to design this in a way that's a little unique from other states because it wasn't just about improving quality which many states do we have to tie it to school readiness and obviously you all are interested in that and that's important to us that we're doing it in a way that's going to show improvement for children so we have specifically focused in on two nationally recognized indicators of quality the first is interactions which is measured with a very rigorous assessment tool I brought a copy if

[03:21:53] anybody's curious to look at it the classroom assessment scoring system it's about 20 years old now and it's been used it's used across the country it's actually used across the world and it is the most researched and validated tool to look at the quality of what's happening in classrooms with children there's an infant version a toddler version and the pre-k version that we use here in Virginia the second aspect that we look at is the use of approved curricula so we have a process for kind of looking at the quality of

early childhood and again infant toddler preschool curricula that align with our Virginia early learning and development standards by far as you'll see today our

[03:22:32] focus is really on interactions and using curriculum as more of a tool to improve those interactions so we are very much focused on improving what's happening for children because research shows that that's what will help them be ready for school a curriculum use as it is noted there is optional but strongly encouraged and we'll talk a little bit tomorrow too about part of that change that the board approved last year as well next slide so when we say that publicly funded programs are required to participate just come when I kind of quickly summarize what that means so again any program that receives any

[03:23:10] type of public dollars is required to do three activities every year this is an annual system and other programs if they voluntarily choose to participate also have to do these three things so the first is they use what we call our link b5 data system they log in there's a registration period every year and they provide us with very detailed information about their site about their classrooms about their teachers and their child enrollment and then they also tell us whether or not they are using one of our approved curriculum options and which curriculum they are using if they are. That helps us do a lot with our data and

[03:23:49] is helping us do even more to link information about educators and classrooms to child outcomes as we move forward. The other two activities are both related to the use of the class tool and these class observations. So the first is that every eligible classroom, which is over 11,000 different classrooms. That includes family day homes. They are we consider those classrooms.

[03:24:11] They must complete what we call two local class observations. They do one in the fall and one in the spring every year. We enter those scores in link B5. We'll talk a little bit in a future slide about ready regions who help coordinate this at the local level but the important thing here to know is that these are certified and reliable observers. You have to go through a certification on the class tool but these are primarily folks that have more of a local connection with sites so they could be a site leader like a principal a coordinator a director who again is there to support not just those observations but ongoing uh understanding and expertise of the class

[03:24:50] so then we also have a way this third activity to ensure the accuracy and the consistency again across these 11 000 classrooms of our state that we call external class observations these are through an external contractor these are more like a third party more of a research-based approach where not only are they certified and reliable but they have more rigorous standards as far as calibrations and checks that they have to do and we require all sites to participate in those at each age level served so not every classroom gets one but we have a way to use these for consistency and accuracy checks so those are the three things that every year our publicly funded

[03:25:30] programs have to do for vqb5 next slide so between those local observations which is about 22 000 a year because again every classroom is getting an observation in the fall and the spring and then about 8 000 plus external observations we end up with over 31 000 classroom observations a year and that is truly a nation-leading stat we don't know of any other state right now that's doing that many observations down to that classroom level and that enables us to give every birth to five an educator that really specific classroom data that is helping

[03:26:08] drive improvement this includes an annual cycle again this isn't something that happens every three years or every five years as it does in other states every year they have multiple opportunities to get prepared to understand what they're being measured on go through that measurement get their data to guide improvement they get individualized feedback that feedback helps point out what they're doing well and where they can improve helps guide them towards different types of support we have some supports that are state funded for and prioritized for those with lower scores but there are also other options available to them at the local and regional level and then we encourage them to kind of use their data to reflect on what works make

[03:26:47] adjustments as they move forward in the cycle so it's really it never really stops in our system it's ongoing throughout the year and even over the summer next slide so to do all this work we could not do this alone at the state level and get to all 11,000 of these classrooms so part of the state law and part of what we learned during our practice stages was to have these local level community networks that developed into what we now call ready regions and it was added to the state law I believe in either 21 or 22 we partner with the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation who provides that coordination so that these

[03:27:26] nine regional entities can really understand those local needs and they help these programs complete these VQB5 activities. They are responsible for making sure those local observers are certified and reliable and get support to continually strengthen their skills. That's one of the main things they do, but they also have family councils and other things that help us grow our system as well this is a competitive process so the nine regional entities that are now are ready regions every about four years they go through another competitive process but it is part of the state

[03:28:01] law to have these nine entities next slide so this is our va connects data system which we are very excited about we started with what we called link b5 which was really designed for our vqb5 system five six years ago that captured all of our information about quality that i just talked about but then as aaron was just talking about we knew that in order for us to get to the point where we could really link the quality of these classrooms to what children were learning we needed a stronger

[03:28:35] data system to do that and so last august we launched va connects where we integrated all three of these data systems the link b5 data system the val system and the vkrp system so now it's really a birth to eighth grade data system you can see those numbers there a lot of users sites classrooms these are elementary schools middle schools and all of our early childhood programs but this is allowing us to get closer to looking at information and i'm going to share a little bit of you with you today on kind of what we're starting to see in those connections

[03:29:10] between quality and child outcomes and a lot more to come as we start to look at the longitudinal information of what's happening in our system next slide so uh there we have two slides here this is similar to what aaron was just sharing with you about the kindergarten vkrp but we also have a version of vkrp that's a preschool version and as you i think they were referencing it's a little bit different it talks more about measuring bands of growth in some of those skills and it's for three and for four-year-olds we're going to look at information on the sub tests for four-year-olds

[03:29:47] this is primarily right now used in our vpi public school classrooms however there are some other publicly funded programs that have opted in to using vqrp our mixed delivery uses it and we're trying to expand to other publicly funded programs so any vq any vqb5 program could start to use it as well what this is looking at on the left is the quality of the class score. And so class is a one through seven

scale. And so showing kind of different total scores for that class score about the quality of what's happening in those four year old classrooms. And then it's breaking apart

[03:30:26] the growth these four year olds had from the fall to the spring. And so if it's orange, it means that they dropped from fall to spring. That dark blue is if they grew from fall to spring. So we want to see that dark blue is our goal there for children to grow from fall to spring and what we're finding in this kind of emerging data that we're tiara's working on pulling a lot more of is we are seeing a clear connection between the quality of those class scores which means higher quality experiences for children and the growth that's happening in those classrooms so again even children if they're coming in lower

