

VPI Funding for Early Childhood Special Education Classrooms



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Overview of the Opportunity

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Classroom Definition

Early Childhood Special Education Classroom: A classroom where a special education teacher is responsible for the instruction of all areas of the [Birth-to-Five Early Learning and Development Standards](#) (ELDS) for children ages 2-5 and in preschool. The classroom is composed of 50% or more children with Individualized Education Programs (IEP). The classroom may also contain children from the community without disabilities.

VPI Eligibility for Students with IEPs

- All students aged 3 and 4 with IEPs are eligible for VPI regardless of family income
- Children with IEPs served in ECSE classrooms who are 3- or 4- years old by September 30 are eligible for VPI
- ECSE classrooms can be funded by VPI
 - VDOE supports placement of children with IEPs in the Least Restrictive Environment. In cases where the IEP team determines ECSE classrooms are most appropriate, these children will benefit from VPI programming.
- Any classroom with at least one student funded by VPI is a VPI classroom

Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

- Research indicates that inclusion benefits all children, regardless of disability status, as well as families, and communities.
- Inclusion involves holding high expectations and promoting participation in all learning and social activities, facilitated by individualized accommodations and using evidence-based services and supports to foster their development, friendships with peers, and sense of belonging.
- VPI program leaders must ensure practices and policies encourage inclusion and advancement of all children who are eligible for the program.
- For more information on Inclusion see the [Early Childhood Inclusion Guidelines](#) .

Using VPI dollars to fund ECSE classrooms does not lessen the importance of including children with IEPs nor does it negate the 10% inclusion target.

Considerations for Funding ECSE Classrooms

Supporting ECSE classrooms with VPI funds is a way to expand VPI programming in your locality as well as have state funds replace or supplement funds used in these classrooms

- School divisions receive some [Standards of Quality](#) state funds to support personnel costs for children with IEPs.
- School divisions receive Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 619 special education funds to support the excess costs of providing special education and related services to preschool aged children with IEPs.
- Most localities must use local funds to support programs for children with IEPs.

Considerations for Funding ECSE Classrooms

- By enrolling children with IEPs as VPI students, the cost to operate ECSE classrooms may be shared by state, local and federal funds
 - VPI requires a local match
 - The local match required for VPI may be lower than the local funds already used to support ECSE classrooms
- Supporting ECSE classrooms would be way to use unused VPI slots, fund additional waitlist requested slots, and/or provide slots for 3-year-olds
- An ECSE classroom may be fully or partially funded through VPI funds
 - Children aged 2 are not eligible for VPI
 - The VPI program may fund 3-year-olds provided the division has funding for 3-year-old slots

VPI Funding

VPI Funding

State dollars may be used to:

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

Local Match for VPI

The Appropriations Act states that a local match of funds, based on the composite index of local ability-to-pay, is required to receive state funds.

Cash Contributions are local dollars that are:

- In a program that meets, or can meet the criteria for a quality preschool program for at-risk 3- or 4-year-old children; or
- New local dollars, which are used to implement a program that meets the criteria for a quality preschool program for at-risk 3 and 4-year-old children.

In-Kind Contributions are cash outlays that are made by the locality that benefit the program but are not directly charged to the program. They are:

- Limited to no more than 50 percent of the total local match requirement;
- Justified in the program plan as necessary and reasonable for proper implementation of the program;
- Verifiable from the recipient's records;
- Not included as contributions for any other federally-assisted or state-assisted project or program; and
- Not paid by the federal government or state government under another award.

VPI Guidelines

Overview of VPI Guidelines

The following slides contain sections of the VPI Guidelines most applicable to funding ECSE classrooms with VPI funds

Reminder: Any classroom with at least one child funded through VPI is considered a VPI classroom

- VPI classrooms are required to meet all VPI Guidelines
- Many ECSE classrooms already meet the expectations within the VPI Guidelines

VQB5 - Virginia's Unified Measurement and Improvement System

All VPI programs are legislatively required to participate in VQB5. To meet this requirement:

1. VPI programs must use LinkB5 to provide information about their sites, classrooms, teachers, and child enrollment through the completion of various profiles.
2. Every eligible classroom must complete two local CLASS[®] observations, one in the fall and one in the spring, with scores entered in LinkB5.
 - Fall local observation window is August 15 to December 22
 - Spring local observation window is January 20 to May 31
3. In addition to the two local CLASS[®] observations, all sites must participate in external CLASS observations for each age-level served, between August 15 and May 31.

For more information and resources visit the [Quality Measurement and Improvement \(VQB5\) website](#) for VQB5 Guidelines and implementation support.

High-Quality Curriculum

All VPI programs are required to implement a vetted curriculum.

- A vetted curriculum is one that meets the VDOE's [baseline criteria for high quality birth to five curriculum](#).
- All [current vetted curricula](#) are listed on the VDOE [Early Childhood Curriculum Website](#).
- Classrooms within a program may use different vetted curricula.

