

# **VPI+ Formative Evaluation Program Implementation Report**

## **Year 2: Fall 2016**

**February 23, 2017**

**Prepared for:**

Virginia Department of Education, Office of Humanities and  
Early Childhood  
VPI+ Implementation Team Members

**Prepared by:**

SRI International  
Shari Golan  
Betsy Davies-Mercier  
Sara Thayer  
Kirby Chow  
Dominique Tunzi  
Cyndi Williamson  
Erika Gaylor

with support from  
School Readiness Consulting

# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Evaluation Questions .....	9
Evaluation Methods.....	11
Report Overview .....	13
<b>2. Enrollment and Access</b> .....	<b>14</b>
Eligibility Requirements .....	14
Demographic Characteristics of Participating Children.....	15
<b>3. Program Implementation and Quality</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Structural Program Characteristics.....	19
Teacher Characteristics .....	20
Curriculum, Formative Assessments, and Instruction.....	20
Supports for Children from Special Populations .....	21
Family Engagement .....	26
Comprehensive Services .....	26
Use of Program Evaluation Data .....	27
<b>4. Professional Development and Technical Assistance</b> .....	<b>29</b>
Virginia Department of Education Technical Assistance and Trainings .....	29
Virginia Early Childhood Foundation Technical Assistance and Trainings.....	30
Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning Technical Assistance and Trainings .....	30
Other State Partner Technical Assistance and Trainings .....	32
<b>5. Local Coaching</b> .....	<b>34</b>
Coaching Contacts and Intensity.....	34
Coaching Strategies.....	37
Coaching Focus .....	38
<b>6. Facilitators and Barriers</b> .....	<b>41</b>
Facilitators and Barriers Overall .....	41
Enrollment and Access .....	43
Program Implementation .....	47
Technical Assistance and Professional Development .....	55
<b>7. Recommendations</b> .....	<b>58</b>
Enrollment Process .....	58
Program Implementation and Quality .....	59

Family Engagement .....	59
Comprehensive Services .....	60
Local Coaching and Training.....	60
General .....	61
<b>Appendix A: Enrollment for VPI+ and VPI Improved Classrooms .....</b>	<b>A-1</b>
<b>Appendix B: Program Characteristics of VPI+ and VPI Improved Classrooms.....</b>	<b>B-1</b>
<b>Appendix C: Coaching Activities with Teachers of VPI+ and VPI Improved Classrooms (August 15 – December 31, 2016).....</b>	<b>C-1</b>
<b>Appendix D: VPI Eligibility Criteria .....</b>	<b>D-1</b>

## Exhibits

Exhibit 1.	Formative Evaluation Methods, by Question .....	11
Exhibit 2.	Number of VPI+ Schools, Classrooms, and Children for Cohort 2 (2016–2017) .....	14
Exhibit 3.	Race/Ethnicity of VPI+ Children .....	15
Exhibit 4.	Household FPL for VPI+ Children and Families .....	16
Exhibit 5.	Home Language of VPI+ Children .....	17
Exhibit 6.	Maternal Education of VPI+ Children.....	17
Exhibit 7.	Use of Various Models to Support DLL Children .....	22
Exhibit 8.	Training, Instructional Practices, and Resources to Support DLL Children .....	23
Exhibit 9.	Training, Instructional Practices, and Resources to Support Children with Challenging Behaviors .....	24
Exhibit 10.	Use of Inclusion Models to Support Children with Disabilities .....	25
Exhibit 11.	Use of Training, Instructional Practices, and Resources to Support Children with Disabilities .....	25
Exhibit 12.	VPI+ Children in Classes with Comprehensive Services Readily Available .....	27
Exhibit 13.	Percent of Coaching Contacts with VPI+ Teachers by Length of Contact.....	35
Exhibit 14.	Percent of Coaching Contacts with VPI+ Teachers by Type of Contact.....	36
Exhibit 15.	Average Length of Contact (Minutes) with VPI+ Teacher by Type of Contact.....	37
Exhibit 16.	Coaching Strategies for Individual Coaching Contacts with VPI+ Teachers.....	38
Exhibit 17.	Percentage of Individual Coaching and Group Training Contacts with VPI+ Teachers by Focus Area .....	39
Exhibit 18.	Percentage of Individual Coaching and Group Training Contacts with VPI+ Teachers Incorporating Domain-Specific Focus Areas .....	40
Exhibit 19.	Facilitators and Barriers to VPI+ Implementation.....	42

## Executive Summary

In January 2015, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) in the Commonwealth of Virginia was awarded a federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG) to expand high-quality preschool programs for at-risk four-year-olds in 11 of Virginia's 132 school divisions that ranked among the highest in need based on key indicators.<sup>1</sup> Since the PDG grant augments Virginia's existing state-funded Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), Virginia named the work being carried out through its PDG grant the Virginia Preschool Initiative Plus (VPI+).

To measure impact and support program improvement, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) contracted with SRI International (SRI) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of VPI+, including a formative evaluation of VPI+ implementation, a summative evaluation of VPI+ impact on children's school readiness and later academic outcomes, and a cost analysis to determine investments needed for desired outcomes.

The PDG funds support two types of preschool classrooms in high-need communities within 11 school divisions across the state: (1) VPI+ classrooms (i.e., newly-opened classrooms that implement all of the VPI+ grant requirements) and (2) VPI Improved classrooms (i.e., existing state-funded classrooms that enhance their quality by implementing at least one of five program quality enhancements). Due to budgetary constraints, VDOE decided to focus the external evaluation on only VPI+ classroom implementation and child outcomes (not VPI Improved classrooms), given VPI+ classrooms will be receiving the full treatment of initiative supports. This report provides formative findings on the implementation of VPI+ in **fall 2016** (Year 2 of PDG).

### Evaluation Methods

SRI used a variety of methods and sources to learn about VPI+ implementation in fall 2016, including analysis of extant data on student demographic and enrollment characteristics and teacher and program characteristics; logs on local coaching and professional development activities; summaries and documentation of technical assistance and training sessions provided by state partners to VPI+ coordinators, coaches, and family engagement coordinators; and interviews and surveys with school division VPI+ coordinators. In addition, teacher surveys are conducted each spring, and program quality observations are conducted every other year

---

<sup>1</sup> School divisions selected to participate in VPI+ were ranked in the top five on one or more of four indicators: percentage of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch, number of Title I schools, percentage of entering kindergarten children not reaching benchmark standards on literacy screening, and number of at-risk unserved four-year-olds.

(Years 1 and 3). Teacher survey and program quality observation results will be discussed in future reports when those data are available.

### **Enrollment and Access**

Because of VPI+, the number of high-quality slots available for at-risk four-year-olds in a preschool setting across the Commonwealth has increased to include 1,406 slots in 118 high-quality preschool classrooms as well as 44 existing classrooms with blended funding that were brought up to VPI+ standards, for a total of 118 VPI+ classrooms for Year 2 of the grant (2016–2017 school year).

- By December 2016, VPI+ had enrolled 1,406 VPI+ children.
- The 1,406 VPI+ children represented a range of demographic groups:
  - Approximately the same percentage of males and females attended VPI+ programs.
  - 5% of the children were identified with a disability and/or received an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
  - Almost half of the children (49%) were identified as Black or African American; about one-fourth (26%) were Hispanic and 16% were White.
  - More than half of the children (63%) were from households at or below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). About one-fifth of children were from households between 131% and 200% (21%) and the remaining 16% were from households between 101% and 130% of the FPL.
  - Nearly three-fourths of the children spoke English at home. Nearly one-fifth of children spoke Spanish at home (19%), while the remaining children spoke Arabic (2%) or another language (3%).

### **Program Implementation and Quality**

All VPI+ classrooms are expected to include certain implementation components consistent with a high-quality preschool program as set forth by the Preschool Development Grant (PDG), including a highly educated work force with a deep understanding of child development, children’s and families’ access to comprehensive services, use of an evidence-based curriculum, use of formative assessment results to inform instruction, and engagement of families in children’s learning and progress.

VPI+ programs met the PDG expectations:

- All VPI+ teachers had a bachelor's degree or higher.
- The majority of VPI+ classes were taught by teachers with either a collegiate professional license (45%) or a postgraduate professional license (46%).
- Almost all (92%) VPI+ teachers had an elementary teaching license endorsement that included preschool.<sup>2</sup>
- The average VPI+ teacher salary (\$48,463) was somewhat lower than that of the average K-12 teacher in Virginia (\$54,486), possibly because VPI+ teachers tended to have less experience working in the division than their K-12 counterparts.
- All VPI+ classes were full-day programs (i.e., included 5.5 hours or more of instructional time).
- As in Year 1, 8 of 11 school divisions used the procured evidence-based curriculum (*The Creative Curriculum*®), and the other three continued to use a curriculum that was vetted through a rigorous review process with VDOE and the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL).
- All divisions were using the *GOLD*® formative assessment to inform instruction.
- All divisions participated in fall 2016 summative assessments, and all plan to participate in spring 2016 assessments.
- Professional development and coaching on formative assessments and curriculum were offered to all VPI+ teachers.
- All 11 school divisions had a family engagement coordinator who worked with families on enrollment, needs assessments, and engagement in program activities and planning.
- School divisions reported using several outreach strategies to recruit and encourage the engagement of hard-to-reach families.
- According to VPI+ Coordinators, VPI+ children and their families had readily available access to a wide range of comprehensive services.

---

<sup>2</sup> The type of license held was unknown for 4% of the teachers.

## Professional Development and Technical Assistance from State Partners

In Year 2, a network of state agencies and partners continued to train and support local VPI+ leaders, such as division coordinators, coaches, and family engagement coordinators. It also provided professional development to VPI+ classroom teachers as they worked to establish high-quality preschool programming for children.

- VDOE provided technical assistance to VPI+ coordinators, coaches, and family engagement coordinators on all components of grant implementation through sponsored meetings and consultation with individual divisions.
- Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) provided training to VPI+ coordinators on use of Virginia's Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS), including the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®) and the Early Childhood Environmental Rating-Revised (ECERS-R) to guide program improvement efforts. VECF staff offered this support at VPI+ meetings and through onsite and phone consultations with individual divisions.
- CASTL at the University of Virginia provided extensive technical assistance to school division leaders and coach training on topics such as using evaluation data, developing continuous improvement plans, and identifying division-specific coaching priorities. CASTL staff supported each division around local planning through an onsite meeting and phone consultation with VPI+ staff. CASTL's professional development for VPI+ coaches focused on enhancing high-quality implementation of curricula and effective teacher-child interactions; VPI+ coaches received 21 hours of CASTL support through individual sessions, a group training, and a monthly learning community call.
- To support VPI+ staff in implementing *The Creative Curriculum*® and *GOLD*® formative assessment, Teaching Strategies offered professional development activities such as webinars, group trainings, and in some divisions, onsite consultation. Teaching Strategies also provided a webinar for coaches and administrators who are responsible for providing professional development to teachers.
- Other resources from organizations and agencies such as The Annie E. Casey Foundation, other centers at the University of Virginia, the Maryland Department of Education, and the Preschool Development Grant Technical Assistance providers were used to facilitate trainings for VPI+ staff.



## Local Coaching for VPI+ Teachers

In Year 2, 15 VPI+ coaches supported 111 of 118 VPI+ teachers. Based on data from the online log of the services coaches delivered to teaching staff:

- Coaches served 94% of VPI+ teachers in fall 2016.
- Coaches made 922 contacts with VPI+ teachers between mid-August and December 2016, which amounted to 7.8 contacts per teacher (approximately 2 contacts per month per teacher).
- Coaches most frequently worked with teachers in their classrooms while students were present (53% of contacts), followed by meeting teachers in person or on the phone when students were not present (38%). Group trainings occurred less frequently (27% of contacts). Coaches typically spent about an hour when meeting with teachers in person or by phone (without students present) and during in-class coaching sessions. Group trainings, in contrast, lasted about three hours on average.
- Coaches used a variety of strategies. Discussion was the most frequently used strategy, occurring in more than half (53%) of coaching contacts. More than a third of contacts included observation (35%), and more than a fourth (31%) included making connections to curriculum resources and materials.
- Coaches most often focused on teacher-child interactions (64% of coaching contacts) and 43% of coaching contacts addressed supportive environments. In half of their contacts with teachers (50%), coaches addressed domain-specific topics (i.e., the five Essential Domains of School Readiness<sup>3</sup>). About a quarter (23%) of coaching sessions addressed language and 10% addressed literacy.

## Conclusion

This report contains findings across all 11 school divisions, 118 classrooms and teachers, and more than 1,400 children. In addition, the final two chapters present facilitators and barriers experienced by division staff as they implemented VPI+ and recommendations for improving implementation based on the formative data collection from fall of Year 2 of the PDG grant. When reviewing the report, VPI+ Implementation Team and staff from the divisions should pay special attention to how implementation can be strengthened across sites to ensure high-quality preschool programming is occurring. The VPI+ Implementation Team and staff from the

---

<sup>3</sup> National Research Council. 2008. *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How*. Committee on Developmental Outcomes and Assessments for Young Children, C. E. Snow and S. B. Van Hemel, editors. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Board on Testing and Assessment, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

divisions may want to carefully consider what additional resources, materials, and technical assistance they need to meet the learning and teaching needs of all involved, including coordinators, coaches, teachers, and children and their families.

## 1. Introduction

In January 2015, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) in the Commonwealth of Virginia was awarded a federal preschool expansion grant to improve quality in existing preschool classrooms and to expand access to high-quality preschool classrooms, referred to as the Virginia Preschool Initiative Plus (VPI+). Virginia is one of only 18 states awarded a U.S. Department of Education Preschool Development Grant (PDG). Virginia is using their PDG funds to increase access to high-quality preschool in 11 school divisions in high-need communities by expanding the number of slots available and by improving existing classrooms. (Virginia uses the term “division” rather than “district”.) These activities build on Virginia’s existing preschool program, Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI).

This report presents formative findings on the implementation of VPI+ in fall 2016 (Year 2 of PDG). Formative findings from Year 1 are available in the Year 1 fall and spring formative evaluation reports and in the Year 1 VPI+ Comprehensive Evaluation Annual Report.

The PDG funds support two types of preschool classrooms in high-need communities within 11 school divisions across the state:

**VPI+ classrooms** are newly-opened VPI+ classrooms that implement all of the VPI+ grant requirements. Further, VPI+ classrooms receive the following supports:

- Developmentally appropriate evidence-based curriculum (*The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> or other reviewed curriculum) that focuses on the Essential Domains of School Readiness (National Research Council, 2008<sup>4</sup>):
  - Language and literacy development;
  - Cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development);
  - Approaches to learning (including the utilization of the arts);
  - Physical well-being and motor development (including adaptive skills); and
  - Social and emotional development.
  
- Teaching Strategies<sup>®</sup> GOLD<sup>®</sup> formative assessment system and training

---

<sup>4</sup> National Research Council. 2008. *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How*. Committee on Developmental Outcomes and Assessments for Young Children, C. E. Snow and S. B. Van Hemel, editors. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Board on Testing and Assessment, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

- Ongoing program evaluation and monitoring and improvement support through the Virginia Quality Rating Improvement System (VQRIS)
- Focused coaching and professional development (e.g., curriculum implementation connected to the five essential domains of school readiness)
- External program evaluation (formative and summative assessment reports to inform program improvements)
- On-site comprehensive services, such as vision and hearing screenings, mental health, nutrition, and adult education, and referrals to additional community-based services
- Family engagement coordinators to help with outreach to hard-to reach families and to connect families to services
- Significant additional resources (e.g., instructional technology for classrooms, curriculum support with training, classroom libraries and curriculum-based literacy materials, curriculum-based hands-on materials and learning center supplies)

In addition, classrooms within the VPI+ program must contain the following elements associated with high-quality preschool programs:

- High staff qualifications, including teachers with a bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education or in any field with state-approved pathways and teaching assistants with appropriate credentials;
- Teachers must have an active Virginia teaching license with an elementary endorsement including PreK;
- Individualized accommodations and supports so all children can access/participate fully in learning tasks;
- Child-to-instructional staff ratios of no more than 9 to 1 and class sizes of no more than 18 children;
- Staff salaries comparable to salaries of K-12 teachers;
- Full day program; and
- Engagement of families as decision makers.

**VPI Improved classrooms** are existing state-funded classrooms that enhance their quality by implementing at least one of five program quality enhancements (i.e., raising private providers' teacher and/or assistant compensation to align with K–12 school division teachers, moving from a half-day program to a full-day program, reducing class size and student-teacher ratio,

providing evidence-based professional development and/or coaching, and making comprehensive services available to children and their families).

In addition, Virginia is improving its preschool infrastructure. For example, Virginia is making improvements to its preschool data collection that feeds into the Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS) to accommodate preschool program characteristics and child assessment data and has established a Cross-Organizational Data Team to collaborate on integration of preschool data. The team members have established Restricted Use Data Agreements (RUDAs) to appropriately share various data among school divisions, agencies, and the evaluation team.