[03:31:03] they're showing that growth which ultimately is what we want for those children so this is looking at math you see that that's true in math it was true in both the social skills and in the self-regulation skills we saw more growth when the class score was higher on the next slide similar but this is that Val's literacy assessment that you are hearing about again this is the four-year-old version but similar types of literacy skills you can see there's more skills that are looked at from the literacy level but again across the board, some even more than others dramatically. You can see that there's

[03:31:40] more growth in those four year olds from fall to spring when the class score was higher, particularly letter names, name writing, a lot more growth in those higher quality classrooms. So again, we know it's important to get children into our publicly funded programs, but we also know that the quality of those experiences is making a difference and we're excited to be able to bring you some of this data now but there's a lot more of this that's just starting to emerge as well so I'm going to shift gears into the profiles but anything

[03:32:12] about those two slides that we just shared before we shift gears okay I would just say and I know you guys are gonna get tired of hearing this from me but nobody in the country has data like this at scale right that basically this is across thousands of classrooms it shows you both the importance of improving those interactions and it also shows you if you look for example at the literacy where we're not seeing that growth right so we've really been getting the folk the system to focus for example in the last year on expressive comprehension and that is you know that is

[03:32:48] a very sophisticated skill for four-year-olds right you are you have as an educator you need to ask open-ended questions you need to not immediately you know cut the child off you need to get the child to sort of your what you're trying to do is get the child to put together multiple sentences, right, using more sophisticated vocabulary and to kind of understand that that's an area, for example, right, that we really have to focus represents at a systems level to be able to hone in not only on more broadly, is this quality or not, but what are the specific skills that our educators need additional supports to work on across a very big system.

[03:33:29] Mr. Robinson. Given that this is a nation-leading effort, I commend the testing the theory of change, testing the hypothesis by actually measuring whether the class scores result in these things. And it just leads to curiosity. I know in the later slides we'll kind of break down quality a little bit more.

[03:33:48] But as I look at, you know, here are the ones where the scores dropped, scores remain the same, scores grew. So great data to show that the scores result in better student readiness. Do you have a rough breakdown of, like, what percentage of classrooms fall into each of these buckets?

[03:34:09] I know it will change based on indicator, but that might help me interpret the data a little better. For the classrooms that fall into the class score, like, breakdown? What percentage of classrooms have their class score band drop versus which percentage have their band grow, you know, et cetera?

[03:34:28] It's just, you know, obviously we want to see more with the band growing and just curious kind of where we, our baseline data, knowing that no other state has this baseline data, could help for the future. My guess is we probably want to send that to you via follow-up.

[03:34:44] We can give you all those presentations. We have a whole deck on that. Yeah, of course. We'll follow up with that. We absolutely have it. Very exciting. And I forgot to mention, too, with the class tool itself, it also breaks down teacher-child interactions into interactions that focus more on emotional and social development, on classroom organization, and instructional support.

[03:35:08] And so we're also, in fact, I was just asking, Tiara, do we have information that shows when those different domains are of different scores, and how is that impacting quality as well? So all of that is in the works. Exciting. Thank you. Awesome. Let's go to the next, I think you can go forward two slides.

[03:35:27] So, we are very excited about our second full year of implementation. So, this past fall was our second year of publicly releasing our VQB5 quality profiles. We had a couple practice years during COVID, and then we developed this new website called earlychildhoodquality.doe.virginia.gov.

[03:35:49] So, this past fall, and currently, if you go to this website, you'd find 3,293 quality profiles. These profiles are similar in the sense to the K-12 profiles where they measure for the year, and then we publish the results based on that previous year.

[03:36:06] So we will have new results every year that go out in the fall. This website, when we made this slide, had been viewed 190,000 times, but it is now over 200,000 times. It is getting a lot of attention and views, and we track that, and we're very excited about that.

[03:36:23] It can be used to find individual site information and defined their overall rating, their interactions, and their curriculum, kind of a summary of their performance. It also shares information about the type of public funding that they receive. And then it links to the health and safety information that our licensing team has.

[03:36:41] So as Superintendent Conway refers to it a lot, it's kind of a one-stop portal for families to connect health, safety, and quality. Next slide. So I'm going to share a couple of slides on the results from our first two years sort of the change we saw over time you also have a handout that goes into a little bit more detail here and breaks it down by our ready regions so in this second year this was our first time to really compare the quality results from one year to the next through our full implementation again we had 172 more

[03:37:17] sites that got a quality profile that second year so a 6% increase during our second year of measurement 99% of sites met or exceeded the state's quality expectations that was similar to the first year but slightly higher which was 98 percent in the second year we had fewer sites in that lowest rating that we call needs support than the previous year so there were 51 sites the first year and 25 in the second year those were not the same site so all of those sites that had a need support rating the first year moved out of need support but then there were 25 sites who fell into that bottom level of that second

[03:37:56] year. Some of those stats, keep those in mind, because as we present our proposed changes tomorrow, we'll refer back to this information that kind of led us to proposing a change. Next slide. So when we see and hear in our data that 99 percent of sites are meeting or exceeding the state's expectations, we wanted to take a closer look at this data to better understand sort of the variations of quality.

[03:38:23] So what this is showing is on the top in those boxes are those three big broad bands 25 in need support. Those sites are required to have very intensive improvement support in order to maintain their public dollars through intensive coaching and monitoring.

[03:38:40] And then we have 101 at that top level, which is currently called exceeds expectations. And then really all the other sites are falling into this very broad meets expectations. So what we did is we broke it down by 100 point intervals because we noticed that each of those 100 points represents a shift in the quality of what children are experiencing.

[03:39:01] And there's a pretty big difference we have started to notice when we look closely at the data between a site that's getting a 400 up to a site that's getting a 699. So those 400 to 499 we consider on the lower end of meets expectations, a 600 to 699 is on the higher end of meets expectations.

[03:39:21] The quality profiles do show the actual three-digit score, but we also recognize that that can sometimes be a little confusing to understand the three-digit score as opposed to seeing that you're basically meeting expectations and all of these 3000 programs are in that same category.

[03:39:37] So this side in particular will be helpful to refresh your memory on as we talk tomorrow. Next slide. Another thing that we were really interested in better understanding was the quality across our different site types.

[03:39:52] And so we were really pleased to see that when we look at our highest-performing scores within family day homes, child care centers, and public schools, we saw high-performing sites in all three of these site types. So there was a very high-performing family day home, just one point lower than a public school, the second-highest-performing site in the state.

[03:40:13] The first year, actually, the highest-performing was a family day home, so that was consistent from our first two years. We had high-performing childcare centers and high-performing public schools. But then you can see by the blue bar as well that there's quite a range. We also had very low-performing family day homes, lower-performing childcare centers, and some lower-performing public schools as well.