Teachers and their leaders need training and ongoing support to implement all the components of a curriculum with high fidelity. For example:

- Teachers need access to all curriculum materials and introductory trainings.
- Program leaders should be fully versed in the curriculum.
- Programs need curriculum experts who can provide ongoing training and support.

Virginia's Birth-to-Five Early Learning and Development Standards

VPI Programs must certify that Virginia's [Birth-to-Five Early Learning and Development Standards](#) (ELDS) are followed.

VA B5 ELDS describe behavior indicators across five areas of development:

- Approaches to Play and Learning,
- Social and Emotional Development,
- Communication, Language and Literacy Development,
- Health and Physical Development, and
- Cognitive Development

To learn more about the ELDS and aligned resources, visit the [Early Childhood Standards & Instructional Supports](#) webpage.

Child Assessment with VKRP and VALLS for Pre-K

VPI Programs are required to evaluate all students in the fall and spring using the VKRP and VALLSS by each participating program.

- The [Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program \(VKRP\)](#) and the [Virginia Literacy Partnerships' Virginia Language & Literacy Screening System \(VALLSS\)](#) are complimentary assessments designed to measure school readiness and provide academic information to teachers to inform instruction.
- The VKRP and VALLSS are aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards and assesses preschoolers' school readiness skills.
- Optional mid-year assessments are available for VKRP and VALLSS.
- The IEP team may choose to opt out of the VKRP and/or VALLSS if not appropriate for the child.

Providing Individualized Professional Development

VPI Programs are required to ensure all VPI teachers and teaching assistants have a minimum of 15 clock hours of professional development each year.

- Programs must keep detailed records of this professional development for each staff member.

This professional development must:

- Be individualized based on the classroom data (e.g., CLASS scores or children's assessment data).
- Focus on:
 - curriculum,
 - assessment,
 - teacher-child interactions, and/or
 - individualizing learning based on the unique needs of students.
- Be delivered with fidelity with the necessary leadership and organizational support.

Health Services and Facilitation of Comprehensive Services

At a minimum, all VPI children need a physical, hearing screening, vision screening, and current immunizations. Behavioral and mental health screenings should be coordinated if needed.

- See the [Code of Virginia 12VAC5-110-80](#) regarding exemptions from immunizations requirements.
- The [Virginia Department of Health](#) provides the requirements for school and day care minimum immunization.
- VPI Programs are not required to provide any of these services, they are required to ensure each student has them each year and that referrals for follow up are given as needed.

Children who are not toilet trained cannot be excluded from VPI enrollment.

- Programs may not add a requirement that eligible children be toilet trained prior to entrance into a VPI program. This applies to both VPI 3-year-olds and VPI 4-year-olds.
- Program should consider how they may schedule toilet training into the day and give the child the opportunity to practice and become more independent with the task.

Family Engagement

- VPI programs should have an intentional plan for implementing meaningful parental involvement and family engagement strategies in the areas of:
 - Building a community of respect that considers the various cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds of parents and caregivers,
 - Promoting parenting skills and coaching parents as their children's first teacher, and
 - Listening to parents' feedback and building partnerships with them.
- Programs should have parent teacher conferences at least twice a year which include, at minimum:
 - Sharing VKRP (EMAS and CBRS) and VALLS-PreK reports, and
 - Individualized resources to support at home learning.
- Collaboration is encouraged with [Ready Regions](#) leadership on family engagement efforts within your local and regional community. Ready Regions are tasked with continuing to develop plans to engage families in all birth-to-five programs.

Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

VPI programs have a 10% inclusion target set by the General Assembly

- This target is a measure of the percentage of students with an IEP in inclusive VPI classrooms.
- Any student placed in a VPI classroom is included in this count, regardless of their funding source.
- Inclusion percentages are calculated using data from the end of the previous school year. Programs may view their VPI Inclusion Target Report in SSWS to understand how this rate is calculated.

A program's inclusion percentage decreases when self-contained classrooms are VPI classrooms.

- There are more students in the program overall, but the number of included students remains the same.

Instructional Time and Operating as a Full- or Half-Day Program

Recreational Time

- Programs may include unstructured recreational time that does not exceed 15 percent of total instructional time or teaching hours

Full or Half Day Programs

- Programs must operate at least 180 days or 990 hours (540 hours for half-day), excluding any breaks for meals/snacks
 - Virtual and/or asynchronous instructional days do not count
 - This may mean that VPI calendars/schedules deviate from K-12 schedules
- All programs must operate 5 days a week
- Full day programs must operate 5.5 hours a day
- Half day programs must operate 3 hours a day

Transportation

VPI programs must have a plan for ensuring that VPI eligible students have access to a safe method of transportation

- Transportation must never be a barrier for recruiting eligible children providing full services.
- All students should have at least one VPI location with transportation available to them, this could be considered a “home” or “zoned” location similar to elementary school students.
 - VPI students are not guaranteed a spot at this location due to space limitations.
 - When a spot is not available at the location with transportation, a family can choose to remain on that location's waitlist or attend a location with openings and self-transport.