Virginia also created a cross-agency and cross-sector system at the state level to support coordinated implementation of VPI+ programs. The VPI+ Implementation Team consists of both public and private and state and local agency partners that can advise on and provide services for VPI+ and other at-risk children. The representatives and agencies assigned to the VPI+ Implementation Team have connections with a wide range of related programs and services that can support VPI+ children and their families. The VPI+ Implementation Team, has met three times for planning, technical assistance, and collaboration between school divisions and agency/organization partners.

To measure impact and support program improvement, VDOE contracted with SRI International (SRI) in late August 2015 to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of VPI+, including a formative evaluation of VPI+ implementation, a summative evaluation of VPI+ impact on children's school readiness and later academic outcomes, and a cost-benefit analysis to determine investments needed for desired outcomes. Due to budgetary constraints, VDOE decided to focus the external evaluation on only VPI+ classroom implementation and child outcomes (not VPI Improved classrooms), given VPI+ classrooms will be receiving the full treatment of initiative supports (e.g., approved curriculum, formative assessments, evaluation and monitoring from the QRIS, summative assessments, intensive coaching, increased funding for comprehensive services and family engagement, and increased availability of instructional materials, including technology). Therefore, this report presents findings on only VPI+ classrooms and children.

### **Evaluation Questions**

The goal of VPI+ is to improve quality, access, and impact of services in high-needs communities throughout the state. Questions about access and quality are part of the formative evaluation questions. Access to high-quality preschool is expected to lead to positive child

growth in the essential domains of school readiness in preschool. These positive preschool experiences and outcomes are expected to lead to greater school readiness in kindergarten, as well as increased attendance, decreased student retention, and a reduction in special education placement and other intensive reading intervention services. Thus, our formative evaluation questions are as follows:

1. **Enrollment and access:** How many children are served in VPI+ new classrooms and what are their characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, home language, and special education status)? How much VPI+ preschool did children receive (e.g., days)?
2. **Program implementation and quality:** To what extent are new VPI+ classrooms providing high-quality teacher and learning environments that address the five school readiness domains, use formative data to individualize instruction, and provide supports to the unique needs of learners? To what extent are the new VPI+ classrooms providing comprehensive services and increasing their engagement with families and communities?
3. **Technical assistance from state partners:** To what extent are VPI+ coaches and administrators receiving professional development (PD) from the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) at the University of Virginia and other state partners to support implementation of an evidence-based curriculum, formative assessments to inform instruction, family engagement strategies, effective teacher-child interactions, and other practices based on CASTL's needs assessment in new VPI+ classrooms? Do these supports meet the needs of division administrators and coaches?
4. **Local coaching and professional development:** To what extent are teachers of new VPI+ classrooms receiving local coaching and PD to support implementation of an evidence-based curriculum, formative assessments to inform instruction, family engagement strategies, effective teacher-child interactions, and other practices based on CASTL's needs assessment? Do these supports meet the needs of individual teachers?
5. **Facilitators and barriers:** What are the facilitators of and barriers to successful implementation? How do local context, curriculum choices, use of formative assessments, and the backgrounds, experiences, and qualifications of VPI+ teachers and leaders affect implementation?
6. **Recommendations:** What additional supports do VPI+ school divisions and programs need for successful implementation?

## Evaluation Methods

SRI is using a variety of methods and sources to learn about VPI+ implementation (Exhibit 1).

### Exhibit 1. Formative Evaluation Methods, by Question

	Extant data	Coaching logs	Technical assistance documentation	Observation of PD sessions	Division coordinator interview/ surveys	Teacher surveys
Timing of data collection	Fall only	Fall and spring	Fall and spring	Fall and spring	Fall and spring	Spring only
1. Enrollment and access	★				★	
2. Program implementation and quality*	★				★	★
3. Technical assistance from state partners			★	★	★	
4. Local coaching and PD		★			★	★
5. Facilitators and barriers					★	
6. Recommendations	★	★	★	★	★	★

\*Note. Program quality data are collected in only Year 1 and Year 3.

SRI is using the following methods to collect evaluation data for the formative evaluation:

**Extant and administrative data analysis.** Each VPI+ school division provides data exports to the evaluation team on VPI+ and VPI improved enrollment and student demographics and teacher and program characteristics each December, and data on cumulative attendance, attrition, and participation in special education and reading interventions each July.

To measure classroom quality, the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) provides SRI in Year 1 and Year 3 of the grant with classroom observation data they collect on VPI+ classrooms using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®) and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) through their involvement in a tiered QRIS. The CLASS® and ECERS-R are observation measures of classroom quality and are collected as part of the PD supports offered to VPI+ classrooms through their involvement in the QRIS.

**Coaching logs.** To learn about local coaching and professional development activities, local school division coaches use a log to track the coaching they deliver to teaching staff, including the content and intensity (hours) of coaching for individual VPI+ teachers. These logs are completed online throughout the school year.

**Documentation of technical assistance and observations of professional development sessions.** VDOE, VECF, and CASTL provide technical assistance and support to VPI+ coordinators, coaches, and family engagement coordinators. To gather information about the type and intensity of technical assistance and support offered in fall 2016, SRI obtained summaries from VDOE and documentation from CASTL with the dates, hours, participant information (division, school/program, type of program, role), and the content of the technical assistance. The evaluation team observed leadership academies and coach trainings led by CASTL to collect additional information about the content of technical assistance and the ways in which CASTL is supporting school divisions with the adoption of new curricula and formative assessments, coaching, use of data, and development of individual PD plans for their teachers and continuous quality improvement plans for programs.

**Division VPI+ coordinator phone interviews and surveys.** To gather basic program information, the evaluation team conducts semi-structured interviews and brief surveys with the division VPI+ coordinators responsible for coordinating each division's VPI+ classrooms in the fall and spring of each grant year. The fall 2016 interviews gathered information about the enrollment process; experiences with implementation of the core curriculum and formative assessment; family engagement and services for families; the types and usefulness of state-supported technical assistance for VPI+ coordinators, coaches, teachers, and family engagement coordinators; and the structure and focus of VPI+ teacher coaching. The fall 2016 survey included questions about VPI+ program schedules; hours of training teachers are expected to receive on the core curriculum and Teaching Strategies *GOLD*<sup>®</sup>; areas of interest for future statewide training; supports for children with disabilities, dual language learners, and children with challenging behaviors; and availability of comprehensive services for children and families. The phone interviews and surveys also focused on; facilitators of and barriers to the VPI+ work (e.g., availability of teachers and coaches who meet qualifications, availability of classroom space, buy-in to the new formative assessment and curriculum, and evaluation feedback).



**Teacher surveys.** SRI conducts an online survey with VPI+ teachers each spring to learn about teachers' backgrounds, experiences, and qualifications; participation in PD and coaching; perceived usefulness of PD and coaching; their classroom practices, including use of certain curricula, formative assessments to inform instruction, and selected family and community engagement activities; buy-in for the new curriculum and formative assessment; perceived access to and use of comprehensive services by their students; and facilitators and barriers to VPI+ implementation.

### **Report Overview**

This report presents findings on VPI+ implementation in fall of Year 2 of the initiative. Chapter 2 presents enrollment counts overall and by subgroups. Chapter 3 describes VPI+ program implementation including program structural characteristics, teacher characteristics, curriculum and instruction, use of formative assessments, family engagement, and comprehensive services. Chapter 4 highlights professional development and technical assistance provided to VPI+ coordinators, coaches, and family engagement coordinators by state partners. Chapter 5 summarizes local coaching efforts aimed at VPI+ teachers. Chapter 6 presents the facilitators and barriers to effective implementation as reported by VPI+ coordinators in surveys and interviews. Chapter 7 concludes the report with a discussion of potential recommendations for further program improvement based on the findings from the fall of Year 2 of the evaluation. The appendices include data on enrollment, program characteristics and coaching activities for both VPI improved and VPI+ classrooms, as well as the VPI eligibility criteria.

## 2. Enrollment and Access

In Year 2 of the grant, VPI+ programs expanded their enrollment to 1,406 students, an increase of 176 students from Year 1. Exhibit 2 presents the number of VPI+ classrooms, schools, and enrolled children in fall 2016 by division. Enrollment counts for VPI Improved classrooms appear in **Appendix A**.

**Exhibit 2. Number of VPI+ Schools, Classrooms, and Children for Cohort 2 (2016–2017)**

School Division	Number of Classrooms	Number of Schools	Number of Children Enrolled in Fall 2016
Brunswick County	2	2	29
Chesterfield County	10	10	160
Fairfax County	5	5	88
Giles County	2	2	36
Henrico County	53	25	358*
Norfolk City	11	10	188
Petersburg City	5	1	58
Prince William County	11	11	199
Richmond City	11	7	160
Sussex County	2	1	25
Winchester	6	4	105
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1,406</b>

\*Note: Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS) served 14 Title I children and 166 Head Start children, as well as 422 VPI Improved children in their blended VPI+ classrooms, who are not included in the fall VPI+ enrollment count.

As of December 2016, the VPI+ program had enrolled 1,406 VPI+ children, 93% of its adjusted enrollment target (from Statement of Work submitted to USED/HHS in April 2015) of 1,514 students. The majority (93%) of VPI+ students were enrolled in public programs.

### Eligibility Requirements

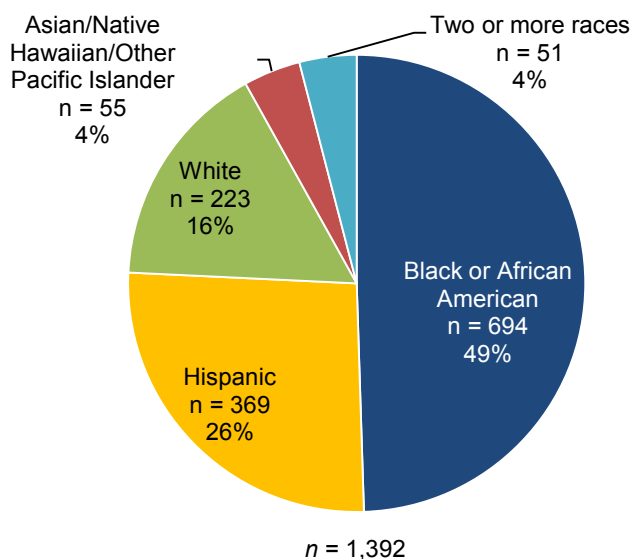
Eligible students in VPI+ classrooms (or VPI improved classrooms) must be from households at 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL) or lower and must be four years old as of September 30. Virginia uses different enrollment eligibility criteria (listed in **Appendix D**) for its Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), which predated the federal grant and continues to operate in the majority of other school divisions across Virginia. Children who did not meet the federal PDG eligibility requirements, but who participated in classrooms with VPI+ children, are not included in this report or the evaluation.

### Demographic Characteristics of Participating Children

This section presents data on the demographic characteristics of children enrolled in VPI+ programs in fall 2016.

Student enrollment in VPI+ classes was distributed evenly across gender (51% male and 49% female). All VPI+ students were at least 4 years old, with ages ranging from 48 to 59 months, and about half (51%) were between 54 and 59 months of age by September 30, 2016. About 5% of the children had an identified disability or delay, or had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) at the time of enrollment ( $n = 71$ ). Typically, the percent of preschool children identified with disabilities increases during the school year, as staff have more opportunities to observe and screen children.<sup>5</sup> About half of the children were identified as Black or African American (49%); about one-fourth (26%) of children were Hispanic and 16% were White (Exhibit 3).<sup>6</sup>

**Exhibit 3. Race/Ethnicity of VPI+ Children**



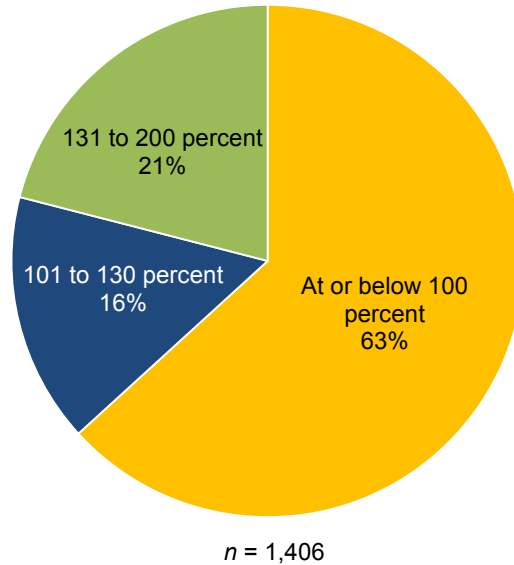
Children were eligible to be enrolled in VPI+ if their families' incomes were at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Exhibit 4 displays the distribution of children based on varying thresholds of household income: at or below 100% of the FPL, 101 to 130% of the FPL, and 131 to 200% of the FPL. More than half of enrolled children (63%) were from households at or below

<sup>5</sup> Blackorby, J., Schiller, E., Mallik, S., Hebbeler, K., Huang, T., Javitz, H., Marder, C., Nagle, K., Shaver, D., Wagner, M., and Williamson, C. (2010). Patterns in the Identification of and Outcomes for Children and Youth With Disabilities (NCEE 2010-4005). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>6</sup> The race/ethnicity of children was unspecified for 10 children (1%).

100% of the FPL. About one-fifth (21%) of children were between 131% and 200%, and the remaining 16% were between 101% and 130% of the FPL.

**Exhibit 4. Household FPL for VPI+ Children and Families**



Children’s families indicated the primary language spoken at home on school registration forms. As seen in Exhibit 5, about three-fourths of the children spoke English at home. Nearly one-fifth of children spoke Spanish at home (19%), while the remaining children spoke Arabic (2%) or another language (3%). The percent of VPI+ children whose home language was English varied across school divisions. In five divisions, more than 95% of VPI+ children spoke English at home, whereas in the other six divisions, this percentage ranged from 39% to 88%.

**Exhibit 5. Home Language of VPI+ Children**

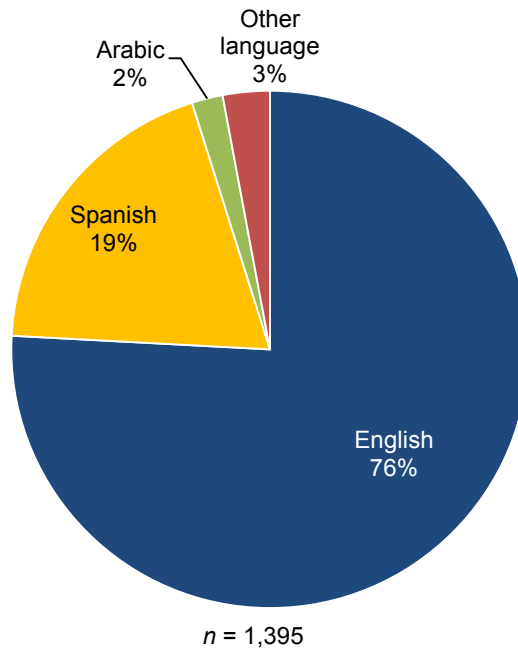
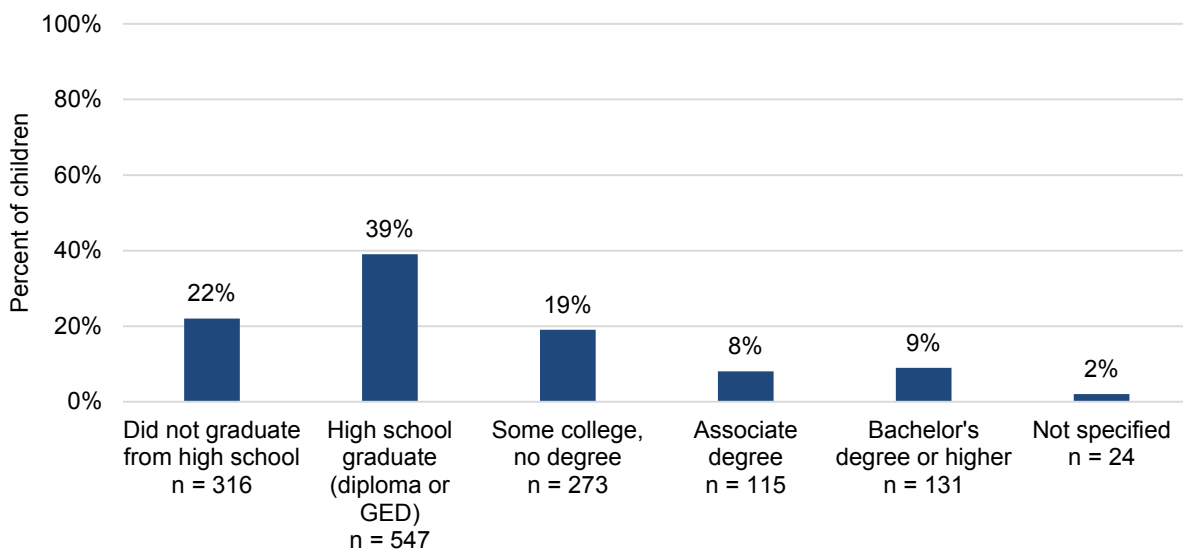


Exhibit 6 presents data on enrollment by maternal education. Mothers of 22% of VPI+ children had not completed high school, and mothers of 39% of VPI+ children completed high school with no additional education. Mothers of more than a third (36%) of VPI+ children had completed some college (without a degree), received an associate’s degree, or received a bachelor’s degree or higher.