[03:40:35] So the biggest range is in those family day homes. The lowest to the highest was a family day home. But we see a variation in all three site types. This is really important because quality can't be dictated by the type of the program that it is.

[03:40:52] We really have to go in, watch what children are experiencing. These class observations are not a quick check. They are 60 to 80 minutes of us watching what children are actually experiencing. And that's helped show us that these quality experiences can happen in a variety of settings.

[03:41:07] And as Erin talked about earlier, we know families rely on different types of settings for their care needs as well. I know I am not supposed to interrupt. No, I know you love this slide, too. There's an important point on this slide that I want to iterate. That I was just about to say. For the board.

[03:41:23] I think the first is, again, this idea of changing hearts and minds around judging a building or judging a book by its cover, right? And it is so important when you think about child care and family child care in particular, who those educators are, the history of that in this country, that saying that they are quality and being able to show evidence of that at scale is incredibly, incredibly powerful.

[03:41:53] I think the second, and I learned this from a community leader in New Orleans many years ago, is one of the most important roles of this body of the Board of Education is to think about those kids and families who are furthest from opportunity. And so by raising the floor, by getting that blue bar higher over your work, It means that if you have to rely on a public dollar, which is by design a family in need, that you get to choose quality, right?

[03:42:23] And that there could be maybe potentially no more important work that this board does in early childhood than that. So this is not only about aligning choices to family need, but ultimately saying, and again, most states still have optional measurement systems where you parents just don't know what they don't know.

[03:42:42] but if this board can get that blue bar that number up so whether you choose all that's in your community is family child care or child care or school-based program but to know that no matter what you picked it's of a sufficient level of quality is a is the single most important thing that this board can do in the in the space of early childhood thank you next slide so another piece that we were interested in our second year was looking at change over time and so what this slide is looking at is something we've identified again as somewhat of a challenge that our proposal will address is looking specifically at those

[03:43:21] interaction points and that does make up the majority of their quality rating and that comes from the class scores averaged all together from the classrooms at those sites and for sites that were returning and that was most of the site there were about a little over 200 that were new to VQB 5 but most had participated both years we saw about 53% of them that grew and that means they grew by either one point or more in their interaction points a small percentage that actually stayed the same and then 46% whose interaction points again went down which means that they went down by one point or more we were

[03:43:58] glad that it was a little over half that showed growth but ultimately we want that number to be much higher and so our goal is to have really all programs as much as possible showing that growth or if you're already at those highest levels that you're maintaining those highest levels as well I think there's some stats within either the handout or in the appendix that talks a little bit more about sort of the range so the most common growth was just about a three point kind of a modest growth the most kind of the typical was to move up or down about 20 or 30 points there were also a few sites that had a you know a

[03:44:34] 100 or more points that they grew and that's not from their curriculum points but truly just from improving their class scores or declining so we're also able to take a closer look and find out why were some programs improving what can we learn from those and why did some programs decline so that we can better understand and support them as well next entertain a question yeah so for church schools religiously exempt organizations is am i correct that they're only participating

[03:45:09] if they're volunteering to participate or if somehow there is some i would normally think that they would not necessarily have public funding so just can you explain to me what the difference is as it relates to site performance and whether they get to participate in meeting expectations so a religious

exempt program can become a subsidy vendor and approved subsidy vendor and so we do have some religious exempt programs if they are an approved subsidy vendor that they are required to participate so

[03:45:48] that's a fair amount not all of them and then there are a few that just choose to voluntarily participate but a religious exempt site can become approved subsidy better so another new piece from this past fall was honor rolls and so this was a way for us to kind of in addition to the overall ratings kind of highlight some different aspects that we feel are really important to our system so we looked at awarding honor rolls in three key categories the first was to look at

[03:46:24] overall excellence for programs to get to that 700 to 800 range is a quite an achievement it truly is a national exemplar level of class scores that you just don't see very often and so we wanted to make sure that we were recognizing those sites that were in that excellence top rating with honor rolls as well and you can see a hundred and one total sites got that honor roll and that included centers family day homes and again public schools the second category was improvement so we want we are a measurement and an improvement system and so we wanted to recognize programs that showed significant improvement they may have not gotten to those higher levels but

[03:47:04] they showed improvement and again specifically in their class scores it wasn't just that they got some points for using a curriculum so we looked at the returning sites again the sites that were there for more than one year and the top 10% of improvement in their class scores and that was 294 sites that was about a 63-point improvement is what ended up being about 10 percent and again that included a lot of centers family day homes and some public schools and then the third category is really just for child care centers and family day homes that are serving our infants and toddlers against the most expensive

[03:47:40] type of care to provide we know there's huge wait lists and for those that are doing it well we wanted to really recognize those programs so we looked at their interactions and class scores specifically in those infant and toddler classrooms they may have also served preschool but we were looking at where they were how they were doing in those infant and toddler classrooms and looked at the top 10 percent and so there were 216 programs that got the top infant toddler quality both centers and family day homes these honor roll sites get an additional certificate that they can display in addition to their ratings they're also the profile has a little icon on it to indicate that they were

[03:48:19] an honor roll site and our ready regions help us celebrate them which i think on the next slide actually we have a few pictures of some of the many many pictures that were shared on social media again these are not just honor roll sites but the honor roll sites in particular seem to really want to highlight and celebrate the recognition that they were receiving so we saw lots of posts like these where they were highlighting their achievement sites also get a certificate for for their rating, and so we also see sites that are just excited and promoting their quality achievements.

[03:48:52] So, we're really encouraging this and love seeing these additional photos and ways to celebrate this, too. Next slide. So, a big goal of our system is to make sure that this information is available to families.

[03:49:08] That's also part of our state law, so we are really trying to work on not just having these profiles available, but using it in a way to help families understand what's important and early childhood programs. So all of our sites are required each year to inform families that they are participating in VQB 5.

[03:49:26] We have a flyer that you see there on this slide called VQB 5 for Families that kind of breaks it down to what VQB 5 is, what do sites have to do, what is class, what is a quality curriculum. And then we have other resources that we've developed to help our sites leaders in our Ready Regions help promote this with families.

[03:49:45] So we have a PowerPoint template that a site could use if they wanted to do an info session for families. We have tips for how they can promote their quality rating, not just on social media, but in newsletters, on their website, in other ways. We have a whole toolkit on student child list, which is part of how they inform families, because we are looking at child level information.

