

# Frequently Asked Questions: Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) Funding for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Classrooms

## Definitions

**ECSE Classroom Definition:** A classroom where a special education teacher is responsible for the instruction of all areas of the Early Learning and Developmental Standards for children ages 2-5 and in preschool. The classroom is composed of more than 50% children with Individualized Education Programs (IEP). The classroom may also contain children from the community without disabilities.

**VPI Classroom Definition:** Any classroom with at least one student funded with VPI funds

## Eligibility Questions

- 1. Do children with an IEP have to meet financial criteria to receive VPI funding?**  
No. Student with a disability is a standard state eligibility criterion for VPI. All students with IEPs are eligible for VPI funding regardless of family income or other family conditions.
- 2. Are eligibility criteria the same for inclusion classrooms and ECSE classrooms?**  
Yes. Students with disabilities are eligible for VPI regardless of setting.
- 3. Can 3- and 4-year-olds in an ECSE classroom be funded by VPI?**  
Yes. However, 3- and 4-year-old slots are not interchangeable. They must be requested separately via the Spring Application.
- 4. Are 2-year-olds with a disability eligible for VPI?**  
No. Only 3- and 4-year-olds can qualify for VPI.
- 5. Do current 3-year-olds need to reapply for their 4-year-old year?**  
Yes. VPI students need to apply each year.
- 6. Must all children in an ECSE classroom be funded by VPI?**

No. Any number of children can be funded. When a classroom has at least one child funded with VPI, the classroom is considered a VPI classroom and must meet the VPI Guidelines.

**7. Is there any requirement to have non-disabled peers in a self-contained classroom to use VPI funds for those students in the self-contained setting?**

No. VPI funds can be used for students in classrooms without any typically developing peers. Some ECSE classrooms may contain non-disabled peers, but it is not required.

## Funding Questions

**1. Is there a limit on the number of VPI slots a division or program may request for VPI funding?**

There is no limit. Divisions can request 3-year-old and 4-year-old slots during the VPI Spring Application. These slots will be awarded based on availability of funds. In the event statewide requests exceed the VPI budget, slots will be awarded using data driven metrics

**2. Is there a waiver to submit for students with IEPs to participate in VPI?**

No. Student with a disability is a standard state eligibility criterion for VPI.

**3. Can we use VPI funds to hire instructional coaches? And, if so, do they only have to work in VPI classrooms?**

Yes. VPI funds can pay for the percentage of time instructional coaches spend in VPI rooms. For example, if the coach serves 10 classrooms, 8 of which are VPI, VPI funds can cover 80% of the cost of the coach.

**5. What percentage of the local match can be in-kind?**

Up to 50% of the local match may be in-kind.

**6. Are there restrictions or specific guidelines for using funds to establish or expand current programming?**

VPI funds can be used to support all expenses associated with setting up a new VPI classroom with the exception of capital outlay. Please see the full [VPI Guidelines](#) for complete funding guides.

## Teacher Licensure Questions

**1. What type of teaching licenses are required for VPI classrooms?**

A VPI classroom is any classroom with at least one VPI funded student. Teaching licenses are required for any VPI classroom. There is an exception for this in Community Provider settings.

There are four VPI classroom types, any VPI classroom will fit into one of these categories. Below is the minimum licensure requirement for each classroom type. Teachers can always have additional licensures or endorsements, but they must have at least the minimum. If a classroom is exactly 50/50 split between students with and without disabilities, the classroom is considered inclusive.

***Inclusive (50% or more children without IEPs), Teacher is not the service provider for children with IEPs***

- No more than 50% students with disabilities
- Teacher License: PreK-3, PreK-6, or ECSE with add-on endorsement, early childhood for three-year-olds and four-year-olds
- Children with IEPs are to receive special education and related services by a person appropriately licensed and/or endorsed (e.g., educational services provided by a Special Education Early Childhood endorsed teacher; Speech Language services provided by a licensed Speech Language Pathologist.)