**Exhibit 6. Maternal Education of VPI+ Children**



School divisions also tracked whether VPI+ children were in military-connected families, migratory families, families experiencing homelessness, and in the foster care system. Across the 11 divisions, 5% of VPI+ children were in families in which at least one parent was an active member of the military. One percent or less of VPI+ children were identified as being migratory, experiencing homelessness, or in the foster care system.

### 3. Program Implementation and Quality

This chapter describes the implementation of the VPI+ programs, addressing the extent to which VPI+ classrooms included the elements of high-quality preschool programs of the VPI+ model. The Preschool Development Grant (PDG) requirements specify implementation components that are consistent with a high-quality preschool program, and the grant provides VPI+ programs support in implementing these features. Each division provided data in December 2016 about the components of the VPI+ programs:

- structural program characteristics (such as class size, child-to-instructional-staff ratio, full day scheduling, and teachers' salaries);
- VPI+ teacher characteristics and training (such as teachers' educational and licensure credentials and high-quality professional development and coaching of teachers);
- use of a developmentally-appropriate, evidence-based curriculum and formative assessments;
- inclusion and full participation of children with disabilities, including individualized accommodations;
- support for families (such as engagement with families as decision makers, availability of on-site comprehensive services for children and families, and targeted outreach to hard-to-reach families);
- program evaluation to ensure continuous improvement through the Virginia Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS); and
- summative assessments in fall and spring that will be integrated into the Virginia Longitudinal Data System.

The sections below present data on each of these program components. **Appendix B** presents program and teacher data for both VPI+ and VPI Improved programs.

#### Structural Program Characteristics

All VPI+ programs had structural features that are expected in high-quality preschools. For example, all VPI+ programs offered full-day schedules, providing 5.5 hours (330 minutes) or more of instructional time each day.<sup>7</sup> Across the 11 divisions, VPI+ coordinators reported that the time between the start and end of their VPI+ programs ranged from 360 to 420 minutes daily. The average length of the VPI+ program was 391 minutes. Likewise, VPI+ teachers'

---

<sup>7</sup> Information on hours of instruction was reported by VDOE to SRI.

salaries averaged \$48,463 and ranged from \$34,445 to \$88,127. The average VPI+ teacher annual salary was \$6,000 lower than that of K-12 teachers in Virginia, whose average salary was \$54,486,<sup>8</sup> which may have been due to VPI+ teachers having fewer years of experience within their divisions.

### **Teacher Characteristics**

The 118 VPI+ classrooms were taught by 118 primary teachers, seven co-teachers, and 122 assistant teachers. Across divisions, there were 18 teachers who were new to VPI+ and 100 teachers who were returning to VPI+ in Year 2 of the grant. Thus, almost all (91%) of the 110 VPI+ teachers who taught in 2015-2016 school year returned to their positions in the 2016-2017 school year.

A research-based quality standard for preschool programs is to employ teachers who have, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree and specific training in early childhood education.<sup>9</sup> All VPI+ children (100%) had teachers who held a bachelor's degree and nearly half of VPI+ children (48%) had a teacher who held a master's degree. In addition, almost all VPI+ children (91%) were taught by teachers with either a collegiate professional license (45%) or a postgraduate professional license (46%), and who had an elementary teaching license endorsement that included preschool.<sup>10</sup> Finally, the majority (66%) of VPI+ teaching assistants held an associate's degree or higher.

### **Curriculum, Formative Assessments, and Instruction**

Virginia selected *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> for Preschool and its formative assessment system, Teaching Strategies *GOLD*<sup>®</sup>, to be implemented in its VPI+ classrooms through a competitive procurement process. *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> for Preschool is a comprehensive set of resources that assists teachers as they plan content-rich programs for children with diverse backgrounds and developmental levels. Accompanying *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> for Preschool is Teaching Strategies *GOLD*<sup>®</sup>, an observation-based system for assessing the development and learning of children from birth through kindergarten.

---

<sup>8</sup> DLAS Document Summary: 2015–2016 Teacher Salary Survey Results:

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/workforce\\_data/salaries/2015-2016\\_salary\\_report.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/workforce_data/salaries/2015-2016_salary_report.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Barnett, W. S., Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Gomez, R. E., Horowitz, M., Weisenfeld, G. G., Clarke Brown, K. & Squires, J. H. (2016). *The State of Preschool 2015: State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from [http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Yearbook\\_2015\\_rev1.pdf](http://nieer.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Yearbook_2015_rev1.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Four percent of children had teachers with a provisional license and 4% of children had a teacher whose type of license was not specified by their school division.



In fall 2016, eight of the eleven divisions continued to use *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup>. These eight divisions represented 42% of VPI+ children. Three school divisions continued to implement other curricula. One was using Houghton Mifflin, another High Scope, and the third a curriculum designed by that school division (representing 43%, 11%, and 5% of VPI+ children, respectively). All divisions reported using Teaching Strategies *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> formative assessment.

### **Supports for Children from Special Populations**

Divisions also had instructional models and practices in place to support children from special populations, such as DLL children, children with challenging behaviors, and children with disabilities.

#### ***Supports for Children Who Are Dual Language Learners***

As discussed in the Enrollment and Access chapter, there was considerable variation in the numbers of Dual Language Learners (DLL) children served across divisions. Five divisions had fewer than 5% of DLL children in their VPI+ classrooms, including one that had enrolled no DLL children because they were enrolled in another school. In the other six divisions, percentages of DLL children ranged from 39% to 88%. The six divisions with a significant number of DLL children differed in terms of the instructional models they used to support DLL students and in the extent to which these supports were available in multiple VPI+ classrooms in the division. All of the VPI+ coordinators (100%) in these six divisions reported that most or all of their VPI+ classrooms supported DLL children by providing instruction in English while also providing some support in the children's home language (Exhibit 7). A couple of VPI+ coordinators from these six divisions reported some limited use of a dual immersion model. Only one coordinator reported that most or all of the VPI+ classrooms provided instruction in English only.

## Exhibit 7. Use of Various Models to Support DLL Children

Instructional Models to Support Dual Language Learners	% of divisions with DLL children where model is used in <b>any</b> VPI+ classes <i>n</i> = 6	% of divisions with DLL children where model is used in <b>most or all</b> VPI+ classes <i>n</i> = 6
<b>Dual immersion</b> (Instruction is provided in both English and a second language; teachers are fluent in both languages; teaching materials are available in both languages)	33%	17%
<b>Home language with English support</b> (Instruction is primarily provided in children’s home language, but there is support for English language acquisition)	0%	0%
<b>English with home language support</b> (Instruction is primarily provided in English, but there is support for the home language)	100%	100%
<b>Use of English-only</b> (Instruction is provided in English only, without home language or cultural support)	17%	17%

**Note.** Findings are based only on the six divisions in which at least 5% of VPI+ children were dual language learners (i.e., Chesterfield, Fairfax, Henrico, Prince William, Richmond, and Winchester).

In addition to using dual language models, VPI+ staff engaged in other strategies to support the learning and development of DLL children. Five of the six VPI+ coordinators (83%) in divisions with a significant number of DLL children reported that teachers in most or all of their VPI+ classrooms receive training on and use culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate instructional strategies to promote English language development and a supportive early learning environment for DLL children (Exhibit 8). In addition, all VPI+ coordinators (100%) in these six divisions reported that most of their VPI+ classroom teachers engage and partner with families to learn about their children’s language background to encourage families to support the children’s home language and bilingual literacy. Half of VPI+ coordinators (50%) in divisions with a significant number of DLL children reported widespread use of bilingual teachers or other staff to support classroom instruction and interactions with families.

## Exhibit 8. Training, Instructional Practices, and Resources to Support DLL Children

Supports for Dual Language Learners	% of divisions where model is used in <b>any</b> VPI+ classes <i>n</i> = 6	% of divisions where model is used in <b>most or all VPI+</b> classes <i>n</i> = 6
<b>Classroom teacher(s) and staff receive professional development and training on specific instructional strategies that are culturally and linguistically appropriate and promote English language development</b>	100%	83%
<b>Instruction is provided in a culturally responsive learning environment where there is continuity between children’s home environment and their early learning environment</b> (e.g., learning materials and toys reflect the languages and cultures of children in the classroom; pictures and art work reflect the diversity of children in the classroom; speakers of children’s home languages are included in classroom activities)	100%	83%
<b>Classroom teacher(s) engage and partner with families</b> (e.g., to learn about the child’s language background in order to provide individualized developmental and learning supports for the child; to provide information about the benefits of bilingualism)	100%	100%
<b>Bilingual classroom teacher(s) or other classroom staff support classroom instruction and interactions with families</b>	83%	50%

**Note.** Findings are based only on the six divisions in which at least 5% of VPI+ children were dual language learners (i.e., Chesterfield, Fairfax, Henrico, Prince William, Richmond, and Winchester).

### *Supports for Children With Challenging Behaviors*

In addition to offering supports for DLL children, the VPI+ coordinators reported offering widespread training and resources for VPI+ teachers focused on supporting children with challenging behaviors. All VPI+ coordinators reported that most or all of the teachers in their VPI+ classrooms receive professional development on providing children with an organized environment, structure and routine, and nurturing and supportive relationships. All but one coordinator reported that all or most teachers receive professional development on instructing children with challenging behaviors (91%). In addition to offering professional development for teachers, all or most VPI+ coordinators further reported that their divisions provide behavioral assessments and referrals (100%), intensive interventions (91%), and mental health services (82%) as needed for children in all or most of their classrooms.

**Exhibit 9. Training, Instructional Practices, and Resources to Support Children with Challenging Behaviors**

<b>Supports for Students with Challenging Behavior</b>	<b>% of divisions where model is used in <i>any</i> classes</b>	<b>% of divisions where model is used in <i>most or all</i> classes</b>
<b>Classroom teacher(s) receive professional development on best practices for providing children with an organized environment, structure and routine, and nurturing and supportive relationships</b> (e.g., actively supporting children’s engagement; promoting the communicative attempts of children with language delays and disabilities; and providing encouragement to promote skill learning and development)	100%	100%
<b>Classroom teacher(s) receive professional development on best practices for instructing children with challenging behavior</b> (i.e., instruction in social skills and behavioral expectations)	100%	91%
<b>Classroom teachers implement systematic and focused approaches aimed at promoting positive behavior and social skills</b> (i.e., anger/impulse control, emotional literacy, friendship skills, interpersonal problem solving)	100%	100%
<b>Children receive behavior assessments and referral services as needed</b>	100%	100%
<b>Children receive individualized intensive interventions as needed</b>	100%	91%
<b>Families and children receive mental health support services as needed</b>	100%	82%

***Supports for Children With Disabilities***

As reported in the Enrollment and Access chapter, approximately 5% of VPI+ children enrolled in fall 2016 were identified as having a disability. Seven (of 11) VPI+ coordinators reported that VPI+ classrooms in their division use some type of inclusion model (full, co-teaching, or push-in) to support children with disabilities. The VPI+ coordinators most often reported the use of a push-in special education resource teacher and least often reported the availability of full inclusion classrooms (Exhibit 10).

### Exhibit 10. Use of Inclusion Models to Support Children with Disabilities

Instructional Models to Support Children with Disabilities	% of divisions where model is used in <i>any</i> classes	% of divisions where model is used in <i>most or all</i> classes
Full inclusion	27.3%	27.3%
Co-teaching or team teaching	36.4%	9.1%
Push-in or Itinerant teacher	63.6%	36.4%
Child with disabilities spends part of the day in a general classroom and part of the day in a special education classroom	36.4%	9.1%

Regardless of the type of inclusion models used in their division’s VPI+ classrooms, many of the VPI+ coordinators reported that their school divisions provided VPI+ classroom teachers with professional development and helped them to make accommodations (i.e., adapt and modify their classroom environments and instruction) to better serve children with disabilities. These supports most often focused on a subset of classrooms rather than all classrooms. The least common support was team planning around a child’s Individualized Education Program goals (Exhibit 11).

### Exhibit 11. Use of Training, Instructional Practices, and Resources to Support Children with Disabilities

Supports for Students with Disabilities	% of divisions where model is used in <i>any</i> VPI+ classes	% of divisions where model is used in <i>most or all</i> VPI+ classes
Teachers receive professional development (PD) focused on quality inclusion strategies for working with children with disabilities	82%	64%
Adaptations are made so every child can access all areas and materials in the indoor/outdoor learning settings	91%	73%
Adaptations are made so every child, including those with significant movement and/or intellectual delays, have meaningful ways to actively participate in activities	91%	64%
Teachers and staff modify and/or use assistive technology to support the participation of students with disabilities	82%	55%
Specialized instruction and related services are modeled and provided by qualified professionals within classroom routines	91%	55%
Team planning time is provided for everyone involved with the child to share information and plan together to carry out Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals	73%	36%

## **Family Engagement**

All 11 school divisions had a family engagement coordinator who worked with families on enrollment, needs assessments, and engagement in program activities and planning. Only four school division coordinators mentioned having formal structures for engagement of families as decision makers. School divisions either built on existing family governance and advisory structures or were trying to establish family decision-making bodies. School divisions reported using several outreach strategies, including some specifically tailored for hard-to-reach families, which are described in the Facilitators and Barriers chapter of this report.

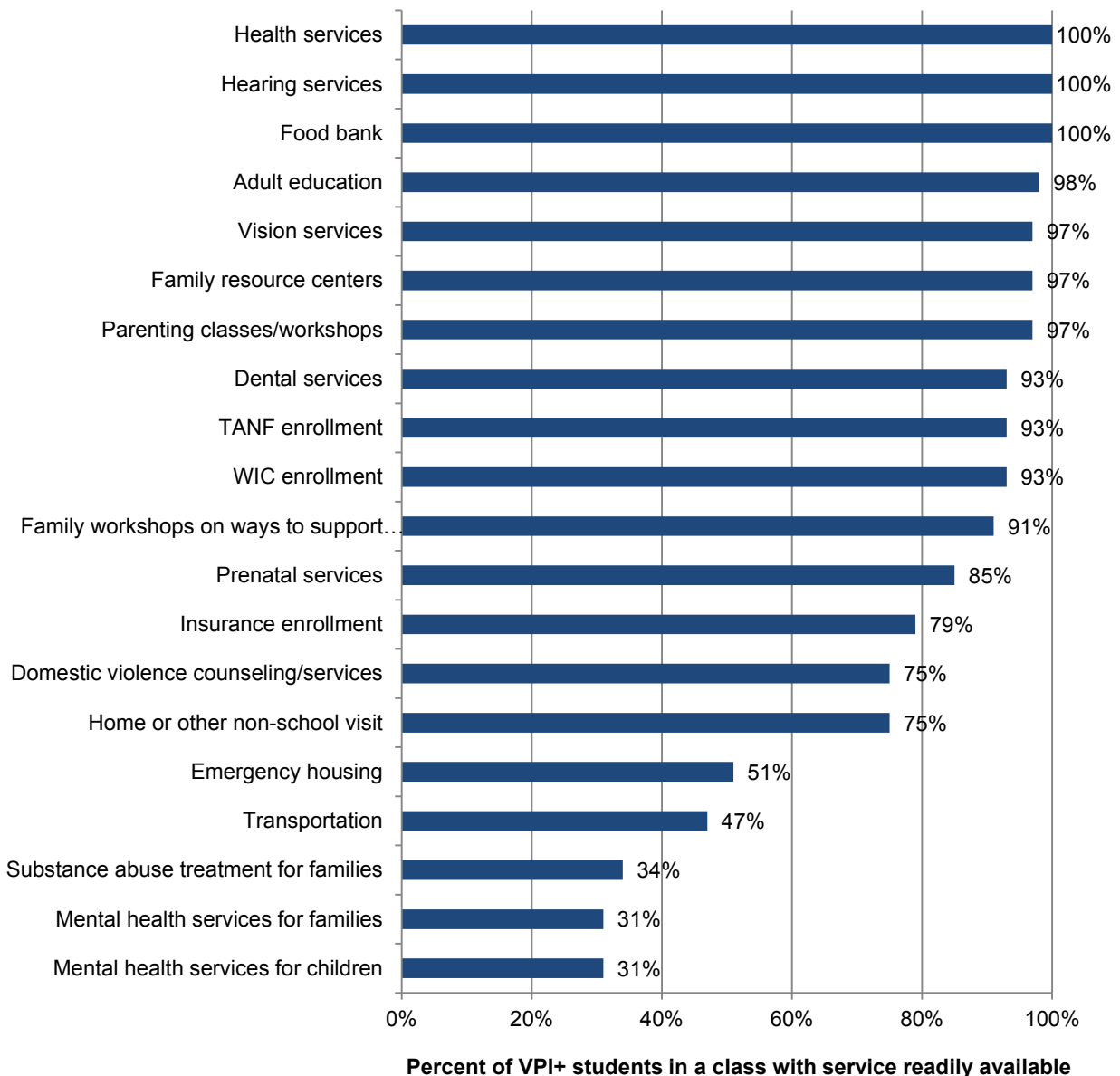
## **Comprehensive Services**

As part of the PDG grant, VPI+ programs receive funding to provide a comprehensive set of services to children and families to increase family engagement in children's learning.