[03:50:08] So that has some letter templates that they can send to families. And then the website itself has some FAQs, which will continue to expand based on feedback that we get from the field. Every year we also go to our Ready Region Family Councils and we share the information and tools that we have for families, and they help give us feedback on our tools and resources and give us some suggestions on either the wording that we have or perhaps some new tools so we're in the process of developing even more resources for families.

[03:50:39] Next slide. just a couple slides here to wrap up our time today about our current year participation and that'll lead us in nicely to tomorrow's session so you can go to the next slide so we have just about the same number of sites that are currently participating in vqb5 we continue to be really proud that we have sites in every city and county in virginia and these are the sites that are participating right now the child care centers the family day homes the head starts the public school preschools that are in the process of getting their class observations done and entering

[03:51:16] information about their curriculum and they will receive their 2526 quality rating in the fall of 2026 as well the map just kind of gives you a quick snapshot you can kind of see our heavily populated areas but really proud that there are sites all across the state in centers family day homes and public schools head start uh sometimes folks ask they are primarily the depending on how they are funded and organized either through centers or public schools primarily I think there's a few family day homes that get some head start funding but head starts are captured in those numbers as well and then our last

[03:51:53] slide is definitely a celebration of a lot of hard work from our team but really even more from our ready regions and our local observers all across the state tiara and her data team have been closely watching our class observation numbers since our first two practice years and this past fall we got to that over 100,000 class observation level and you can see most of those are local observations which means again this is by people who understand the class tool at the local level and can really help provide that kind of ongoing support to programs as well now the number alone is exciting but we did the math and again

[03:52:32] these observations are about 60 to 80 minutes so this represents 7.6 million minutes of insight into what infants toddlers and preschoolers have been experiencing in virginia over the last five years and it's those insights and us better understanding what they're experiencing is helping us give better feedback to educators so that they understand what they're doing well and where they can get a little bit better to even strengthen those high quality learning interactions so with that i will pause we are looking forward tomorrow to sharing with you the feedback that we've received from the field in addition to the data that we shared today

[03:53:10] and then our proposal for a couple revisions to our system thanks uh thank you chris thank you aaron thank you to the early childhood team another thank you if they're listening to the early

childhood foundation and their formidable leader kathy glazer who has been instrumental in this work since the law was passed as well as our nine ready regions who have led this work in their communities our partners at the new E3 for their

[03:53:44] leading work around BKRP and literacy and our partners at UBA and our other higher ed institutions who've helped make this possible it truly is a public private research policy partnership effort across the Commonwealth our folks the ones who get lucky enough to present it but it reflects a tremendous amount of work by individuals last but not least uh to all of our early childhood educators who are out there probably now getting ready for nap time um and so we're not able to watch this uh but

[03:54:19] uh they are the real difference makers as you can see this just represents a tremendous amount of change for a sector that already faces a lot of challenges including during the pandemic but but to be able to recognize this sector to recognize them as educators regardless of the setting in which they work to recognize them as high quality educators regardless of the credential and the opportunities that they may have had is just a tremendous privilege of our team and of the folks here in this room great thanks superintendent conway just a couple of questions mr mcpherson

[03:54:57] yes so as it relates to the programs for these i like to call them the toddlers um can you tell me what the average number of hours are for the programs is there an average hour and is there are there materials that talk about the division of time like are we given in a four-hour day are We're given one hour of instruction, a one-hour nap, or two hours of naps, or an hour of play.

[03:55:25] Just is there a model that we pattern after? Yeah, so you've got, depending on how they're funded, there are different expectations. So, for example, Head Start only pays for a proportion of the year. Child care subsidy might go up to full day, full year.

[03:55:44] I'll ask Chris to talk a little bit about the toddler tool. what we try to focus in on is that is that kind of morning period where so we don't you know we don't want to get the beginning of the day where everybody's coming in we don't want to get the end of the day where it's probably more just kind of free play but the toddler tool kind of in what it lays out kind of gives you a sense of what we're looking for it's important to note that the teacher child interaction measure can be used across different curriculums so the specific a specific curriculum, whether you choose to use Stream in 3, which is the state's kind of open educational resource, or you choose to use a commercial product, or if you're

[03:56:23] a faith-based program and you've sent us your curriculum and we've reviewed it, that kind of lays out the specifics of that. But I'll ask Chris to talk briefly about kind of what the toddler tool measures, and that'll give you a sense of what we're looking for. So the toddler tool is the one we most frequently use with mixed-age settings as well on family day homes and when it's measuring both the emotional supportive interactions and more of the learning focus types of interactions it's also gathering information about the activities that are happening throughout the day so it could be happening when they're playing on the floor when they're feeding them when they're diapering them it's really meant to capture interactions of a

[03:57:01] variety of types of regular routines since we know our littlest learners actually learn a lot from when they're eating and you're talking with them and having conversations um we with the class tool we can kind of track some of that and look at the activities that they're doing like how many of these observations happen during a meal time how many happen during a free play time how many happen during more of an instructional activity and then we also gather the content in fact tiara and i were just

talking about some of that like was it sort of a literacy activity or an art activity or a math activity and starting to look more at the connections between the activities that are happening in the class scores and that's part of that this kind of

[03:57:39] early look that we're doing right now good to know no yeah it's important to note that it looks so very different for toddlers than for older grades right so there are no worksheets there are no desks right and so if you walk in there as a as a high school educator you might say this is chaotic and very loud and there's a lot of touching and there's inevitably there's gonna be tears like you're not gonna observe an hour and a half in a toddler classroom and not have tears right and that and what the what the tool does and why the evidence basis

[03:58:17] and the research basis and tool is so important is that it figures out what matters most for kid learning without trying to sort of but like being sort of age and developmentally appropriate right so what we measure from the teacher is not do you prevent tears I mean good luck right for preventing tears, right? When one three-year-old takes another three-year-old's magnet tile, they're going to be feelings and they're going to be tears. But it's more on how is the affect of the teacher? Is the teacher scanning the room and figuring out who's about to take somebody else's thing, right? Is the teacher then responding and helping both parties work through that, right? Think about

[03:58:54] kind of the response to that, getting both children, you've heard the phrase, to use their words, Ida, when you took my magnet tile, it made me very, very mad, right? And Ida says, but I really want that magnet tile because it's purple and it's my favorite color. And then sort of thinking about how they're sort of shaping the day. And as you get younger, it is less about, all right, guys, like we're doing, you know, this, it might be centers and you're letting the kids have choice around which centers and then you're responding. So it's a, it's a really detailed tool, but it is,

[03:59:27] it is meant for babies and toddlers and preschoolers and it again allows across all these different settings rather to maintain rigor but also offer flexibility. Okay thanks. So I'm going to go to Dr. Wilson and Robinson and then Dr. Norton. Thank you all again thank you again. So an observation and then a question. I love seeing pictures of kids and so the social media posts and those screenshots, fantastic seeing kids, because that's how you know when you're doing good work.