Monitoring

VPI programs will participate in monitoring, at a minimum, once every 4 years. This process is focused on program compliance with the VPI Guidelines.

- VPI monitoring consists of:
 - Completion of a document summarizing program information
 - An onsite visit in the fall, including:
 - Interviews with key staff members
 - Classroom visits
 - Review of documentation
 - Virtual meetings with your assigned monitor throughout the process to provide guidance and feedback

Teacher Licensure

All teachers paid with public funds must have a teacher's license issued by the Board of Education.

- For an inclusive VPI classroom, a VPI teacher may have any of the following endorsements on their teaching license:
 - PreK-3
 - PreK-6
 - Dual Licensure with PreK-3 or PreK-6 with Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)
 - Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) with 3-and 4-year-old endorsement
- A teacher endorsed in Special Education Early Childhood must deliver the educational services outlined in the child's IEP
- An ECSE classroom must be taught by a teacher endorsed in Special Education Early Childhood

Considerations for Enrolling Students in VPI

- All VPI students need to have a completed enrollment packet
 - If a child is currently attending an ECSE class as a three-year-old, their family needs to complete VPI enrollment forms to be enrolled next year as a four-year-old
- Enrollment should include verification of family income
 - Income ranges must be reported for all VPI students, regardless of how they are found eligible for the program

Planning for Next School Year

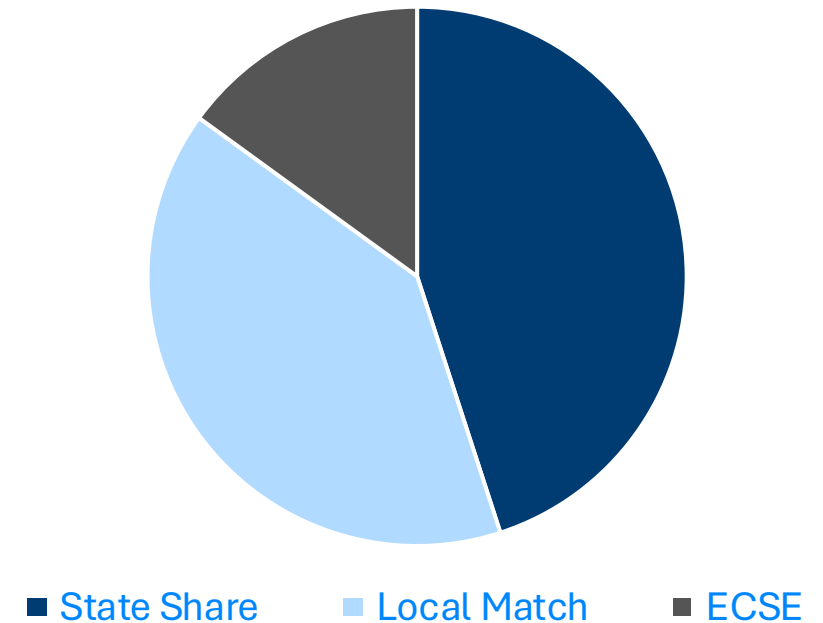
The VPI Spring Application opens in Mid April and closes May 15

- This is the only opportunity to request VPI slots for the upcoming year
 - This includes both four-year-old and three-year-old slots
- The Budget Calculator in the VPI Spring Application can assist with projecting state share and local match for VPI slots

Funding ECSE Classrooms with VPI Funds

VPI Funds

- VPI per pupil funding is re-benchmarked biannually based on VPI Standards of Quality.
 - Re-benchmarking updates the overall per pupil amount. This amount is split between state share and local match.
 - Local match is determined by Local Composite Index (currently capped at 50%).
- Other funds can be used to provide additional services and supports as needed.



Use of VPI Funds

Used to establish or expand quality, comprehensive preschool programs. Priority should be to use funds to meet state Early Learning and Development Standards and VPI Guidelines:

- Teacher salary
- Curriculum
- Classroom materials and supplies
- Purchasing items and services that benefit all children in the classroom
- If direct program requirements are met, may use for non-direct service components such as custodial services

May not be used for capital outlay

Use of IDEA Funds (619 and 611)

**Designed to supplement and provide additional supports/services needed.
Must be used for a child with an IEP:**

- Special education teachers
- Administrators
- Related services providers
- Specialized equipment or devices
- Materials and supplies
- Professional development
- Technology for recordkeeping, data collection
- Case management activities for providing services described in a child's IEP

Program Contacts

Program	Contact
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