Accordingly, on the fall 2016 survey, VPI+ Coordinators reported that large majorities of children enrolled in VPI+ programs and their families had readily available access to a wide range of local services and supports. Family engagement coordinators and other VPI+ staff advertised these resources widely and worked in collaboration with public and community-based agencies to identify families in need and connect them to available services.

Coordinators reported that families of nearly all VPI+ children (95–100%) had readily available access to health services, hearing services, vision services, food bank services, adult education services, family resource centers, and parenting classes (Exhibit 12). Nearly as many children in VPI+ classrooms and their families (90–94%) had readily available access to dental services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) enrollment, and family workshops on supporting children's learning at home. The majority of children (75–85%) and their families also had readily available access to family prenatal services, insurance enrollment, domestic violence counseling/support, and home or community visits. Children and families in 47–51% of VPI+ classrooms had readily available access to transportation and emergency housing. The services that were least often available were mental health services for children and for families, and substance abuse treatment for families; these services were available for 31–34% of VPI+ participants.

## Exhibit 12. VPI+ Children in Classes with Comprehensive Services Readily Available



### Use of Program Evaluation Data

In fall 2015, Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) observed most VPI+ classrooms using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) and Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) assessments and provided the results to school divisions and teachers. (The 2015–2016 VPI+ Annual Report presented the CLASS® and the ECERS-R ratings of VPI+ program sites in Year 1.) In fall 2016, VECF observed nine additional newly opened VPI+ classrooms. In fall 2016, VECF also worked with VPI+ coaches on how to use

CLASS® and ECERS-R ratings in their work supporting teachers to strengthen their interactions with children and to improve their classroom environments.

All 11 divisions participated in fall 2016 summative assessments. To inform their plans for instruction and professional development, divisions receive results from the fall and spring summative assessments in tailored reports. The fall and spring reports present data on student proficiency and growth in literacy, math (numeracy and counting), social and emotional development (peer social skills, behavior control, and self-regulation skills), approaches to learning (task orientation), and fine and gross motor skills. These division-level reports present assessment results by division, classroom, student demographic groups (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity), and risk factors (i.e., disability status, health status, DLL status, poverty status, low maternal education).



## **4. Professional Development and Technical Assistance**

The Preschool Development Grant has enabled a network of state agencies and partners to train and support local VPI+ leaders. This chapter discusses the broad range of professional development activities, technical assistance, and trainings delivered by state partners to VPI+ division coordinators, coaches, and family engagement coordinators in fall 2016 (August – December).

Virginia state agencies and partners—the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF), and the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) at the University of Virginia—provided technical assistance and trainings for VPI+ coordinators, coaches, and family engagement coordinators. Below we present the content and format of the technical assistance and professional development activities that each partner implemented in Year 2.

### **Virginia Department of Education Technical Assistance and Trainings**

VDOE provided technical assistance to VPI+ coordinators, coaches, and family engagement coordinators on all components of grant implementation. VDOE led several activities from August 2016 to December 2016 to support VPI+ staff in their professional development. These included co-hosting an implementation meeting with CASTL (see section on CASTL technical assistance and trainings), hosting a training for family engagement coordinators, and conducting a webinar.

From September 2016 through December 2016, VDOE staff conducted phone calls and site visits with each school division. These contacts provided opportunities to discuss divisions' progress in engaging at-risk families and children for the VPI+ program, recruitment of children for available VPI+ classroom slots, grant and budget compliance, and plans for Year 2 of VPI+.

In September 2016 VDOE hosted a VPI+ Implementation Meeting on “Learning through Data,” which included the participation of staff from VECF and CASTL. The meeting offered five break-out sessions on topics related to using VPI+ data from Year 1 of the grant. In addition to inviting all VPI+ coordinators, coaches, and family engagement coordinators, VDOE encouraged the attendance of other important school division staff and community partners, such as early childhood special education coordinators, school principals or assistants, and lead VPI+ teachers.

VDOE also hosted a one-day training and networking opportunity for family engagement coordinators in September 2016. This training included sessions on topics such as increasing program participation and parent education, supporting families experiencing homelessness, complying with family engagement grant requirements, sharing successful division family engagement initiatives, and learning about the benefits of community collaboration, home visiting, and support available from Head Start resources.

### **Virginia Early Childhood Foundation Technical Assistance and Trainings**

VECF staff members provided support to VPI+ coordinators and coaches through trainings on the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R). At the September VDOE implementation meeting, VECF staff co-hosted two breakout sessions with CASTL staff on interpreting and using QRIS data to plan improvements to teacher-child interactions and classroom environments. In two divisions, VECF staff also provided in-person trainings for the VPI+ coordinator, coach, and teachers. In one division, the 2-hour training focused on ECERS-R, and in the other division, a 6-hour training provided an introduction to the CLASS®. VPI+ staff in other divisions also consulted with VECF staff by phone as needed.

### **Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning Technical Assistance and Trainings**

VDOE contracted with CASTL at the University of Virginia to provide technical assistance and professional development for VPI+ coordinators, coaches, and family engagement coordinators. Year 2 activities were developed based on observations during division site visits, communication with VPI+ division leadership and coaches, and the formative and summative VPI+ reports developed by SRI in Year 1. CASTL provided technical assistance to school division leaders on planning for Year 2, including using their evaluation data, developing continuous improvement plans, and identifying division-specific coaching priorities. CASTL staff members also provided professional development for coaches. These activities, discussed below, included regional consultation meetings, onsite visits to VPI+ school divisions, and individual and group phone calls.

#### ***School Division Consultation and Technical Assistance from CASTL***

CASTL staff supported school divisions with local planning related to curriculum, professional development, formative assessments, and continuous improvement planning. School division

VPI+ coordinators received 5 hours of consultation from CASTL, which included the following activities:

- One in-person meeting with each school division to review Year 1 data (QRIS, *GOLD*<sup>®</sup>, and evaluation data) and plan for Year 2 improvements using continuous improvement plans (June 2016 to September 2016). Meeting participants included the VPI+ coordinator, VPI+ coaches, the family engagement coordinator, and other division administrators and staff (e.g., superintendents, principals, preschool administrators and teachers) (3 hours)
- One break-out session during the VPI+ Implementation Team Meeting on interpreting and using QRIS data to plan improvements to interactions/environments (September 2016). (1.5 hours)
- One consultation call with each division (the VPI+ coordinator, coach(es), and family coordinator) to discuss progress and challenges with continuous improvement plans, checkpoint data to be shared in Leadership Academies, and feedback about Leadership Academies (November 2016). (1 hour)

### ***Coach Training and Support from CASTL***

CASTL provided professional development to VPI+ coaches, with three objectives:

(1) promoting coaching intensity (contact frequency, use of intensive support strategies), (2) supporting ongoing coaching focus (on effective teacher-child interactions and content area practices aligned with divisions' continuous improvement plans), and (3) building a community of learning among coaches across VPI+ divisions. Coaches received approximately 21 hours of training and support from CASTL staff between August 2016 and December 2016. These activities included:

- A 2-day training (September 2016) focused on introducing new tools to support coaching focus and intensity, including content checklists, environment 1-pagers, and a video clip directory. (14 hours)
- Monthly learning community calls (October 2016–December 2016) focused on math and social-emotional practice (3 hours)
- A call with each school division's coordinator and coaching team (November 2016) to review coaching log data and plan coaching focus and intensity for Year 2 (1 hour).
- Between two and five individual coaching calls for each division's coach or coaches (October 2016–December 2016) to discuss coaching focus and intensity through case

studies and data-based feedback, motivational interviewing strategies, and coaching models for some divisions (on average, 3 hours per division)

### ***Professional Development Resources from CASTL***

Based on Year 1 Implementation findings, CASTL developed several tools to improve the focus and intensity of coaching including 1-page briefs on teaching practices for specific content and observational tools to use when observing certain content domains (e.g., language, literacy, math). CASTL also developed a website ([www.vpiplus.org](http://www.vpiplus.org)) that included a searchable database of professional development resources and videos.

### **Other State Partner Technical Assistance and Trainings**

Other VDOE-endorsed professional development for VPI+ division staff included several trainings that were offered by Teaching Strategies on *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> and *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> formative assessment and by various other state partners on a range of topics.

### ***Training by Teaching Strategies on The Creative Curriculum<sup>®</sup> and GOLD<sup>®</sup>***

Teaching Strategies offered a one-hour webinar for coaches and administrators who are responsible for providing professional development to teachers (November 2016). Topics included the coaching process and strategies for working with teachers at varying levels of implementation.

From July 2016 through December 2016, school division leaders, teachers, and teaching assistants participated in professional development activities offered by Teaching Strategies specific to *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> and *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> formative assessment. These included:

- A 1-day training for VPI+ teachers on linking *GOLDplus*<sup>®</sup> data with *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> to improve fidelity and quality of curriculum implementation (August 2016 and September 2016).
- A 1-day training for coaches on achieving fidelity to *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> (September 2016).
- Two 1-hour webinars to discuss implementation of *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> and *GOLDplus*<sup>®11</sup> in the 2015–2016 school year and to answer questions for the 2016–2017 school year (July 2016).

---

<sup>11</sup> Staff in some VPI+ divisions used Teaching Strategies<sup>®</sup> *GOLDplus*<sup>®</sup> to support integration of the formative assessment with the core curriculum.

- A one-day training for new VPI+ staff (e.g., teachers, assistants, and other division leaders) on linking *The Creative Curriculum*® and assessment data with *GOLDplus*®.
- Two 90-minute breakout sessions at the September 2016 VPI+ Implementation meeting for coaches and coordinators on using Teaching Strategies GOLD® data.

In addition to these statewide opportunities, coordinators had Teaching Strategies conduct additional in-person trainings with staff in their division. Five divisions held in-person trainings, each on one of the following topics:

- Collecting *GOLD*® checkpoint documentation & using reports (November 2016),
- Using *GOLD*® data to plan instruction and communicate children’s progress (December 2016), and
- Teaching the curriculum with fidelity and use of *GOLDplus*® (December 2016).

***Training by Other State Partners and Approved Vendors on Other Topics***

VPI+ staff had access to professional development activities delivered by entities such as The Annie E. Casey Foundation, the University of Virginia, the Maryland Department of Education, and the Preschool Development Grant TA providers. These included a webinar hosted by the Annie E. Casey Foundation on a self-assessment for engaging parents and developing leaders (October 2016); three webinars offered by the University of Virginia on using PALS data (October 2016); and one webinar hosted by the Preschool Development Grant TA provider as part of a Family Engagement Community of Practice on Maryland’s family engagement framework and their new family engagement toolkit (December 2016).

Local school divisions also offered professional development through a procured list of options or through other vendors approved by VDOE. These opportunities included local in-person training sessions, online modules, webinars, and coaching. The grant requires that each VPI+ teacher completes at least 30 hours of professional development focused on early learning environments. Quantitative data on local professional development are not collected until the spring and therefore, not included in this report. Data on professional development trainings will be included in the spring 2017 VPI+ formative evaluation report.

## 5. Local Coaching

To help VPI+ classrooms achieve implementation of all the components of a high-quality preschool program, local VPI+ coaches tried to help teachers:

- Implement evidence-based curricula to target learning in the five essential domains of school readiness (language and literacy, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development),
- Engage in effective teacher-child interactions, and
- Individualize instruction based on formative assessments.

The grant requires that each VPI+ teacher receives up to 40 hours of coaching. Coaches kept an online log of the services they delivered to teaching staff, including the content and intensity (hours) of coaching for individual VPI+ teachers. The coaching log data presented below cover about four months of coaching activities that occurred between mid-August and December 2016. Across the 11 VPI+ divisions, there were 15 VPI+ coaches: 12 coaches worked full time (i.e., 30 hours or more per week), and three worked part time, ranging from 15 to 20 hours per week. On average, each coach was responsible for 19 teachers, but this varied considerably by school division (ranging from 4 to 35 teachers per coach). In most school divisions, VPI+ coaches also provided coaching to teachers in VPI Improved classrooms, but some divisions used other staff to coach teachers in VPI Improved classrooms. **Appendix C** presents data on coaching of teachers in VPI Improved classrooms.

### Coaching Contacts and Intensity

Between mid-August and December 2016 coaches served 94% of teachers in VPI+ classrooms (111 out of 118 teachers). Coaches made a total of 922 contacts with teachers in VPI+ classrooms, averaging 7.8 contacts per teacher (approximately 2 contacts per month per teacher) during the 4-month period.<sup>12</sup>

On average, each VPI+ teacher received 13.5 hours of support from their coach through individual coaching and group professional development during the 4-month window (3.4 hours a month).<sup>13</sup> Exhibit 13 presents data on the amount of time spent during each teacher contact.

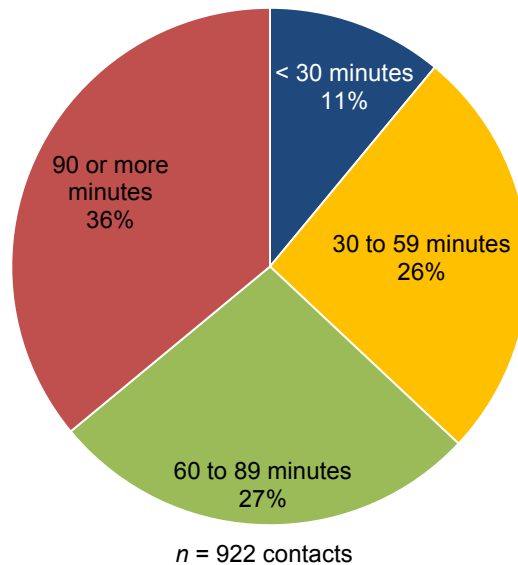
---

<sup>12</sup> The calculation of the average number of coaching contacts across divisions includes seven VPI+ teachers who received no coaching between mid-August and December 2016.

<sup>13</sup> The calculation of the average number of coaching hours across divisions includes seven VPI+ teachers who received no coaching between mid-August and December 2016.

Sessions most often lasted more than 90 minutes (36%). Approximately one-quarter of contacts lasted between 60 and 89 minutes (27%), and one-quarter of contacts lasted between 30 and 59 minutes (26%). Very few sessions lasted less than 30 minutes (11%).

**Exhibit 13. Percent of Coaching Contacts with VPI+ Teachers by Length of Contact**

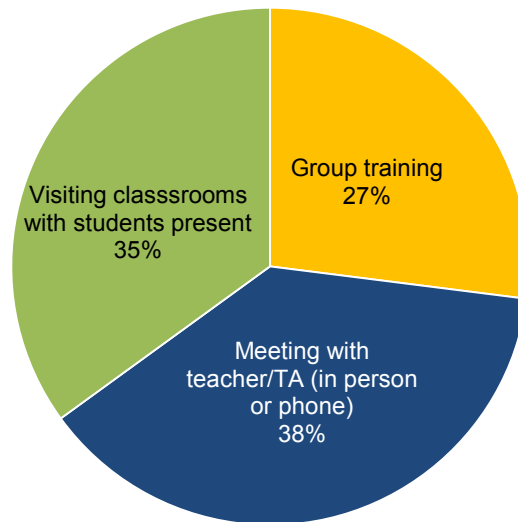


Overall, teachers who were new to VPI+ in Year 2 received more intensive coaching than returning VPI+ teachers. Between mid-August and December 2016, the 100 returning VPI+ teachers received an average of 7.3 coaching contacts and the 18 new VPI+ teachers received an average of 10.5 contacts. Likewise, returning teachers received an average of 12.4 hours of coaching, compared with 20.0 hours for new VPI+ teachers.

Coaches supported VPI+ teachers through three types of contacts: (1) visiting the classroom with students present, (2) private coaching in person or by phone (without students present), and (3) facilitated group trainings. For the purpose of this report, a coach contact is considered one session with a particular teacher using one of these three coaching formats.

Exhibit 14 shows the percentage of coaching contacts offered by format. Nearly three-fourths (73%) of contacts involved coaching of individual VPI+ teachers, either through private meetings (in person or by phone) (38% of contacts) or during direction instruction to students (35%). Slightly more than one-quarter (27%) of coaching contacts with VPI+ teachers involved group trainings.