[04:00:02] This slide here, I'm glad that you talked about the local observation, because I was wondering, you know, who is actually conducting the observations? I heard you say the local, kind of those folks who are right there, but I'm interested in knowing who might be some external observers, like what is the profile of that individual who might be an external observer?

[04:00:22] Sure. So I'll talk about the local first. There's over a thousand local observers across the state. So it's a more diverse pool of folks. We try to get as many site leaders themselves to get certified and reliable in the tool so that they have the expertise to do these observations and support teachers.

[04:00:41] so we do have some principals some site directors vpi coordinators do them head start directors our ready regions then can also hire contracted observers again to try to find folks in the community and in those areas a lot of times they try to find somebody who has experience with family day home providers and who understands those contexts and then occasionally they use some of their own staffing to do the observations so they all have to become certified and reliable in the tool but they can have a variety of kind of working relationships with them and then the ready regions kind of watch their data and their trends compared to the external and when they

[04:01:20] need support they step in and they support them with strengthening their skills or offer different trainings to kind of keep their observation skills the external observers are a much smaller core group it's about 140 statewide contractors that are more again of third party they cannot have a working relationship with the site there's a strict conflict of interest policy in addition to becoming certified and reliable they have additional double coding calibrations monthly and higher actually levels of pass rates that we look at to keep them kind of as rigorous

[04:01:55] as possible they can again we look for folks who have some education background but ultimately we look for folks who can be very objective and follow the class manual and have good reliable results on that tool thank you and just for clarification so in order to be certified it's it's not a paper test if you actually have to watch for videos and score reliably so it's very much a practical observation tool rather than a multiple choice test and you have to renew it every year I just did my infant this last weekend I would know all three every every year as well so it is

[04:02:31] just becoming certified alone but then there are additional pieces that we do to maintain kind of the integrity of the system. Thank you. Mr. Robinson? Again, just incredible gratitude for equipping us with this information to be partners to educators across Virginia and lifting that blue bar.

[04:02:50] It's such a great call to action for us. And I'm just curious to help educate us further in what you're learning about the theory of change related to the curriculum. So I understand that the measurement more focuses on interactions and you can get a higher score if you're using curriculum.

[04:03:07] But we now have data that we've never had on whether a theory of change, how it proves out, whether having the approved curricula results in those higher interactions. And, you know, so I know tomorrow is more about the now what, but to help prepare us for that, what are you learning about the use of approved curricula and how that and the impact that has?

[04:03:32] Yeah, we have looked at that. So a couple things that we noticed, we looked at just the reported use of curriculum and compared to the class scores, and we did see overall that the classrooms that supported using an approved curriculum had higher class scores. We also broke it down by the age level and the domains, and what I found particularly interesting was that if they reported using a curriculum, it didn't have as much of an impact on the more emotional supportive interactions, but it did have higher class scores on those more instructional focused domains and dimensions and so that seemed to be we're having that

[04:04:08] curriculum using it more effectively makes the biggest difference we also noticed that in our lower performing sites there's much less use of approved curriculum and even those that are reporting using it are not using it as effectively as they could so part of the coaching and support they receive is to how do you use it to support those higher quality interactions as well what would you add? And we'll cover a little bit more about this tomorrow also. But, you know, I think the focus on curriculum in VQB5 is distinct, especially when we think about it across site

[04:04:43] type. So this is one area where prior to VQB5, the use of curriculum looked very different. The very earliest data we had looked very different in our family day homes versus our public schools who were all using curriculum most of which is now on our approved list compared to the family day homes where the uptake and that was very limited I'm not sure if we have this chart included tomorrow or not but the growth we can find it the growth in our family day homes and child care program specifically in achieving that goal of using one curriculum in one classroom

[04:05:22] one age group to get those points has been huge right and i think that that is an important milestone for us in our theory of change for how to get people on board with curriculum if you haven't thought about it and you're not a teacher who has been traditionally using curriculum that could be a very scary premise right but now and we'll talk about this a little bit more tomorrow we're really working to integrate that and help help all classrooms in all settings see the value of that in in every age group uh important piece to note i should note there is one other state that

[04:05:59] doesn't do as many observations overall but per capita does as many observations and it happens to be louisiana where you have a similar model that is now uh has more than than 10 years of impact part of the original drivers mr robinson of including curriculum is that when this similar model was ruled out in Louisiana and after a few years of the measuring only interactions childcare actually came to Aaron and myself and said we need a resource for our educators who are not traditionally trained in educator prep

[04:06:37] but they can do the warm and responsive they've begun to reorganize how they think about the day but the idea of intentional learning and how to do that in a developmentally an age-appropriate way like we need a resource and so at that point in Louisiana it was not part of the measurement system but we began to fund programs to use it and so then when we had the opportunity to develop a system here in Virginia at the outset we recognized that that was likely to happen I as Erin noted I think fewer than 40% of family child care even use any form of curriculum in the beginning and so we created a simple incentive to

[04:07:15] participate as these folks will talk about tomorrow we are increasing that but the idea is about the coherence so that you're going to start to see if you effectively use curriculum across a variety of kind of quality choices there that you'll see a more positive score in terms of the instructional support and that encourages you to use the curriculum more and trying to kind of build that cycle uh as part of the theory of change it takes time um uh and so you know we

[04:07:50] we know we've tried to kind of pace all of these changes uh again head start and vpi have been using curriculum for years and for there we're about actually how we're using the child level data to think differently about your interactions and how i'm using your curriculum versus it's a kind of more differentiated approach for family chalk and child care just starting to introduce and support the continual use of curriculum dr northern hopefully this will be quick i'm just piggybacking on this external observers i'll notice on slide 40 and you guys have explained

[04:08:24] this before and i've just forgot so tell me again how their scores get replaced if there's something inconsistent and how that kind of plays out yeah so uh we basically we get enough external observations so that we can compare local and local and external in the same observation window so if teacher a's classroom has a local observation in the fall and we have an external observation we compare those two scores and we look for domain level consistency so depending again on the age level there's different domains but we look for scores that are within one point

[04:08:59] consistent and that's the same way the class tool reliability works you have to be within one point to be reliable so if the scores are consistent we keep the local scores our goal is to have as much autonomy on those scores to have those strong observers at the local level but if the scores are inconsistent more than a point difference we replace that domain score with the external score so the stats

i believe here uh talked about over half of these observations were fully consistent had no replacement at all and we're seeing more consistency each year in fact in the practice

[04:09:34] years we only had 39 consistent so they are getting more consistent which is our goal and then when we do a replacement it's typically just in one area so it's a mix of some local and external scores it's very rare to have a full replacement but if that happens we we take a close look at it with our ready regions to see how we can support those observers are there any other questions yes thank you so much echoing the kudos to the team on this it's really incredible work i hope i'm not the only person that was thinking about ways that lessons learned and

[04:10:10] And the fact that you've got a truly comprehensive and coherent system of accountability and support that drives towards continual improvement, the things that we could do at K-12 in that direction to really build that same coherence.

