



The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) builds a more comprehensive understanding of school readiness and success.

## FALL 2021 STATEWIDE SCHOOL READINESS LANDSCAPE

- Most students are learning in-person. This fall, 98% of students received 5 days of in-person instruction per week, in contrast to last fall when most students were learning in a virtual or remote setting, and only 16% were learning in-person.
- More students enrolled in kindergarten in the fall of 2021, compared with fall 2020 (87,057 and 80,586 children, respectively). However, fall 2021 enrollment still represents a 6% drop compared to the fall of 2019 (92,407 children).

The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) gives schools, teachers, and families a picture of school readiness in 4 key areas: Literacy, Mathematics, Self-Regulation, and Social Skills. This fall, teachers completed fall VKRP assessments for most students with 92% of students having information across all 4 sub-domains. 99% used in-person versus remote assessments.

## STATEWIDE KINDERGARTEN READINESS LANDSCAPE - FALL 2021

Virginia defines school readiness as, “the capabilities of children, their families, schools, and communities that best promote student success in kindergarten and beyond.” The fall readiness rate is based on the expected skill levels of a kindergarten student at the beginning of the academic year.

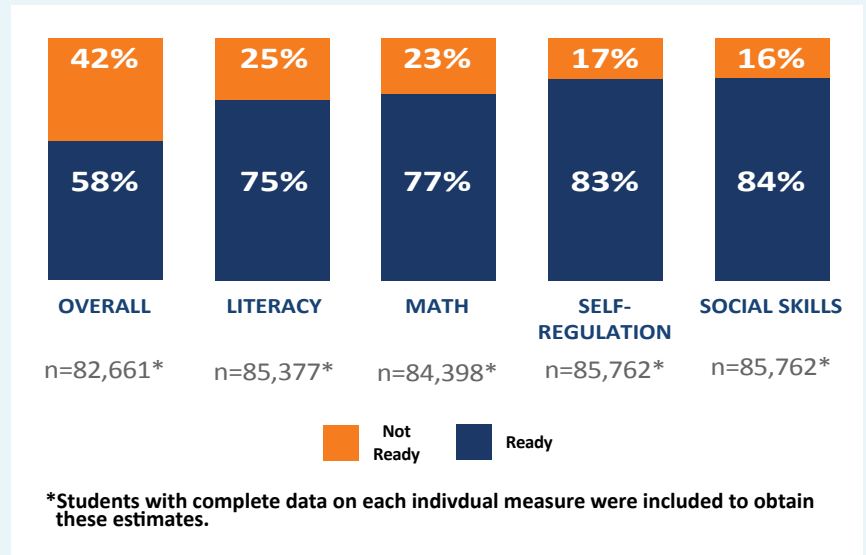
 **42%** of Virginia’s kindergarteners began the school year below the expected level for kindergarten entry and required additional supports and instruction to build foundational skills in Literacy, Mathematics, Self-Regulation, and/or Social Skills.\*

- Approximately 1 in every 4 students were below the benchmark in early Literacy foundational skills (25%) and/or Mathematics skills (23%) in the fall of 2021.
- Teachers reported that most children entered kindergarten displaying solid foundational Self-Regulation and Social Skills, with 17% and 16% falling below the benchmark, respectively.

**A comparison of VKRP Fall 2021 data across demographic subgroups highlights disproportionately higher rates of below-benchmark scores among historically marginalized students.**

The pandemic led to disruptions in instruction and supports that disproportionately impacted historically marginalized children, who were already less likely to receive high-quality early care and education experiences. These disparities in supports and educational experiences are associated with differences in readiness skills. Students falling below the benchmark were more likely to be students of color, students from low-income families, English language/Multilingual learners, and students with disabilities.

- 52% of Black students, and 60% of Hispanic students began the school year below the overall readiness benchmark.
- 56% of students from low-income backgrounds began the school year below the overall readiness benchmark.
- 67% of English language/Multilingual learners began the school year below the overall readiness benchmark.
- 64% of students identified as having a disability began the school year below the overall readiness benchmark.



## Preschool Matters for Readiness

Students from low-income families who attend public preschool are more likely to be categorized as ready, compared to their peers who do not attend preschool.



49% of preschool attenders are categorized as ready, compared to 34% of non-attenders categorized as ready.

## YOUNG CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Teachers reported being moderately, very, or extremely concerned about the mental health and social-emotional well-being of 13% of their students, indicating that the pandemic may be continuing to impact students’ mental health.

## EXPANSION OF VKRP TO PRE-K

- High-quality early learning experiences set the stage for school success and can narrow early opportunity gaps. This fall, VKRP was made available to publicly funded 4-year-old preschool classrooms (e.g. VPI, VECF mixed delivery, Head Start) so that we can identify earlier on students’ strengths and support student growth in areas they need it most.
- 23,761 pre-k students were assessed using VKRP this fall, compared with about 4,000 students who were assessed during last year’s voluntary pilot.
- Pre-k teachers had positive feedback about implementing VKRP.



*“I like the assessment and resources very much. I feel it is the best assessment we have used in the past 23 years. I especially appreciate being able to share the information with parents easily as well as print out activities. The parent feedback has been very good so far during the few conferences I have completed. Thank you so much!”*

- PRE-K TEACHER

## IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING

Large variations in children’s learning experiences last year (2020-2021 school year) likely resulted in vastly different skill levels within classrooms this year. Many students will need tailored support across the school-year to engage in unfinished learning and to continue building new skills as they progress in preschool and kindergarten.

Data also suggest that supports are needed for children’s mental health and well-being such as additional mental health supports, additional school counselors, and training in trauma informed approaches.



## NEXT STEPS

- Spring data collection in pre-k and kindergarten will allow teachers, administrators, and divisions to see how students have grown across the school year in Literacy, Mathematics, Self-regulation, and Social Skills.
- We are expanding. The VKRP assessments will be available for use with 3-year-olds next year.