**Exhibit 14. Percent of Coaching Contacts with VPI+ Teachers by Type of Contact**



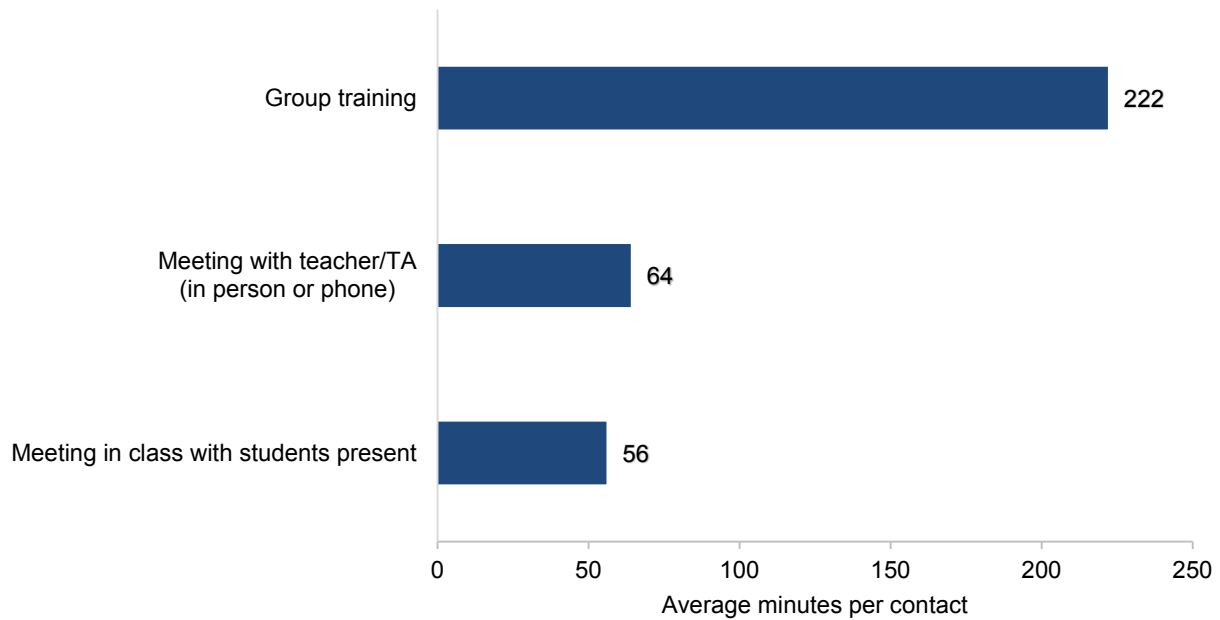
*n* = 922 contacts

Exhibit 15 shows that private coaching sessions generally lasted around an hour, and on average, sessions where students were present were slightly shorter than sessions without students present. Individualized coaching sessions were more frequent than group trainings, but group trainings lasted about 3.5 times as long (222 minutes on average versus 64 minutes when students were not present and 56 minutes when students were present).



### Exhibit 15. Average Length of Contact (Minutes) with VPI+ Teacher by Type of Contact

*n* = 922 contacts

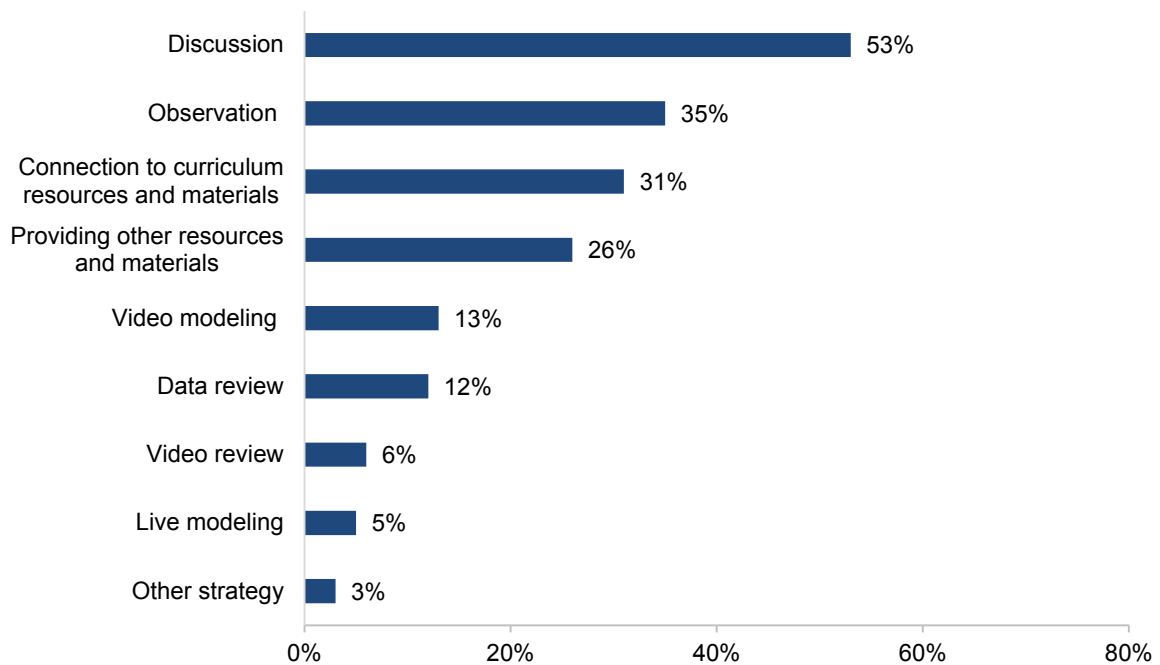


### Coaching Strategies

Coaches used a variety of strategies when working individually (with or without students present) with teachers (Exhibit 16). More than half of the time, coaches engaged teachers in discussion (53% of individual contacts with teachers), and coaches made observations in more than a third (35%) of contacts. Coaches worked on making connections to curriculum resources and materials in around 31% of contacts, and they provided materials and resources in about 26% of their contacts with teachers. Around 13% of contacts included video modeling, and coaches and teachers spent time reviewing data in 12% of contacts. Strategies used less frequently included video review (6% of contacts) and live modeling (5%).

## Exhibit 16. Coaching Strategies for Individual Coaching Contacts with VPI+ Teachers

*n* = 673 individual contacts

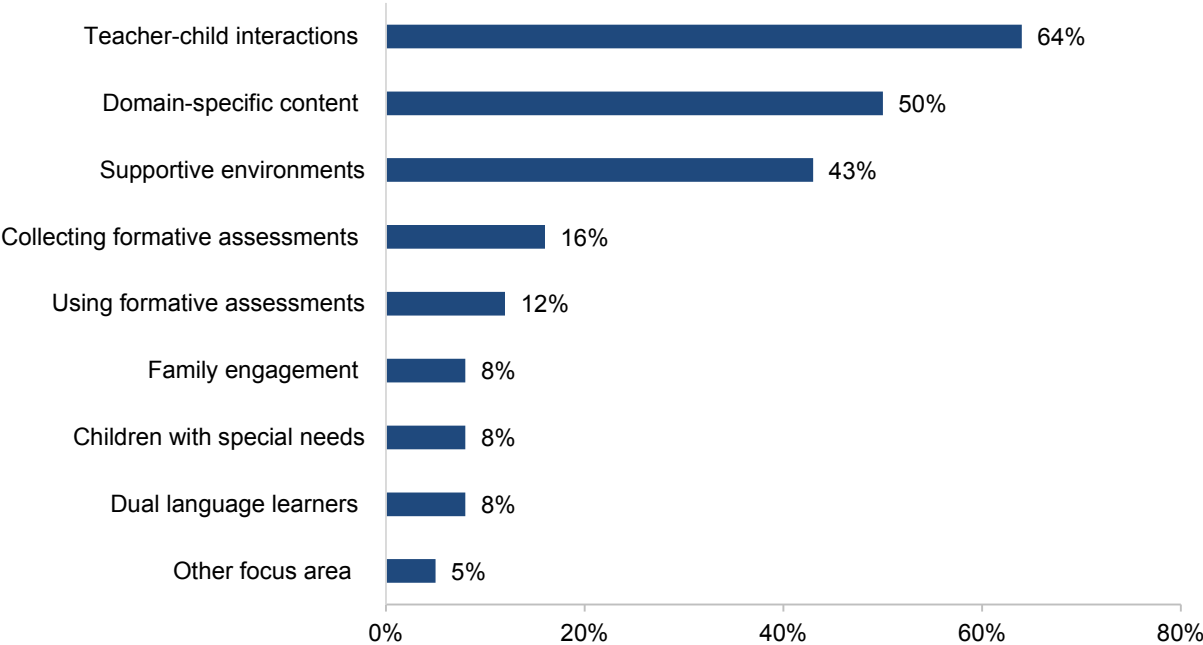


### Coaching Focus

Coaches addressed a variety of focus areas during individual coaching and group trainings with teachers (Exhibit 17), and coaches often addressed more than one focus area during a single contact. Coaches most often focused on teacher-child interactions during their contacts with VPI+ teachers (64% of contacts), and they addressed domain-specific topics (i.e., the five essential domains of school readiness) in one-half of contacts (50%). Coaches also frequently addressed supportive environments with VPI+ teachers (43% of contacts). Coaches less frequently emphasized the collection or use of formative assessments (16% and 12%), time spent on family engagement (8% of contacts), and strategies for working with dual language learners (8%) and children with special needs (8%).

**Exhibit 17. Percentage of Individual Coaching and Group Training Contacts with VPI+ Teachers by Focus Area**

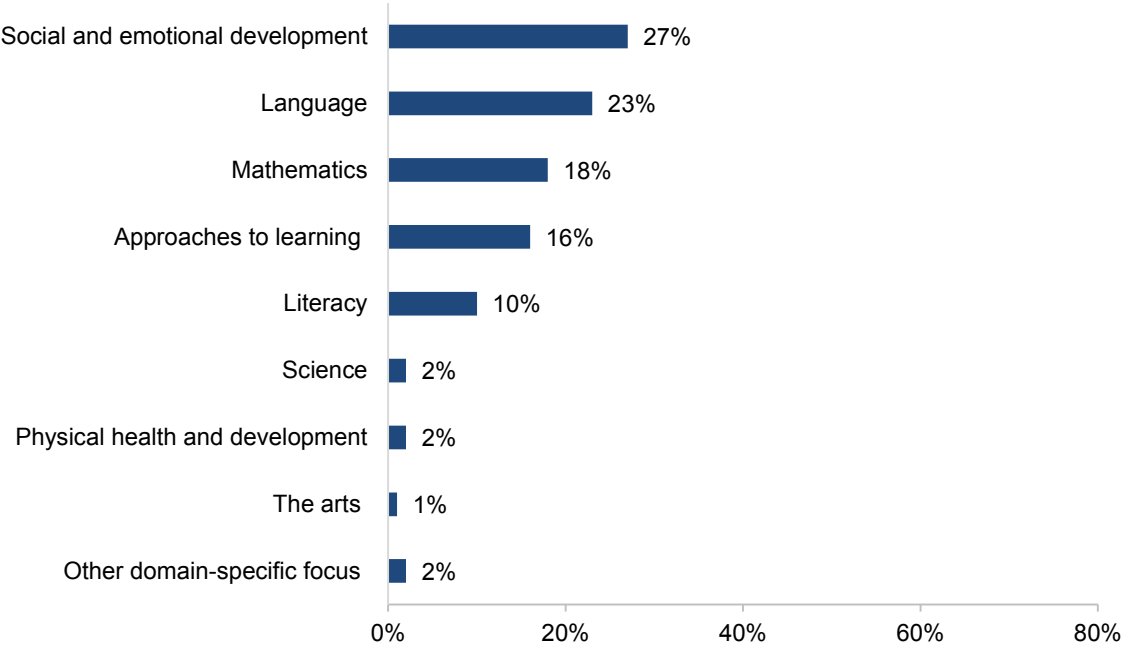
*n* = 922 contacts



As mentioned above, half of coaching contacts included support around a domain focus area. Exhibit 18 provides additional detail on the domain-specific focus areas, showing the percentage of coaching contacts that incorporated each of the five essential domains of school readiness. Coaches most often addressed social and emotional development (27%), followed by language (23%), and mathematics (18%). Coaches also focused on approaches to learning (16%) and literacy (10%). Science, the arts, and physical health and development received the least emphasis, included in only 1–2% of contacts with VPI+ teachers.

**Exhibit 18. Percentage of Individual Coaching and Group Training Contacts with VPI+ Teachers Incorporating Domain-Specific Focus Areas**

*n* = 922 contacts



## 6. Facilitators and Barriers

VPI+ coordinators reflected on the factors that helped facilitate the implementation of the program, as well as factors that made implementation more difficult, through a survey conducted in November 2016 and phone interviews conducted in December 2016. Overall, VPI+ coordinators reported that several aspects of the VPI+ grant were going well and reported facing fewer barriers in fall 2016 (their second year) than they did in fall 2015 (when the VPI+ program launched). This section describes the lessons learned and shared by the 11 VPI+ coordinators about the second year of implementation of VPI+ in their school divisions.

### Facilitators and Barriers Overall

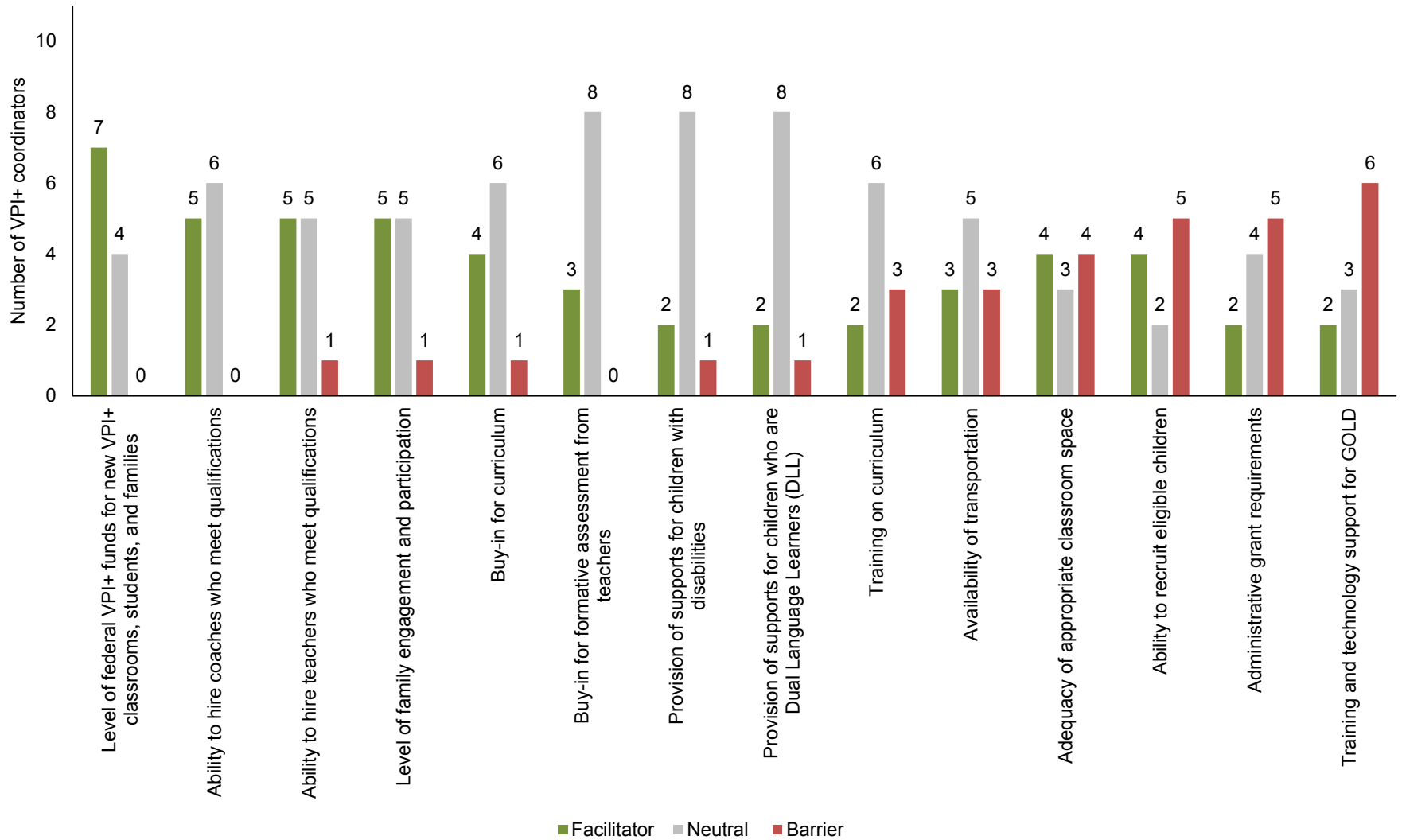
The VPI+ coordinator survey asked coordinators whether various features of the VPI+ grant served as facilitators or barriers to program implementation. Exhibit 19 summarizes the responses.

VPI+ coordinators identified grant funding, availability of high-quality teaching and coaching staff, and family engagement as important facilitators to successful program implementation. Most VPI+ coordinators rated the level of federal VPI+ funds for new VPI+ classrooms as a facilitator to program implementation, and almost half of the VPI+ coordinators reported that divisions' ability to hire qualified VPI+ teachers and coaches also was beneficial. Several coordinators further perceived VPI+ families' level of engagement as facilitating implementation of the VPI+ program.