[04:10:27] I know they're very different. I don't want to say animals, but they're very different sectors. But the system design that has gone on here, there are plenty of lessons to be had. My question about this system in particular is, I know less than nothing about pre-K and early childhood.

[04:10:47] But the bit I do know is around the research around early childhood and segregation, and then some nascent research on that impact on even class scores. And so I'm wondering, you know, are you able to break things down to at least shine a spotlight on whether or not that's happening in Virginia it in terms of looking at not just the types of centers but the demographic makeups socioeconomic and racial that's a great a great question so part of the

[04:11:21] importance of VA connects is helping to again because this is at scale right that to really think through what are all the factors impacting children and then students kind of within the classroom but also what do we also know about those those those children those students those educators and and their communities right so for example across these different settings and we didn't even really touch on workforce today but you have very different expectations around preparation and very different structures around compensation which

[04:11:58] still makes sort of this structure and coherence you know in some ways near miraculous. The reason we asked the team to share that data up front about the kind of the different settings is because all of that is in play. So as a society, we face a dilemma between we want to prioritize kids and families in greatest need, right? Those who can't otherwise afford child care. Inadvertently, what that does is end up concentrating kids and families in greatest need.

[04:12:29] And so you end up with, in sort of our Head Start and our Virginia Preschool Initiative classrooms that tend to be more demographically similar, whether that's socioeconomics, that's language, whether that's race, right? And so your tradeoff is we might get a more socioeconomic diverse class, but then we also want to prioritizing to the point that Ms. Witherspoon made earlier around, you know, if we have scarce dollars, they should go towards those in greatest need.

[04:12:59] And so there are some trends around looking at segregation that is partly about kind of communities and history, but is also partly about prioritizing families and children in greatest need. Part of why we have, in a very bipartisan way, tried to kind of get folks more interested in funding the child care subsidy program is that provides more opportunity for socioeconomic diversity, right?

[04:13:27] because you can take that child care scholarship or voucher or kind of wherever, including with sort of a set of privately funded kids who might look different and represent a different language, a linguistic competency or a different socioeconomic background.

[04:13:45] And so it looks, Dr. Bridges, different across our programs. I think as we get more and more data, we are working really closely with programs to understand and work with parents to get even parents who are not publicly funded to opt in and include their information on the child list so we can understand as we capture which kids are in which classrooms the positive benefit of those high quality interactions and then what does that mean for the children who are receiving public dollars and what does that mean for the other children it's always a choice whether or not you want to be a part of that but by capturing some of that data

[04:14:21] it will actually help us understand particularly when those children enter uh kindergarten kind of what that what that all means the the challenge is we got to wait for time we got to wait for the kids to move through the system to enter our k-12 system and then we'll see that but the va connects creates that infrastructure to look at all sorts of issues that go beyond just that uh immediate classroom quality yep miss mcpherson all right so using as a base that obviously having interaction

[04:14:57] in a school setting k through five is important as it relates to not having one far more important okay so as we go forward if you would let us know why you're finding that even though some kids have been exposed to having that they're still struggling to get to the k to the third grade level as it relates to instructional performance you know we'd be interested in on why it's still taking kids up to third grade to be able

[04:15:34] to perform at third grade level even though they had their four or five years in pre-k absolutely and I think just an important point and I know this is going where Dr. Northern was going to. Right now, the dilemma of VKRP is it's very binary, right? Are you at great risk or are you at not? But the actual distribution of those children, if you were to look at kind of how they did, is probably a full arc, right? Rather than, you know, here or here. And so trying to kind of understand where kids are at. And then I think trying to think about how is the system in a way that's age and developmentally appropriate, do you maximize that

[04:16:13] growth. There's research, right, on sort of that even the vocabulary of a three-year-old is highly predictive, right, of future academic performance in a way that feels hard to believe. There's research on 18 months old, right, that like sort of some of the very initial, there's so much that is happening in terms of that brain development that's highly invisible. And so what we would want to build is a system that not only is continually improving, right, and you're raising that blue bar, but also that is getting better at understanding how do I maximize, regardless of where a child, when they first enter the system, because it's not compulsory, right?

[04:16:53] It's a parent's choice whether or not I want to put my two-year-old in this experience, and we've learned lessons from other countries around sort of warehousing young children is also not effective, but the moment at which the child enters the system, how do we do the best job of moving them as far as we can, and then understanding kind of what that means as they get into kindergarten and beyond, but that is absolutely the most important work of that system and thinking, again, less.

[04:17:23] When we're talking with broader stakeholders, and Ms. Reinhardt is talking with businesses, they want to kind of know ready or not, but ultimately our system should be able to quantify growth in

addition to this kind of binary ready or not.

[04:17:39] And that interaction at kindergarten clearly becomes the data that we find right there may give us a better indication of whether the pre-K, you follow me, is measuring the growth and providing the growth and are we falling off once they enter into kindergarten and need to do more right there at that intersection.

[04:18:04] So as we go forward, I'd be interested in that data. And I think the other piece on that, and where is that kind of more tactical skills? So we see quite a bit of catch-up on some of those tactical skills. And then we see when we get to later grades, that if the underlying vocabulary and content are not there, then you sort of see that drop off.

[04:18:23] And so being able to look at it across the system to diagnose exactly what's going on is really important. Great. If there are no other questions, thank you, team. The only, I guess, final comment for me is, Dr. Bridges, I was exactly thinking about what you asked, which was, this is really tremendous.

