

## Virginia's Definition of School Readiness

"School readiness" describes the capabilities of children, their families, schools, and communities that will best promote student success in kindergarten and beyond. Each component – children, families, schools and communities – plays an essential role in the development of school readiness. No one component can stand on its own.

- **Ready Children.** A ready child is prepared socially, personally, physically, and intellectually within the developmental domains addressed in Virginia's six Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: literacy, mathematics, science, history and social science, physical and motor development, and personal and social development. Children develop holistically; growth and development in one area depends upon development in other areas.
- **Ready Families.** A ready family has adults who understand they are the most important people in the child's life and take responsibility for the child's school readiness through direct, frequent, and positive involvement and interest in the child. Adults recognize their role as the child's first and most important teacher, providing steady and supportive relationships, ensuring safe and consistent environments, promoting good health, and fostering curiosity, excitement about learning, determination, and self-control.
- **Ready Schools.** A ready school accepts all children and provides a seamless transition to a high-quality learning environment by engaging the whole community. A ready school welcomes all children with opportunities to enhance and build confidence in their skills, knowledge, and abilities. Children in ready schools are led by skilled teachers, who recognize, reinforce, and extend children's strengths and who are sensitive to cultural values and individual differences.
- **Ready Communities.** A ready community plays a crucial part in supporting families in their role as primary stewards of children's readiness. Ready communities, including businesses, faith-based organizations, early childhood service providers, community groups and local governments, work together to support children's school and long term success by providing families affordable access to information, services, high-quality child care, and early learning opportunities.

Indicators of School Readiness In order to define, assess, and track school readiness, we must set objectives, research-based benchmarks for each component of school readiness and develop clear strategies for measuring progress towards these benchmarks.

- **Ready children...**
  - communicate effectively with adults and children by: labeling objects and feelings; providing simple descriptions for events; effectively conveying information, desires, and needs; and using simple language and grammar to solve problems and to negotiate social interactions with adults and peers.
  - display emerging literacy skills by: showing interest in and interacting with books as they are read by adults; answering questions; learning to use new words and tell stories; recognizing and producing speech sounds, such as rhymes, beginning sounds, and letter sounds; identifying the letters of the alphabet; learning about print concepts from books, signs, and household objects; and engaging in drawing and pretend writing and writing their name, letters, and other printed symbols.
  - show an interest and skill in mathematics by: counting and using numbers to describe and compare; recognizing and sorting simple shapes and describing their position; identifying simple patterns; making comparisons based on length, weight, time, temperature, and size; and using objects in play, experimenting with materials, building blocks and puzzles.

- build early science skills by: exploring and showing curiosity; asking and answering questions about nature, why things happen and how things work; identifying patterns and changes in daily life; and making observations based on the five senses.
  - learn about history and social studies by: interacting with their family, peers, religious, and social communities; recognizing ways in which people are alike and different; and recognizing the relationships between people, places and time.
  - enhance physical and motor development by: learning to control their bodies; strengthening their muscles; practicing different movements; participating in regular physical activity; and practicing healthy living and appropriate daily care routines.
  - exhibit personal and social skills and a sense of self-worth by: feeling secure and valued in their relationships; expressing their emotions and taking pride in their accomplishments; recognizing the consequences of their actions; showing self-control; and cooperating with others, using nonphysical ways to resolve conflicts.
- Ready families...
    - interact with their children, helping them to develop listening and communication skills and to express their feelings, needs, and wants. Adults: read to and speak with children regularly and respectfully; appreciate the child's view of the world; encourage exploration of the world in which they live; are trustworthy and dependable; and engage with children with joy, warmth, and comfort.
    - encourage and act as the bridge to positive social relationships. Adults: help children learn to cooperate with others; help children follow simple directions and complete basic tasks; foster friendships with other children; teach children routines and how to respond to rules and structure; help children learn how to handle disappointments; and expose children to and help them describe different people, places, and things.
    - ensure their children are healthy by: completing all appropriate eye, ear, dental and other medical screenings as well as immunizations.
- Ready schools...
    - smooth the transition between home and school by: communicating kindergarten standards and other school information to families through activities such as home visits, telephone calls, questionnaires, and kindergarten visitation days; and forming effective relationships with parents and early childhood programs to share children's prekindergarten experiences and to assess their development.
    - support instruction and staff development by: employing highly qualified teachers; maintaining appropriate class sizes; encouraging professional development; and using best practices in the classroom.
    - support teachers as they assess the individual needs of children, design instruction based on these needs, and regularly monitor students' progress.
    - partner with communities by participating in activities such as: ☉ recreational and enrichment programs; family literacy activities; before and after school care; open houses; and communication with other early childhood education programs in the community.
    - provide resources and services to address the diverse and individual needs of students including: educational services; health and mental health services; and social services.
    - emphasize the importance of early childhood education by: regularly reviewing the quality, appropriateness, and alignment of the curriculum across all grades and phases of development; and regularly focusing on and supporting the quality of teachers' interactions with children at all grade levels.

- Ready communities...
  - promote collaboration to reach the most vulnerable children and families through diverse channels of communication by: supporting effective, innovative strategies; and building a sustainable, comprehensive system that maximizes resources.
  - ensure all children have access to high-quality early care and education programs.
  - provide accessible and affordable family services related to physical health, mental health, and lifelong learning. These services include: literacy, English language learning, parenting skills, and adult education; home visiting programs; basic health care and nutrition services, including prenatal care; mental health counseling; early identification and treatment for children with disabilities and other special needs; drug and alcohol counseling; family court services; and child abuse prevention.
  - promote public assets such as parks, libraries, recreational facilities, civic and cultural venues and other opportunities to provide a better quality of life for families, encourage early learning opportunities, and foster community participation.
  - regularly assess the status of children, families, schools, and community resources with regard to their role in school readiness and use these assessments in program planning and resource allocation.