In contrast, VPI+ coordinators most often cited grant administrative requirements, training and technology support for *GOLD*<sup>®</sup>, and difficulties with enrolling eligible children as the biggest barriers to successful program implementation. A few coordinators also reported difficulties around the availability of transportation, appropriate classroom space, and training on the curriculum.

In general, coordinators reported that programmatic factors, such as buy-in for both the core curriculum and formative assessment and supports for DLL children and children with disabilities, were neutral factors to program success, and almost none saw these as barriers.

**Exhibit 19. Facilitators and Barriers to VPI+ Implementation**



Data from the coordinator interviews, presented below, substantiate these survey findings. Further, the coordinator interviews provide insights into the specific ways in which these and other factors supported and hindered enrollment, program implementation, and professional development in the 11 VPI+ school divisions.

## **Enrollment and Access**

### ***Recruitment Strategies***

**VPI+ coordinators reported using a range of advertising and in-person recruitment and enrollment strategies and that these efforts, particularly word of mouth recruiting, resulted in most programs being enrolled to capacity.** VPI+ coordinators reported advertising their programs through media outlets (i.e., television, radio, and newspapers) and websites, posting informational flyers in community spaces, having schools send packets to families of all students or mailing postcards to those receiving free and reduced-price lunch. A couple of VPI+ coordinators also reported that staff participated in community events or school celebrations to share information about the program with prospective families. About half of VPI+ coordinators discussed word of mouth endorsements from parents whose children participated in last year's program as an integral recruitment strategy. One VPI+ coordinator even mentioned having parents whose children had attended VPI+ last year serve as ambassadors at registration. Although most VPI+ coordinators said that their approach to recruitment was similar to last year's approach, two VPI+ coordinators reported putting more effort into recruitment this year than last; new recruitment strategies included placing advertisements on buses and billboards, posting flyers at local businesses, and publishing newspaper articles. VPI+ staff also took steps to make the enrollment process more efficient. For example, three coordinators reported having online registration, two reported implementing a new single point of entry process for enrollment, and four reported that they deliberately started the process early in the year. Six VPI+ coordinators reported that their VPI+ program was fully enrolled as a result of these enrollment efforts, and four VPI+ coordinators mentioned having a wait list. One division had fully enrolled its school-based sites but had not fully enrolled a community-based site, and another division had three available slots at the time of the coordinator interview. The VPI+ coordinators from divisions that did *not* reach full enrollment indicated that enrollment was down division-wide or in particular geographic regions in the division, that lack of transportation was a deterrent to enrollment, and that several enrolled students did not ultimately attend the program. One coordinator reported that the VPI+

classrooms were not full because Head Start had enrolled several children who were eligible for VPI+.

**Divisions collaborated with staff from local agencies and schools and utilized family engagement coordinators to identify and recruit families from hard-to-reach populations, such as families who spoke languages other than English and those experiencing homelessness, and a few VPI+ coordinators reported using informational materials that were targeted for particular populations.** Four VPI+ coordinators mentioned that family engagement coordinators played a role in recruiting families from special populations: in two divisions, family engagement coordinators facilitated contact with homeless shelters and with bilingual populations, and in one division, the family engagement coordinator made door-to-door visits with prospective families. About half of VPI+ coordinators further discussed collaborations with staff from other agencies that had direct access to prospective VPI+ families from hard-to-reach populations. For example, a few VPI+ coordinators mentioned partnering with staff from social services departments, and others discussed having relationships with staff at a community mental health center, Head Start, and homeless assistance organizations and shelters. In some cases, these associates recruited families directly for VPI+. For example, three VPI+ coordinators mentioned having contacts in various agencies who helped to recruit for VPI+ programs during door-to-door visits with hard-to-reach families (e.g., in mobile home sites and communities having high concentrations of Latino families). In other cases, staff from other agencies referred specific families to VPI+ staff. A few VPI+ coordinators also reported on resources in local schools that helped to drive these efforts, including having front office staff who were familiar with the VPI+ program and a school-based welcome center for DLL families. Two VPI+ coordinators discussed the contributions of bilingual school staff (including some from a local high school) who spoke to families in their homes about the VPI+ program. Three VPI+ coordinators further discussed having written materials targeted for special populations (e.g., Spanish-speaking families, children with disabilities), and one VPI+ coordinator reported that posting these brochures in clinics and doctors' offices had been more effective than relying on the division's Child Find department that provides screenings and/or evaluations for children ages 2 to 5 years suspected of having a developmental delay or disability.

### ***Barriers to Full Enrollment***

Almost half of coordinators reported on the VPI+ coordinator survey that their ability to recruit eligible children was a barrier to implementation. Coordinators mentioned several barriers to



enrollment, including documentation requirements, school division zoning policies, grant requirements, and gaps in transportation services.

**VPI+ coordinators reported that some families had difficulty accessing or completing the documentation required for enrollment and that divisions tried to support families by communicating about firm deadlines, sending paperwork directly to families, and notifying families about community resources that could support their applications.** For example, one VPI+ coordinator discussed difficulties in getting families to complete the needed paperwork during the previous year's enrollment process, despite the division offering families a grace period. In response, the division eliminated the grace period in Year 2 and contacted families with incomplete paperwork during the five days prior to the start of school, emphasizing children with incomplete paperwork could not attend; this resulted in all enrolled children having complete paperwork on the first day of school. Another VPI+ coordinator said that the VPI+ staff sent enrollment paperwork directly to families who were unable to get to the registration site, noting a lack of public transportation for parents to use in this rural division. Two VPI+ coordinators relayed that families often lacked needed documentation, such as birth certificates and immunization records, to complete the enrollment process. In one division, VPI+ staff helped families identify agencies from which they could obtain birth certificates and informed them of health fairs that could provide vaccinations and associated paperwork before the beginning of the school year.

**Five coordinators cited various grant and division requirements as having been a barrier to full program enrollment.** A couple of VPI+ coordinators reported having been unaware of grant requirements at the time of the grant award that eventually limited their ability to enroll some families. One VPI+ coordinator reported that division staff were not aware of the grant's income eligibility criteria (200% of the federal poverty level) at the time of the grant award, indicating that this requirement excluded children with other important risk factors (e.g., having special needs and coming from a DLL family) and commented that other grants have less stringent income requirements for children with disabilities. Another VPI+ coordinator reported having been unaware, until after arranging for VPI+ programming in several churches, that these facilities could not be used for VPI+ programming.<sup>14</sup> This resulted in the division being unable to establish a presence in a geographic area with a large number of families VPI+ staff had hoped to reach. Another VPI+ coordinator discussed how the requirement to fill Head Start

---

<sup>14</sup> Article IV, Section 16 of the Code of Virginia prohibits the General Assembly from making appropriations of public funds to any church or sectarian society.

and other VPI programs before filling VPI+ classrooms resulted in children already enrolled in VPI+ having to switch programs when slots became available in other programs. Finally, two VPI+ coordinators discussed limitations around division zoning. One division prohibited the use of waivers for students to attend out-of-zone schools, which resulted in having waitlists for some VPI+ sites and unfilled slots in others.

**A few VPI+ coordinators reported issues with providing transportation to VPI+ preschools, including difficulty securing buses and drivers and concerns about safety; staff from these divisions were attempting to negotiate transportation contracts.** Three VPI+ coordinators discussed having ongoing issues related to providing transportation for children in VPI+ programs. In one division, staff had been working to obtain additional buses to meet demand and the VPI+ coordinator was hopeful that VPI+ attendance and participation would consequently improve. However, at the time of the interview, the wait time for securing more buses was estimated to be six to eight months. All three VPI+ coordinators discussed challenges with being able to hire qualified bus drivers, and, in one division, bus monitors. One coordinator suggested that if the division was able to offer higher salaries it might be more successful in recruiting more drivers. In one division, buses were reserved for students living farther away from their schools. For children and families living closer, this meant needing to walk to school on streets with no sidewalks. In response, division staff had tried unsuccessfully to contract for more buses for these students and at the time of the interview, were exploring other options, including the use of public transportation.

**Most VPI+ coordinators reported that student mobility was not a significant issue for maintaining full enrollment and that they used waitlists to fill vacated slots, but three VPI+ coordinators reported high student mobility in their divisions, some of which related to family poverty or military status.** For students whose families relocated within a division, continued VPI+ program participation depended on the presence of a program in the new neighborhood, an available slot, and available transportation. One VPI+ coordinator reported that approximately 15 percent of enrolled students had left a program that was full at the beginning of the school year and suggested that a lack of transportation had made attendance unfeasible for some families. Another VPI+ coordinator reported significant student mobility in a division having high concentrations of military families and families living in poverty.

## Program Implementation

### *Grant Funding and Administrative Requirements*

**A few VPI+ coordinators reported that the level of federal funding received for VPI+ was integral to providing the materials, training, and other resources necessary for successful implementation.** Some VPI+ coordinators reported in interviews that the level of VPI+ funding was instrumental in divisions being able to secure high-quality materials, professional development, and comprehensive services for families, as well as being able to offer competitive salaries for teachers. One coordinator commented, “We couldn't do it without the funds,” and another suggested that the program's well-funded services and activities accounted for high parent involvement (e.g., well-attended PTA meetings). Only one coordinator, whose division was in a high-cost area, reported in an interview that VPI+ salaries were not high enough to recruit qualified staff. VPI+ funding also enabled 5 divisions to hire full-time VPI+ coordinators to oversee implementation, and in the other 6 divisions coordinators held dual roles supporting the program.

**Three coordinators reported that meeting the grant's administrative requirements could be time-consuming and inefficient, while two coordinators reported that these requirements facilitated implementation; one coordinator reported that the grant criteria forced divisions to make decisions that ensured high-quality programming.** Two coordinators reported that there was more paperwork associated with the VPI+ program than with other grants, with one reporting that having to report to three entities (i.e., VDOE, CASTL, and SRI) could be burdensome and another relaying that it was difficult to keep all the requests from these organizations straight. Two VPI+ coordinators further noted that some administrative requirements for the program were duplicative with the requirements of other programs, but the associated tasks still had to be done separately. For example, in one division, the VPI+ and Head Start implementation plans were very similar because the programs were designed to be similar, but the division had to submit separate plans and reports for each program. One full-time VPI+ coordinator reported that the criteria and standards imposed by the VPI+ grant enabled divisions to enforce non-negotiable best practices for the program.

### *Administrative Support for VPI+ Programs*

**Coordinators reported that VPI+ administrators and school administrators demonstrated support for the VPI+ program through effective communication, flexibility, and promotion of positive staff relationships.** About half of the coordinators mentioned having support from superintendents, two discussing the superintendent's commitment to sustaining the VPI+

program. One coordinator reported that division administrators had effectively communicated the importance of the program to school principals and ensured that needed classroom materials and professional development were available. In Year 1 interviews, VPI+ coordinators expressed some uncertainty about principals' role in VPI+ implementation, but in Year 2, VPI+ coordinators voiced greater involvement and support from principals. For example, a couple of coordinators reported that school principals had been flexible with scheduling in order to ensure that VPI+ staff could receive professional development. In addition to support from principals, a few VPI+ coordinators reported support from all staff at their school sites. They described having positive working relationships among school and VPI+ staff, with one noting that VPI+ and school staff functioned as "one universal team" that respected and valued one another.

### ***Hiring High Quality Staff***

**Almost half of VPI+ coordinators reported that the credentials and competency of coaches and teachers facilitated effective program implementation, but one coordinator expressed concern about the division's ability to recruit high-quality staff.** A few coordinators elaborated on their ability to hire qualified staff. For example, one VPI+ coordinator discussed the benefits of hiring a coach who was both a former teacher and a reading specialist, describing her as enthusiastic, experienced, and "amazing." Another VPI+ coordinator reported that the VPI+ coach was particularly valuable because no other programs in the division had a dedicated, onsite position for promoting and supporting teachers' professional development. Another VPI+ coordinator described the VPI+ teachers as being "revered and respected" in the district, emphasizing the critical importance of regarding preschool teachers as professional educators. One VPI+ coordinator further reported that the grant funding enabled the division to pay competitive salaries to recruit qualified teachers. However, one coordinator, in a division with a high cost of living, reported that the division was not able to offer competitive salaries to attract high-quality teachers.

### ***Implementation of the Core Curriculum***

**Most VPI+ coordinators in the eight divisions using *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> reported satisfaction with its content, and a few coordinators commented on its positive effects on teaching and collaboration, as well as the benefits of being able to integrate the curriculum with student formative assessment data.** Four VPI+ coordinators expressed appreciation for the curriculum's thematic units and hands-on activities, which included work in small groups and opportunities for students and teachers to be mobile in the classroom. One VPI+ coordinator further reported that the curricular activities promoted student problem solving

and engagement. The benefits extended to teaching practices, as well, with two VPI+ coordinators expressing that the curriculum's flexibility promoted teacher autonomy and deemphasized rote teaching and learning. One coordinator further reported observing more positive interactions among adults and between adults and children in VPI+ classrooms than in programs using other curricula. Two VPI+ coordinators further reported that being able to assess children's progress on *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> using *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> data was a benefit.

**Although most VPI+ coordinators reported high satisfaction with the core curriculum, a couple coordinators discussed challenges with teacher buy-in, particularly in regard to expectations around academic rigor.** Two VPI+ coordinators reported initial resistance to the curriculum from some teachers, mentioning a mismatch between the curriculum and district expectations for kindergarten readiness (i.e., that the curriculum did not offer learning objectives and activities with the level of academic rigor desired by those divisions). Another coordinator reported that sometimes it was challenging for teachers to identify the portions of the curriculum that are most relevant for their class. However, these VPI+ coordinators indicated that over time these concerns were subsiding.

**Nearly all VPI+ coordinators reported that coaches were monitoring the fidelity of teachers' curriculum implementation with some regularity, but coordinators did not discuss whether or not teachers were implementing the curriculum as intended.** Most (9 of 11) VPI+ coordinators reported the use of regular fidelity checks to monitor curriculum implementation. VPI+ coordinators from seven of the eight divisions implementing *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> reported that coaches were using *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> checklists and manual to monitor curriculum implementation. (The eighth coordinator was unsure if this was happening.) One division implementing *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> also used videos, and another used additional district-level checklists to monitor curriculum implementation. Coordinators from two of the three divisions using other curricula reported that coaches monitored curriculum implementation, one through review of lesson plans, classroom observations, and discussions and the other by analyzing child-level data that were collected three times annually; the other VPI+ coordinator reported that there was no formal monitoring of implementation. Most VPI+ coordinators reported that coaches oversaw the fidelity checks, and one coordinator reported that the lead teacher performed this task. Most VPI+ coordinators reported that implementation monitoring occurred at least once a month, and a few coordinators reported less frequent monitoring (e.g., every other month, fall and spring as needed). A couple of coordinators discussed that teachers were receptive to feedback on ways to improve instruction, but none

discussed the extent to which teachers were implementing the curriculum with fidelity. One VPI+ coordinator from a division using *The Creative Curriculum*<sup>®</sup> reported that teachers' action plans now included suggestions gleaned from the fidelity checklists.

### ***Implementation of the GOLD<sup>®</sup> Formative Assessment***

**New and returning VPI+ teachers had access to online and face-to-face trainings on GOLD<sup>®</sup>, as well as coaching support on the use of formative assessment data.** Seven VPI+ coordinators reported that all teachers completed the online GOLD<sup>®</sup> training, and the other coordinators reported that they encouraged teachers to complete the year's new online training modules. Seven VPI+ coordinators also reported that the division had hosted face-to-face trainings for teachers on GOLD<sup>®</sup>. In a couple of divisions, these trainings explicitly addressed local needs. For example, one coordinator reported that a Teaching Strategies consultant met individually with each VPI+ teacher. In two divisions, new teachers received more intensive training than experienced teachers: in one division, new teachers spent more time in one-on-one training with a Teaching Strategies consultant than returning teachers, and in another division, new teachers completed the online modules with their coach, whereas returning teachers did so independently. VPI+ coordinators further reported that following these training activities, coaches supported teachers in using GOLD<sup>®</sup> data for its intended purposes. For example, a few VPI+ coordinators reported that coaches helped teachers to use data when creating action plans and setting professional development goals. One coordinator reported that, as a result of the professional development around GOLD<sup>®</sup>, teachers felt confident about implementing the assessment and found it to be useful.