[04:18:44] I just wrote a couple notes just being able to lead with the data thinking about the scale the point around accountability and support that last part around communication just tools so that all of our stakeholders have the information it's just very consistent with the work that I know the previous the board at the previous board at the new board members the work that we are doing just breeding transparency and in the last word that I think you said superintendent Conway was just around innovation and I just kept thinking thank

[04:19:21] you to the team but also thank you to superintendent Conway who has led this work and just continued to be excited to see how this transfers not just to our littlest learners but to all of our learners across the state so thank you for your leadership with that I think we are time for at least a break or some snacks is that right we don't get a nap but we can at least get great team again thank you so much for your presentation we are going to break now for lunch and

[04:19:58] reconvene we can are we reconvening or do you want to do a quick okay great Well, I'll turn it back to the superintendent for a stretch break, no? Go for it. You got to go? Okay, good. We're going to jump into a final update.

[04:20:15] Thank you on listening tours, which is exciting. I know, and I know that Chief of Staff Coy is excited to follow that group. Full disclosure, I do not have any brain slides. So hopefully this will be an easier transition to lunch.

[04:20:32] I just need the slides to. Well, good afternoon. President Ashton, members of the board, and Superintendent Conway. My name is Holly Coy. I have the honor of serving as Chief of Staff at the DOE. And this afternoon, I'm going to provide you with an update about the Commonwealth Listening Tour, which the Superintendent and our Secretary of Education, Dr. Jeffrey Smith, have been leading over the last few months.

[04:20:58] So I will share a bit about the genesis of the tour, the types of feedback and engagement opportunities that were created, some of the common themes in the feedback, and how we anticipate the input will inform our work together. There we go. Thank you.

[04:21:20] So on her first day in office, Governor Spanberger signed Executive Order 4 about strengthening public education in the Commonwealth. And at the heart of that charge was a request that

Secretary Smith and Superintendent Conway and the teams begin by spending the first weeks and months in office in meaningful conversations with students, teachers, school leaders, and families around the state. So the incredible team at DOE got to work.

[04:21:48] They built out weeks worth of visits, roundtable conversations, and public input sessions. They created online forums to collect feedback and created virtual sessions for different groups as well. We reached out to divisions, associations, professional groups, and partners all across the Commonwealth to identify and design opportunities for these conversations and to ensure that a wide range of stakeholders were invited and included in the design of these sessions.

[04:22:15] So the foundation of the tour was a day-long visit in each of the eight superintendents regions in the state. Between March 4th and April 8th, at a grueling pace, the secretary and the superintendent and their teams visited each of the eight superintendent regions. So typically these stops included school visits, a roundtable with 10 to 15 students, and invited discussion with 20 to 25 different individuals usually within the division so this included teachers school division central office staff sometimes it included community

[04:22:54] members we had school board members board of supervisors members mayors sheriffs parents pta leaders really a wide-ranging group of individuals in these invited smaller group discussions and then after that often the students in the culinary programs provided dinner and were gracious enough to feed the teams before then those stops all included an evening session that was open to the public both in that particular school division and the surrounding communities often superintendents from divisions nearby came

[04:23:31] and joined and some of you joined us as well for those evening sessions our doe team captured notes at the table conversations to inform our final report and feedback so just a few highlights along the way depending on the community and the schedule and the interest from our partners each of these visits was slightly different so the tour kicked off in Hampton with the governor Hampton City Schools is home to secretary Smith and his lasting impact can be seen in the remarkable opportunities that students have there in the Hampton academies

[04:24:08] We had dinner with nearly all the Region 7 superintendents during our time in Smith. And we had breakfast with all of the superintendents and school board chairs in Region 4 up in Northern Virginia. We put on hard hats and toured an active construction site for a new CTE center in Roanoke County.

[04:24:28] We did experience a cadaver lab with some high school students at the Heals Lab School in Marion, and no one passed out. and we had a session just for our early childhood providers in Alexandria so our hosts who were often but not always school divisions were incredibly gracious with their time their space their staff and it was a real pleasure to work with them to get a flavor of the things in their communities that they are proud of excited to show off as well as have conversation about the challenges so a little bit about the feedback by the numbers so in total

[04:25:05] de-duplicated we had, by best tally that we could muster, 2,282 different individuals providing feedback in some form or fashion over the last few months. So an online survey was launched in early March.

[04:25:21] It received nearly a thousand responses. There were virtual sessions, each for a different and specific group of partners. So this included business and community, principals, teachers, parents and

families. And then DOE staff worked with various associations to partner and identify events already on the calendar that might lend themselves to meaningful input for the secretary and the superintendent.

[04:25:46] So for example, DOE staff already attending conferences and professional learning events were able to gather feedback from middle school math teachers or special education administrators, middle school administrators, the UVA K-12 Advisory Council, and other existing partners and events.

[04:26:05] what did we hear so in each of our conversations we sought to focus with the to start the conversation with a focus on the strengths and successes of any particular division school or community the most common themes that we heard were about the dedication of our educators going above and beyond for our students every day everyone had a story to share about the impact of a phenomenal teacher aid or school staff person and then the impact they had on the students. Similarly, we heard about transformational strong principals who are supporting those educators and leading instruction and creating

[04:26:44] welcoming environments for students and staff alike. In addition to that, we heard about some really positive impacts that recent state policy changes have had on classrooms. So this included fewer distractions with limited access to cell phones, strong student results from the implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act and its many components, We heard also about really strong community collaborations to expand pathways to post-secondary opportunities, including career exploration for all ages, renewed commitments to CTE, the academy high school models, and the power of dual enrollment.

[04:27:23] We also heard a lot about the benefits of recent investments in tutoring and the impact of that high dosage small group tutoring on the success of our students. from that place of strength and success we then invited our partners to share with us areas of challenge and opportunities to improve and they did not hold back we heard a clear and strong desire for stronger relationships transparency and support from the department with our school division partners we heard school leaders articulate a desire to see some

[04:27:58] refinements to the state accountability system SPSF largely by addressing the JLARC recommendations but also related to ensuring that results and then the corresponding supports are made available in a more timely fashion so as to have more lasting impact. Throughout the state we also heard a lot about increasing needs for behavioral and mental health supports for our students so that they can ultimately be successful in the classroom. Concerns continue to linger about the educator pipeline and the need for additional pathways into the profession. Various stakeholders across lots of different

[04:28:38] types of participants raised concerns about number and type of assessments that our students take over the course of their entire academic career and there was interest in additional conversation there. Not surprisingly we heard frustrations about unfunded mandates and concerns about the timing of state budget resolution which is particularly timing this week here in Richmond and the needs funding needs of our divisions both to address new challenges but also to sustain progress and some of the things that have yielded results for

[04:29:13] students like that high dosage tutoring and and so with the conclusion just this very week of the virtual listening sessions the DOE team is now busy compiling feedback analyzing the trends and themes and preparing a final report on everything that we have heard and we anticipate this will be published on our website next week. Even as that report is being finalized, what we have received to date is already informing actions big and small as an agency. With regard to accountability, the feedback has contributed to a

[04:29:52] simultaneous after-action report that we did as an agency on the 2025 release of our results and and that is already informing our planning for the fall of 26 rollout and this is also informing how we're preparing to bring accountability considerations forward for both stakeholder review and ultimately for your consideration so as you know tomorrow we'll begin this work with accountability policy decision points that will apply to the 25-26 school year that we're currently in and then as we work our way into the summer

[04:30:28] We will then bring forward preliminary discussion points for your consideration related to policy decision points for the 26-27 school year and beyond. I will note, too, that EO4 also called for the expanded membership of the Math Task Force, the Innovative Assessment Workgroup, and our Literacy Committee.