***Inclusive (50% or more children without IEPs), Teacher is the service provider for children with IEPs***

- No more than 50% students with disabilities (IEP)
- Teacher License: ECSE with [add-on endorsement, early childhood for three-year-olds and four-year-olds](#); or ECSE & PreK-3/6

***ECSE, Students with disabilities only***

- 100% students with disabilities (IEP)
- Teacher License: ECSE or ECSE with [add-on endorsement, early childhood for three-year-olds and four-year-olds](#)

***ECSE, Combination of students with and without disabilities***

- More than 50% students with disabilities (IEP)
- Teacher License: ECSE or ECSE with [add-on endorsement, early childhood for three-year-olds and four-year-olds](#)
- NOTE: typical peers in these classrooms must receive formal notice that the classroom is a special education classroom not a general education classroom.

**2. Can ECSE teachers teach ECSE-only classrooms with VPI funding?**

Yes. This would be an ***ECSE, Students with disabilities only*** classroom.

**3. Can ECSE teachers without the 3/4s add-on endorsement teach 3-and-4 year-olds without disabilities?**

Possibly. If the classroom is an **ECSE, Combination of students with and without disabilities** classroom and typically developing students' families receive formal notice that the classroom is a special education classroom not a general education classroom

**4. Do provisionally licensed teachers qualify as an ECSE certified teacher?**

Yes, a provisional license is a license. A teacher must have the appropriate provisional license for the classroom type they are leading.

**5. Will a teacher holding a Prek-3 endorsement need any other endorsement if ECSE students are included in the VPI class?**

No, as long as they are not the service provider. This would be an **Inclusive, Teacher is not service provider** classroom.

**6. What is the 3&4 add-on endorsement and how does a teacher get it?**

The [early childhood for three-year-olds and four-year-olds add-on endorsement](#) can be added to any teaching license (e.g., preK-3 or preK-6, or ECSE) and allows a teacher to teach PreK classrooms with three-and/or four-year-olds only. The endorsement competencies are met through coursework and completion of a practicum. Many teachers with an ECSE license will meet these requirements with little or no additional coursework or practicum. The teacher's school division must submit a state license application on the teacher's behalf to add the endorsement. If the application does not pass required standards as part of the review process, the teacher will be issued a notice of deficiencies. This will outline the needed coursework to be granted the endorsement.

## Reporting Questions

**1. What PreK funding code do I use for a VPI-funded student with a disability?**

Code 3 (4-year-olds) or Code 12 (3-year-olds). VPI students are coded the same regardless of disability status. Please see [Guidance for PK Funding and PK Experience Codes](#)

**2. Do families of students with disabilities need to provide income verification for VPI? What if the parent refuses to provide income verification?**

Yes. All families must submit income verification documentation to participate in VPI due to reporting requirements that are separate from eligibility. There is a form to complete to decline to submit verification and self-report income band. Please see [Guidelines For Determining Student Eligibility for The State-Funded Virginia](#)

[Preschool Initiative \(VPI\) and Best Practices for Implementing a Local Eligibility Process](#). If the family refuses to do either option, their child cannot be part of VPI.

**3. Do we need to report EVERY student in the VPI classroom for income and application packet?**

No. Only those students funded by VPI need an application and income verification.

## **Program and Classroom Logistics Questions**

**1. How do we determine if a class should be half day or full day?**

All classes must be 5 days a week. Half day classes must be at least 3 hours excluding meal times (3.5 hours if one meal is served, 4 hours if two meals are served). Full day classes must be 5.5 hours excluding meal times (6 hours if one meal is served, 6.5 hours if two meals are served).

**2. Do we need to use the same curriculum across all our VPI classrooms?**

No. Each VPI classroom must use a curriculum from the [vetted curriculum list](#), but not all classrooms have to use the same curriculum

**3. What if the school division has set the division calendar for less than 180 days?**

VPI classrooms must operate 5 days a week and at least 180 day OR 990 hours (for full day)/540 hours (for half day). If the division calendar is less than 180 days and VPI wants to be on the same calendar, then the VPI day must be extended to meet the 990/540 hours requirement.

**4. Can ECSE classrooms funded by VPI use curricula other than those on the vetted curricula list?**

All VPI classrooms must use vetted curricula. Supplemental tools and resources may be used. VDOE reviews curricula on a regular basis to determine if they meet the standards to be added to the vetted list.