**More than half of the VPI+ coordinators reported encountering barriers to the implementation of GOLD<sup>®</sup>, particularly with technology use.** Six VPI+ coordinators reported in the coordinator survey that training and technology support for GOLD<sup>®</sup> had been a barrier to implementation. In interviews, coordinators primarily mentioned issues with GOLD<sup>®</sup> technology rather than training. Difficulties included getting into the system and uploading data. A few coordinators reported using tablets in conjunction with GOLDplus<sup>®</sup>, and there were differing experiences with this technology. In a couple of divisions, coordinators reported that teachers effectively integrated GOLDplus<sup>®</sup> data with the curriculum, while in a couple other divisions, there were technical glitches that seemed to be related to the use of a certain type of tablet. One VPI+ coordinator further reported that contractual issues prevented the division from implementing GOLD<sup>®</sup> until November and December, and that initially only ten classrooms had access. Other barriers included the time needed for teachers to collect and enter assessment

data, and making sure that teachers actually use the available data. Another VPI+ coordinator reported that there are so many available reports, it can be hard to know which report best serves a given purpose.

**All VPI+ coordinators reported that teachers were using *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> assessment data to inform instructional activities, to identify individual children who are not making progress, and to communicate with parents about their children’s progress.** All VPI+ coordinators reported that teachers in their division used results from the *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> assessment to inform their instructional activities. This included using *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> data to inform teaching strategies, to identify specific areas where the class is not making progress and adjust whole-class instruction accordingly, and to organize students into small groups by ability. About half of the VPI+ coordinators further reported that teachers used the data to plan for individual children’s needs. For example, one VPI+ coordinator reported that teachers used *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> data when individual children needed remedial instruction or tutoring and suggested that teachers should consider *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> data when developing any kind of individualized student plan. Another VPI+ coordinator reported encouraging teachers to track the social-emotional data of children demonstrating challenging behavior. Finally, VPI+ coordinators reported on specific expectations of teachers to use *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> data in their communications with parents. Four VPI+ coordinators reported that teachers shared the *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> parent report at conferences and parent meetings (including home visits), and two mentioned teachers sharing *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> data in conjunction with progress reports (in one division, the information was available in English and Spanish) or as an “unofficial report card.” A few VPI+ coordinators also discussed teachers’ efforts to ensure that parents fully understood the data being shared. One VPI+ coordinator reported that teachers sent parents a letter explaining how to interpret the accompanying *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> report, noting that “all the colors and numbers can be confusing.”

### ***Use of Evaluation Data***

**Most VPI+ coordinators shared division-specific findings from the VPI+ evaluation with VPI+ staff and some reported using these data to inform coaching and goal setting and to identify professional development needs.** Most coordinators reported reviewing and discussing available evaluation data with administrative VPI+ staff. Two coordinators reported examining the evaluation data in conjunction with division data from the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) preschool assessment. In two divisions, coordinators shared evaluation findings with coaches who then shared the findings with teachers, and in two other divisions, coordinators shared evaluation findings directly with teachers during training

sessions. A few coordinators reported using the evaluation findings to identify professional development needs (mainly in terms of coaching), and two reported that evaluation data had informed planning and goal setting for next year at the program level and for individual teachers. One coordinator reported that evaluation data drove the decision to increase the amount of time teachers spend on STEM activities across the division's VPI+ programs. One coordinator condensed the evaluation findings for the division into a PowerPoint summary presentation to inform discussions with teachers, highlighting successes and areas of improvement and using evaluation results to inform continuous improvement plans. In one division, the VPI+ coordinator discussed the VPI+ evaluation data with school administrative staff and teachers who were not familiar with the goals, expectations, and breadth of their VPI+ program.

### ***Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviors***

**Divisions supported teachers in working with children with challenging behaviors by adopting curricula or frameworks to support children's positive social-emotional development, offering trainings on the topic, and providing access to behavioral specialists.** Five of the VPI+ coordinators reported that their division had adopted and trained teachers on a curriculum or framework to promote positive behaviors in the classroom, such as the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children, Promoting Alternative Thinking Systems (PATHS), AI's Pals, HighScope, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Seven coordinators also reported that their division had provided professional development that specifically addressed challenging behavior, such as webinars on creating action plans for students with challenging behaviors, hiring specialists to do in-person trainings, and dedicating time in staff development meetings to discuss issues related to social-emotional development. In addition, seven VPI+ coordinators reported that teachers had access to behavioral specialists who could address individual behavioral issues and whole-class behavior management. These professionals included guidance counselors, school psychologists, social workers, a play therapist, and an early childhood special education teacher. Three VPI+ coordinators reported that the family engagement specialist assisted with behavioral issues, and coaches in two divisions also had relevant expertise (i.e., in autism and behavioral issues). Another VPI+ coordinator reported that the division had a formal "Request for Assistance Process" that required teachers to track challenging behaviors and then connect them with behavioral specialists as needed.

**Most VPI+ coordinators reported having informal policies and procedures to address challenging behaviors, but only two VPI+ coordinators reported having a documented**



**policy and only one division tracked disciplinary actions beyond recording associated absences.** Two VPI+ coordinators reported having an explicit written policy regarding procedures for addressing behavioral challenges. A third coordinator reported that there was information about strategies for handling challenging behaviors in a handbook but no official school board policy on the topic. Five coordinators reported that their divisions do not expel preschool children under any circumstance, and the other coordinators emphasized that removing a child from preschool would be a last resort, typically only when child or adult safety is compromised.<sup>15</sup> However, seven VPI+ coordinators, including some from divisions that do not expel students, did mention having children with challenging behaviors attend a shortened school day or take a brief school absence (which could be considered a suspension), or having parents attend school with their children until a behavioral plan is in place. Coordinators reported following various procedures to document the needs of children with challenging behaviors and identify appropriate supports and actions. These procedures included use of incident report forms, working with families to identify root causes of behavior, consulting a child study team, and consulting experts from other agencies. One VPI+ coordinator reported that the division's student accountability system includes records of student suspensions and half-day attendance, but no other coordinators reported explicitly tracking disciplinary actions in data systems. In one division, teachers documented behavioral issues as part of the process for requesting assistance with challenging behavior.

### ***Comprehensive Services and Family Engagement***

**VPI+ coordinators reported on many successful family engagement strategies and activities and discussed having improved outreach to families and visibility in the community during the second year of the grant.** Coordinators reported on numerous events and strategies that allowed for family engagement staff to share information about local resources and enabled families to connect with each other. For example, VPI+ coordinators discussed hosting back-to-school and Halloween events, a parent-child reading program at school, and a parent fair. Division staff also shared information with parents through parent meetings, newsletters, and bilingual text messages. A couple of coordinators spoke about the leadership and effectiveness of their family engagement coordinator in building rapport with reticent families during home visits and connecting families with needed services outside of the school system. One VPI+ coordinator from a division with limited public transportation reported

---

<sup>15</sup> One coordinator did not provide any information regarding its division's policies and supports for children with challenging behaviors.

that the family engagement coordinator had garnered significant parent participation by offering the same events at multiple locations. Following efforts to reach and engage parents, one coordinator reported, parent attendance increased at trainings and workshops sponsored by VPI+; these included classes on budgeting, parenting, and a conscious discipline class attended by more than 100 parents.

**Despite improved parent participation in many VPI+ sponsored activities across divisions, some VPI+ coordinators reported in interviews that engaging families continued to be a challenge, and a few VPI+ coordinators reported on logistical and infrastructural barriers to effective family engagement.** Two VPI+ coordinators reported significant challenges with getting families to participate in activities and use available resources. One VPI+ coordinator further described challenges in engaging families who were fearful of home visitors and visiting schools. Another coordinator suggested that their division needs to host more activities in community settings and fewer activities in schools in the future. Other issues relayed by VPI+ coordinators included families' resistance to following up on mental health care referrals and poor attendance at events to address English language acquisition, despite parents' requests for those supports. One VPI+ coordinator discussed difficulties in scheduling home visits that were supposed to occur before school started and another discussed challenges with finding space for a proposed family resource center. One VPI+ coordinator reported that there was some concern that family engagement staff were not fully integrated into the preschool team.

**Five VPI+ coordinators reported including parents in policy committees, and five coordinators reported belonging to consortia of service agencies that focus on improving family access to services.** Two coordinators reported having parent advisory committees that comprised VPI+ representatives only; the work of these committees included engaging families in VPI+ activities, addressing families' service needs, and getting family input in decisions about VPI+ programming. A third VPI+ coordinator reported having a joint policy council with Head Start, which included elected parent representatives from each classroom to give feedback and to serve as liaisons between the programs and other parents. Another coordinator reported that staff and parents from their VPI+ program participated in a large committee that included both service providers and parents. Several other VPI+ coordinators that did not have parent advisory committees discussed being members of family access consortia which included several community and social service agency representatives. One of

these consortia was in the process of recruiting a parent representative. One coordinator did not mention engaging parents in formal decision-making or advisory groups.

## **Technical Assistance and Professional Development**

### ***State-Sponsored Technical Assistance***

**VPI+ coordinators expressed satisfaction with the training and support offered by VDOE staff, including having opportunities to network with VPI+ staff from other divisions. The coordinators also identified topics on which they would like to receive more training.**

Many coordinators expressed satisfaction with the content of the VDOE-sponsored Implementation Meeting, webinars, and fall family engagement session. Four coordinators reported that it was helpful to have opportunities to network with VPI+ staff from other divisions during the various VDOE trainings, and one coordinator suggested having coordinator-only events to facilitate more of those connections. Two VPI+ coordinators reported that VDOE staff were also helpful in providing program-specific support, for example, by helping staff at one VPI+ program address local transportation issues. About half of the coordinators further reported that VDOE staff were responsive and communicative when questions arose, with one saying that VDOE had done a great job at resolving scheduling and communication issues that occurred in Year 1. Yet, one VPI+ coordinator suggested that further coordination of communication across players could eliminate some redundant emails about grant expectations and deadlines. In the coordinator survey, at least 9 of the 11 VPI+ coordinators expressed interest in having additional statewide TA and training on math, approaches to learning, collecting and using formative assessment data, and working with children with challenging behaviors. Eight out of the 11 divisions reported being "very interested" in statewide TA and training on teacher-child interactions, classroom organization and management, and using VPI+ evaluation data to inform implementation.

**VPI+ coordinators whose divisions worked with Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) trainers reported high satisfaction with onsite and remote support and had few suggestions for improving this technical assistance.** Four VPI+ coordinators reported that coaches received support from VECF, and two reported that VECF gave onsite training on using CLASS®. All four of these coordinators reported that the VECF trainer was helpful and responsive, including helping VPI+ staff to identify resources when they called after the onsite visit. VECF also assisted VPI+ staff with support around the QRIS and concept development. Coordinators had very few suggestions for improvement, but one coordinator noted that the CLASS® exemplar videos, while helpful, were costly.

**VPI+ coordinators reported that the onsite support, video chats, and monthly conference calls provided by CASTL were helpful, although a couple coordinators found the coaching to be repetitive.** Coordinators reported satisfaction with CASTL trainers' support of coaches, which included assisting with professional development plans and observing teachers, working on action plans and identifying topics for coaches to work on with teachers. A couple coordinators reported that CASTL trainers also provided useful assistance to VPI+ leadership when questions arose. Two coordinators reported that coach training consumed a lot of the coaches' time and, while beneficial, could be less redundant. Another coordinator reported that it would be helpful if coach training could be more tailored to specific division needs.

### *Local Coaching and Professional Development*

**VPI+ coaches used established coaching models to support teachers in implementing VPI+ programming.** In Year 2, ten school divisions adopted one or more models to support high-quality coaching of VPI+ teachers and had provided coaches with training and ongoing support in implementing these models. (One VPI+ coordinator was unsure if the coach was using a particular coaching model.) Four divisions used CASTL's My Teaching Partner™, which includes individualized coaching through web-mediated technology, an online curriculum, and coach feedback from videos. One division used My Teachstone, an online program that provides individualized professional development resources that align with CLASS® observation data. Two VPI+ divisions were implementing the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children. Another division was implementing, in addition to My Teachstone, the social-emotional program, the coaching piece from Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS). Finally, in one division where strengthening math instruction was a high priority, the coaching model integrated coaching resources around math instruction from the Erikson Institute.

**Most coordinators reported on specific areas of focus that VPI+ programs expected coaches to emphasize in their work with teachers this year, and all VPI+ coordinators reported that coaches also provided individualized coaching based on teacher needs.** Nine coordinators reported that, in addition to focusing on individual teachers' needs, coaches were also addressing topics that were high priorities division wide. With support from CASTL, every division used its Year 1 data to identify two school readiness domains to focus on in Year 2 through coaching. Seven divisions are focusing coaching on efforts to improve children's social emotional skills, six divisions are focusing on language and a similar number on math, two are focusing on literacy, and two on approaches to learning (e.g., executive functioning).

Coaches also had some discretion over the content of the topics they covered with teachers, and in a few school divisions, teachers had some input into the coaching topics as well. According to VPI+ coordinators, coaches designed some aspects of their coaching specifically to meet individual teachers' needs based on data (e.g., PALS-PreK literacy data or CLASS® data).

**Coordinators reported limited guidance about the amount of individualized support VPI+ teachers should receive and primarily left that decision to coaches and teachers.** As discussed in the Local Coaching chapter, nearly three-quarters of coaching contacts were with individual teachers (i.e., rather than in groups), which required coaches to plan their time carefully. In one division, coaches strove to meet with all teachers three times a month, and another VPI+ coordinator reported that all teachers received feedback at least once every six weeks. Most VPI+ coordinators reported that, while coaching was mandatory, time spent with individual teachers varied considerably based on teacher need, with one coordinator indicating that coaching was “more optional” this year than last, affording some opportunity for coaches to focus more effort on teachers needing more support. To determine the intensity of coaching that was needed, coaches relied on data, teachers' professional development plans, and their own professional judgment. Some coaches offered more intensive support categorically to new teachers. For example, in one division, new teachers participated in weekly coaching sessions and returning teachers met with coaches twice monthly. Two coordinators reported that new teachers typically required more of coaches' time than returning teachers; one new teacher, in particular, had used all of her coaching time early in the school year for guidance around managing a class with multiple challenging behaviors.

## 7. Recommendations

VPI+ state and local partners successfully launched Year 2 of the PDG grant. The 11 school divisions expanded their enrollment from 1,230 children in Year 1 to 1,406 children in Year 2, with the addition of eight new VPI+ classrooms. The VPI+ program continued to serve children from hard-to-reach families with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. VPI+ grant funds supported school divisions to employ and retain coaches, family engagement coordinators, and highly-qualified teachers with extremely low turnover; keep class sizes and child-to-instructional-staff ratios low; purchase materials and training for developmentally appropriate curricula; and collect and use evaluation and formative assessment data. VPI+ programs strengthened their integration into their home schools with greater principal and staff awareness and support. State agencies and partners provided technical assistance and professional development to division coordinators, coaches, and family engagement coordinators on numerous topics, including recruitment and engagement of hard-to-reach families, curriculum implementation and fidelity, use of formative assessment data, practice-based coaching, use of evaluation data for continuous improvement plans, and budget monitoring and reporting. Local VPI+ coaches worked with 94% of VPI+ teachers, twice a month, on average. Coaches most often spent their time with teachers discussing and observing teacher-child interactions, and teacher practices focused on the five essential domains of school readiness. Finally, Virginia strengthened its cross-agency coordination of services and data through its VPI+ Implementation Team and Cross-Organizational Data Team.

Even though school division VPI+ coordinators reported fewer barriers to implementation in fall 2016 than they did in fall 2015, the formative evaluation has identified some ways VDOE, CASTL, and school division staff may be able to expand the success of VPI+. These recommendations are based on the reflections of VPI+ coordinators, data on program characteristics from division exports, and data from coaching logs.

### Enrollment Process

- Division staff not already doing so may want to mobilize current and former parents of VPI+ children to help with recruitment.
- VPI+ coordinators, who have not yet done so, may want to familiarize front office staff and school welcome centers with the VPI+ program so they can encourage families to apply.

- Staff leading VPI+ enrollment efforts may want to continue or begin to partner with social service agencies and organizations as well as district personnel (e.g., bilingual teachers) that have direct access to hard-to-reach populations (e.g., homeless shelters, social service departments, migrant education programs/grantees). Also, enrollment staff may find it useful to partner with agencies that can help families obtain the documents and immunizations required for enrollment. Finally, children experiencing homelessness should be allowed to enroll, even if they lack documents typically required for enrollment.
- VPI+ programs should continue or begin to closely coordinate with other preschool enrollment efforts, and where possible, use a single-point or universal enrollment process. This would require cooperation among all publically-funded preschool programs (e.g., Head Start, Title 1, VPI, and VPI+) as well as participating private programs.

### **Program Implementation and Quality**

- Division administrators should ensure teachers have the desired elementary license with a preschool endorsement.
- To further support children with disabilities, where possible, divisions should try to expand the use of full inclusion classrooms and increase the involvement of VPI+ staff in team planning around a child's Individualized Education Program goals.
- School divisions having significant concentrations of DLL students may want to increase the use of bilingual teachers and other staff to support VPI+ classroom instruction and interactions with families.
- VDOE may want to provide or have experts provide example policy guidance that VPI+ programs can adopt regarding disciplinary actions for preschool children with challenging behaviors in order to prevent expulsions and suspensions.