[04:30:49] And so the feedback from the listening tour will be shared with those groups as well to ensure alignment with their final recommendations as they move that work forward. In the long term, I think it is very safe to say that the Feedback will also inform the strategic planning work of the agency and how we bring topics forward for your consideration.

[04:31:10] And perhaps most important, but aside from any one topic, we hope that the most lasting impact of this tour has been to open these channels of communication in the spirit of partnership as we engage in this work together. So with that very brief presentation as compared to the last, I will just end by saying thank you to the incredible team, both at DOE and in our divisions, and with all the partners who hosted us over the last many months.

[04:31:43] And their impact was lasting as they opened their doors to these conversations. And to also thank all the participants who are willing to share candidly with us where they see hope and where they had very candid feedback for us about where we could improve and how we might partner in the conversations to improve the system together.

[04:32:06] So with that, I'm happy to answer any questions that you all may have. Superintendent Conway, would you? yes i just want to thank you thank you chief hoy and i just um what a privilege this was a thank you also uh to my spouse um who uh a lot more kid duty uh in in the last um six weeks um but it was uh truly a privilege to with our team who did an incredible amount of work to get every one of these organized to have staff at every table to capture every last comment to drive many

[04:32:43] many many miles but to hear from people and to know in some ways without trying to intimidate anybody on this body you all do such important work because people care so passionately about our early childhood and k-12 education in the commonwealth and that came across loud and clear from the folks who got there early um and were at their tables you know 25 minutes before it began to just hearing from students in particular are very reflective seniors and that senior spring

[04:33:18] as they look back about what an opportunity i had a senior um out in gloucester who was like i mean it's amazing this is all free like this is just like you know in this way that you know as we talk about early childhood where you have to pay or you talk about college where you have to pay but you know he was like i mean i just now realize right as a 18 year old i mean all these classes all these teachers and it was all free like nothing is free um except for this um just it you know there's probably the most competitive board to be on but because people care so much

[04:33:57] this because it is truly owned by every single one of our 131 school divisions and communities and we felt that they are very different across the state but there is truly more that unites us than divides us and so I'm just I am also as chief Coy noted incredibly incredibly grateful to everybody who helped make possible thank you superintendent and thank you Chief Coyt any other questions

[04:34:28] about the listing tour Dr. Bridges thank you Holly can you say more about the technology and ed and the agency division relations and I know I know it you don't have all the nuanced data but those are such broad categories were there areas in how VDOE could help that you cut that kind of bubble up and then when when folks were talking about technology and ed was it more of a we need more we need less you know there's a lot of literature coming out about you

[04:35:05] know how our NAEP score core not correlate that the relationship between the declines we've seen nationally and one-to-one initiatives for example so I'm just curious kind of what the thrust of those two were those are great questions I'll start with the second one by saying it was both right we we heard some about the use of AI and how that is informing both instructional practices and student experiences but I think we heard even more both from students and from educators and from families about the over reliance on on technology and

[04:35:42] some of the downsides to that and so that was really interesting to hear that from so many different perspectives in so many corners of the state when it comes to the relationships I think there was a desire from many corners of the state again from our school division partners for an easier and more consistent ability to engage in conversation with the department for some additional transparency around wide variety of topics but but some frustration about being able to get clear and consistent answers from us

[04:36:19] and perhaps that is oversimplifying but I think at the heart of that was a a desire for the agency to be able to be responsive, for it to be easy for division partners to figure out who to ask within the agency about topics where they may need guidance or can't find what they're looking for or having trouble on a particular topic, and that they have those channels of communication, both formally and informally, with us.

[04:36:52] Is the 2025 after-action report, is that something that's been publicly available? It has not, no. Is that something the board has the ability to see at some point? Or is that an internal document? No, right now it's just an internal document, but we can certainly take a look at it.

[04:37:09] Thank you. I think the other piece to kind of look at the sort of what we said versus what would be the potential root causes is how might we get in a place? and we have lots of folks who care which is both our strength and our challenge but if you look at this body and the important work it does and makes decision on if you look at the gubernatorial initiatives and if you look at what comes out of the general assembly it felt like a lot of things coming at folks in recent years and you know again not pointing fingers at any one of those

[04:37:48] entities in any way, shape, or form, but like thinking about could we all lay out what the priorities were and kind of give a roadmap to 2030 if we're just going to use the kind of the benchmark of a gubernatorial administration and work backwards from there so that there could be a little bit more time for planning for shifting um and for supporting the implementers who are our divisions and i know you know you obviously saw that in some of the early childhood

[04:38:23] work where it was as holly described it was one i can't get to you i can't answer my questions but it was also like and then i just felt like it just kept coming and uh i don't think that just giving two weeks advance notice about massive change would be enough to sort of to to strengthen the relationship it also is around getting that scope sequence cadence and prioritization um to a a uh you know a slightly more measured pace largely recognizing that some of the very important and good things that this board did related to literacy related to standards related

[04:39:01] to accountability they they believe in it it's just we got to get that that right support and right piece of implementation and so it's really i mean loud and clear across the board like please do not go 180 degrees in the other direction like we can't do that right but let's sort of think through how to take the strengths of what was recently kind of implemented across the board the GA and the GOV and think about a kind of a reasonable pacing and how do we ultimately do a better job of using our Virginia data to then inform the kind of implementation over time.

[04:39:40] Thank you. Are there any other questions from board members? Okay, Chief Coy, thank you for your brief presentation. With that, we will break for lunch and for the day. Yes, we are breaking for lunch and for today. We thank you all and turn off your buttons.

[04:39:58] Yes.



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