### **Family Engagement**

- VPI+ programs might consider holding events in multiple locations, such as in community spaces that are convenient places for families who lack transportation, and hosting events at alternative sites for parents who might be uncomfortable at school.
- VDOE may want to highlight, through webinars, successful strategies (e.g., building on existing committees and consortia focused on preschool and family services) being used in some divisions to engage families in program decision-making.
- VDOE may also want to hold a webinar or meeting break-out session in which division staff discuss best practices for sharing *GOLD*<sup>®</sup> and PALS-PreK results with parents and

partnering with parents to develop strategies to support children’s learning both in the classroom and at home.

### Comprehensive Services

- Some school divisions may need targeted technical assistance around how to solve transportation service issues.
- VDOE may need to work with some divisions on improving access to transportation services to reduce barriers to enrollment and attendance.
- Some VPI+ programs may need to build connections with more community providers to increase access to emergency housing, mental health services for children and for families, and substance abuse treatment for families.

### Local Coaching and Training

- VDOE and CASTL may need to clarify expectations around the amount and types of coaching that teachers are expected to receive, as well as the criteria that should drive decisions about the quantity and content of coaching.
- In addition to using observation and discussion, coaches could help VPI+ teachers reflect on their practice by increasing the use of data and video review during coaching sessions.
- CASTL, together with coaches, may want to review local coaching log data to see to what extent coaching focused on the two priority domains in each division’s continuous improvement plan and to determine the need for adjustments to the coaching focus.
- Coaches may need to check whether VPI+ teachers are receiving enough support for working with dual language learners and children with special needs.
- Given that it often takes a few years to become reliable at using a new curriculum or formative assessment, school divisions should require yearly booster trainings for VPI+ teachers on *The Creative Curriculum*® and *GOLD*®. Some divisions encouraged returning teachers to take booster trainings, but made it optional, and therefore, not all teachers completed training.
- Given the challenges coordinators reported with using tablets to collect and review *GOLD*® data, divisions and Teaching Strategies may need to provide more training and support on the use of technology for *GOLD*®. Further, technology seemed to be a promising way to help teachers link assessment results to the portions of their curriculum that are most relevant for their class or groups of students.



- While most divisions are monitoring curriculum implementation and fidelity, no divisions reported that teachers were demonstrating strong fidelity to the curriculum. Coaches may need more training on how to use the fidelity data they collect with teachers, and division leaders may want to compile fidelity data to monitor professional development needs.

### **General**

- VDOE may want to review whether there are ways to coordinate reporting requirements across preschool funding streams (e.g., Head Start and VPI+).
- Division administrators can be strong advocates for VPI+ program needs with principals around issues such as schedules and space and can be ambassadors for the VPI+ program with elementary school staff.
- VDOE and CASTL may want to provide technical assistance and training to division VPI+ coordinators and coaches on some of the desired topics mentioned by most coordinators (i.e., math, approaches to learning, collecting and using formative assessment data, working with children with challenging behaviors, teacher-child interactions, classroom organization and management, and using VPI+ evaluation data to inform implementation).

In conclusion, VPI+ had a much smoother start-up in Year 2 than in Year 1. The school divisions are implementing their continuous improvement plans to further strengthen program quality, using data to track their progress.

Future formative reports will describe the progress, accomplishments, and challenges of VPI+ throughout implementation of its four-year grant.

## Appendix A: Enrollment for VPI+ and VPI Improved Classrooms

Appendix A-1. 2016-2017 Enrollment

	All VPI+ Divisions				
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total
	n		n		n
Goal	1,514		1,968		3,482
Enrollment as of Dec. 2016	1,406		1,891		3,297
Percentage of filled slots	93%		96%		95%

Appendix A-2. Enrollment by Public Versus Private Programs

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
In public programs	1,305	93%	1,891	100%	3,196	97%
In private programs	101	7%			101	3%

Appendix A-3. Enrollment by Child Ethnicity

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
Black or African American	694	49%	1,196	63%	1,890	57%
Hispanic	369	26%	273	14%	642	19%
White	223	16%	276	15%	499	15%
Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	55	4%	60	3%	115	3%
Two or more races	51	4%	52	3%	103	3%
American Indian/Alaska Native	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Not specified	10	1%	29	2%	39	1%

Appendix A-4. Enrollment by Child Gender

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
Male	713	51%	948	50%	1,661	50%
Female	693	49%	942	50%	1,635	50%
Not specified			< 10	--	< 10	--

Appendix A-5. Enrollment by Child Age (age as of September 30, 2016)

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
48 to 53 months	691	49%	953	50%	1,644	50%
54 to 59 months	713	51%	931	49%	1,644	50%
60 months or more	< 10	--	< 10	--	< 10	--

Appendix A-6. Enrollment by Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

	All VPI+ Divisions						
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total		
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent	
At or below 100 percent FPL	889	63%	1,228	65%	2,117	64%	
101 to 130 percent FPL	222	16%	302	16%	524	16%	
131 to 200 percent FPL	295	21%	361	19%	656	20%	

Appendix A-7. Enrollment by Home Language

	All VPI+ Divisions						
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total		
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent	
English	1,058	75%	1,612	85%	2,670	81%	
Spanish	269	19%	208	11%	477	14%	
Arabic	27	2%	19	1%	46	1%	
Other language	41	3%	45	2%	86	3%	
Not specified	11	1%	< 10		18	1%	

Appendix A-8. Enrollment by Child Disability Status

	All VPI+ Divisions						
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total		
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent	
Identified disability	71	5%	37	2%	108	3%	
No identified disability	1,335	95%	1,674	98%	3,009	97%	

Appendix A-9. Enrollment by Maternal Education

	All VPI+ Divisions						
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total		
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent	
Did not graduate from high school	316	22%	352	19%	668	20%	
High school graduate (diploma or GED)	547	39%	855	45%	1,402	43%	
Some college, no degree	273	19%	348	18%	621	19%	
Associate degree	115	8%	132	7%	247	7%	
Bachelor's degree or higher	131	9%	170	9%	301	9%	
Not specified	24	2%	34	2%	58	2%	

Appendix A-10. Enrollment by Military Connected Status

	All VPI+ Divisions						
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total		
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent	
From military families	65	5%	26	1%	91	3%	
Not from military families	1,341	95%	1,863	99%	3,204	97%	
Not specified			< 10	--	< 10	--	

Appendix A-11. Enrollment by Migrant Status

	All VPI+ Divisions						
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total		
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent	
From migrant families	< 10	--			< 10	--	
Not from migrant families	1,405	100%	1,891	100%	3,296	100%	

Appendix A-12. Enrollment by Homeless Status

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
Homeless	12	1%	41	2%	53	2%
Not homeless	1,394	99%	1,850	98%	3,244	98%

Appendix A-13. Enrollment by Child Welfare System Status

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
In the child welfare system (defined as in foster care)	16	1%	10	1%	26	1%
Not in the child welfare system	1,365	97%	1,881	99%	3,246	98%
Not specified	25	2%			25	1%

Appendix A-14. Enrollment by Mixed Age Classroom Status

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
In mixed age classroom	16	1%	43	2%	59	2%
Not in mixed age classroom	1,390	99%	1,848	98%	3,238	98%

Appendix A-15. Enrollment by Economically Diverse Classroom Status

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
In economically diverse classroom			77	4%	77	2%
Not in economically diverse classroom	1,406	100%	1,814	96%	3,220	98%

## Appendix B: Program Characteristics of VPI+ and VPI Improved Classrooms

Appendix B-1. Number of Teachers and Classes

	All VPI+ Divisions				
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total
	n		n		n
Teachers	125		103		228
Assistant teachers	122		105		227
Classes	118		103		221

Appendix B-2. Class Child-to-Instructional Staff Ratio (includes teachers and assistants)

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Ratio	n	Ratio	n	Ratio
Average (number of students to 1 instructional staff person)	118	8.4	103	8.6	221	8.5
Smallest		4.5		2.3		2.3
Largest		9.5		9		9.5

Appendix B-3. Class Child-to-Instructional Staff Ratio (includes teachers and assistants)

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
9:1 or less	117	99.20%	103	100.00%	220	99.50%
10:01	1	0.80%			1	0.50%

Appendix B-4. Class Size (number of students in class)

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Size	n	Size	n	Size
Average	118	17.3	103	17.4	221	17.3
Smallest		9		7		7
Largest		19		18		19

Appendix B-5. Classes by Size (number of students)

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
18 or fewer	117	99.20%	103	100.00%	220	99.50%
19 to 20	1	0.80%			1	0.50%

Appendix B-6. Children in Classes by Teacher Level of Education (highest completed)

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
Bachelor's degree	737	52.40%	816	43.20%	1,553	47.10%
Master's degree	669	47.60%	1,057	55.90%	1,726	52.40%
Not specified			18	1.00%	18	0.50%

Appendix B-7. Children in Classes by Teacher Type of License

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
Collegiate professional	633	45.00%	791	41.80%	1,424	43.20%
Postgraduate professional	648	46.10%	953	50.40%	1,601	48.60%
Provisional	63	4.50%	96	5.10%	159	4.80%
Not specified	62	4.40%	51	2.70%	113	3.40%

Appendix B-8. Children in Classes by Teacher License Endorsement(s)

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
Elementary education PreK-6	668	47.50%	794	42.00%	1,462	44.30%
Early NK-4	293	20.80%	760	40.20%	1,053	31.90%
Early/primary education PreK-3	421	29.90%	307	16.20%	728	22.10%
Other teaching license	366	26.00%	206	10.90%	572	17.30%
Not specified	87	6.20%	48	2.50%	135	4.10%

Note: Teachers may have more than one type of license endorsement so total may add up to more than 100 percent

Appendix B-9. Children in Classes by Core Curriculum

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
Creative Curriculum	761	54.10%	1,237	65.40%	1,998	60.60%
High Scope	199	14.20%	52	2.70%	251	7.60%
Houghton Mifflin PreK	358	25.50%	422	22.30%	780	23.70%
FCPS Program of Studies	88	6.30%	180	9.50%	268	8.10%

Appendix B-10. Children in Classes with Comprehensive Services Readily Available

	All VPI+ Divisions							
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved				Total	
	n	Percent		n	Percent		n	Percent
Health services	1,406	100.00%		1,891	100.00%		3,297	100.00%
Hearing	1,406	100.00%		1,891	100.00%		3,297	100.00%
Food bank	1,406	100.00%		1,891	100.00%		3,297	100.00%
Adult education	1,381	98.20%		1,891	100.00%		3,272	99.20%
Classes or workshops for families on parenting and child development	1,370	97.40%		1,871	98.90%		3,241	98.30%
Family resource centers	1,370	97.40%		1,871	98.90%		3,241	98.30%
Vision	1,370	97.40%		1,871	98.90%		3,241	98.30%
WIC enrollment	1,301	92.50%		1,855	98.10%		3,156	95.70%
TANF enrollment	1,301	92.50%		1,855	98.10%		3,156	95.70%
Dental	1,301	92.50%		1,855	98.10%		3,156	95.70%
Classes or workshops for families on ways to support learning at home	1,282	91.20%		1,691	89.40%		2,973	90.20%
Prenatal	1,189	84.60%		1,603	84.80%		2,792	84.70%
Insurance enrollment	1,113	79.20%		1,608	85.00%		2,721	82.50%
Home or other non-school visit	1,048	74.50%		1,469	77.70%		2,517	76.30%
Domestic violence counseling/services	1,048	74.50%		1,469	77.70%		2,517	76.30%
Emergency housing	718	51.10%		771	40.80%		1,489	45.20%
Mental health services for children	439	31.20%		913	48.30%		1,352	41.00%
Mental health services for families	439	31.20%		913	48.30%		1,352	41.00%
Substance abuse treatment for families	478	34.00%		853	45.10%		1,331	40.40%
Transportation	666	47.40%		611	32.30%		1,277	38.70%

## Appendix C: Coaching Activities with Teachers of VPI+ and VPI Improved Classrooms (August 15 – December 31, 2016)

Appendix C-1. Number of Coaches, FTE, and Teacher-to-Coach Ratio

	All VPI+ Divisions	
		Total
Number of coaches		15
Total coach FTE		11.7
Teacher-to-coach ratio (number of teachers to 1 FTE coach)		18.9

Appendix C-2. Number of Teachers and Teachers Served

	All VPI+ Divisions		
	VPI+ New	VPI Improved	Total
Total number of teachers	118	103	221
Number of teachers served	111	31	142

Appendix C-3. Number of Coaching Contacts, Average Contacts with Teachers, and Average Hours for Coaches

	All VPI+ Divisions		
	VPI+ New	VPI Improved	Total
Total number of coaching contacts	922	342	1,264
Average total number of coaching contacts per teacher	7.8	3.3	5.7
Average number of coaching contacts per teacher per month	2.0	0.8	1.4
- In classroom (with students present)	0.7	0.9	0.8
- Meeting with teacher/TA (in person or phone)	0.8	0.8	0.8
- Group training	0.6	1	0.7
Average total number of hours for coaching contacts per teacher	13.5	7.2	10.6
Average number of hours for coaching contacts per teacher per month	3.4	1.8	2.7

Appendix C-4. Coaching Contacts by Type of Contact

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
In classroom (with students present)	324	35%	108	32%	432	34%
Meeting with teacher/TA (in person or phone)	349	38%	105	31%	454	36%
Group training	249	27%	129	38%	378	30%



Appendix C-5. Average Length of Contact by Type of Contact (in minutes)

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
Average length of contact	922	103.8	342	130.7	1,264	111.1
- In classroom (with students present)	324	55.8	108	74	432	60.3
- Meeting with teacher/TA (in person or phone)	349	64.3	105	51.1	454	61.3
- Group training	249	221.6	129	243	378	228.9

Appendix C-6. Coaching Contacts by Length of Contact (in minutes)

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
< 30	104	11%	21	6%	125	10%
30 to 59	239	26%	89	26%	328	26%
60 to 89	247	27%	92	27%	339	27%
90 or more	332	36%	140	41%	472	37%

Appendix C-7. Coaching Strategies for Individual Coaching Contacts

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
Discussion (reflective conversation or problem-solving, role playing)	357	53%	86	40%	443	50%
Observation	233	35%	71	33%	304	34%
Connection to curriculum resources and materials	207	31%	40	19%	247	28%
Providing other resources and materials	172	26%	57	27%	229	26%
Data review	81	12%	40	19%	121	14%
Video modeling	85	13%	20	9%	105	12%
Video review (of teacher's video)	43	6%	13	6%	56	6%
Live modeling	37	5%	6	3%	43	5%
Other strategy	21	3%	10	5%	31	3%

Note: More than one strategy per contact can be used so total may add up to more than 100 percent.

Appendix C-8. Focus Area for Individual Coaching and Group Training Contacts

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
Teacher-child interactions	587	64%	136	40%	723	57%
Domain-specific content	464	50%	161	47%	625	49%
Supportive environments	396	43%	77	23%	473	37%
Collecting formative assessments	145	16%	91	27%	236	19%
Using formative assessments	108	12%	87	25%	195	15%
Special needs (children with IEPs)	78	8%	21	6%	99	8%
Dual language learners	78	8%	20	6%	98	8%
Family engagement	70	8%	21	6%	91	7%
Other focus area	47	5%	16	5%	63	5%

Note: More than one focus area per contact can be used so total may add up to more than 100 percent.

Appendix C-9. Domain-Specific Focus for Individual Coaching and Group Training Contacts

	All VPI+ Divisions					
	VPI+ New		VPI Improved		Total	
	n	Percent	n	Percent	n	Percent
Social and emotional development	250	27%	46	13%	296	23%
Language	213	23%	77	23%	290	23%
Mathematics	170	18%	84	25%	254	20%
Approaches to learning	147	16%	32	9%	179	14%
Literacy	92	10%	36	11%	128	10%
Science	22	2%	9	3%	31	2%
The arts	8	1%	1	0%	9	1%
Physical health and development	14	2%	5	1%	19	2%
Other domain-specific focus	21	2%	1	0%	22	2%

Note: More than one domain-specific focus area per contact can be used so total may add up to more than 100 percent.

## Appendix D: VPI Eligibility Criteria

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

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

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

The Department of Education has received guidance from the chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees allowing flexibility in the implementation of the new student eligibility criteria during the 2015-16 school year, to allow a one-year transition from the existing student eligibility language in the VPI program to the newly adopted criteria referenced above.

Accordingly, when enrolling students in VPI programs for the 2015–16 school year, students meeting one of the four new criteria referenced above should be given priority for enrollment into approved VPI slots. School divisions, for the 2015–16 school year only, may also continue to use locally selected at-risk criteria for the enrollment of VPI students. The 2015–16 school year is the only year that will allow the transition of using both the new eligibility requirements adopted by the General Assembly and locally selected criteria. Beginning in the 2016–2017 school year, school divisions may only use the four eligibility criteria referenced above in enrolling students in VPI programs. Please also note that the money committee chairmen have requested school divisions to report to the Department of Education the number of students enrolled in VPI for 2015–16 by each local eligibility criterion.