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| **Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item** | **Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia** |

# Agenda Item: E

## Date: June 17, 2021

### Title: Final Review of *Guidelines for Practice Year 1 of the Early Childhood Unified Measurement and Improvement System*

#### Presenter: Ms. Jenna Conway, Chief School Readiness Officer

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## Purpose of Presentation:

Action required by state or federal law or regulation.

**Executive Summary:**   
Section §22.1-289.05 of the *Code of Virginia* directs the Board of Education to establish a unified quality rating and improvement system for all publicly-funded early childhood providers in order to improve school readiness in the Commonwealth. To provide all Virginia children with equitable opportunity, Virginia should establish a measurement and improvement system that ensures all children have access to quality teaching and learning experiences that meet their unique needs.

The *Code* requires the Board to establish the new system by July 1, 2021, with initial results to be published in fall 2024. The first two years of the new system will be practice-only so that educators - including those in all school-based preschool, Head Start/Early Head Start, and publicly-funded child care and family day homes - can learn the new system.

The *Guidelines for Practice Year 1 of the Early Childhood Unified Measurement and Improvement System* describes the guidelines and protocols for Practice Year 1 (2021-2022) of the Unified Measurement and Improvement System. The Board completed the first review of the *Guidelines* on April 22, 2021.

Virginia’s Unified Measurement and Improvement System will support continuous quality improvement in all publicly-funded early childhood programs, which generally prioritize underserved children, including children in low-income households, children with disabilities, children who are Dual Language Learners and children who face other challenges. Programs that do not receive public funding will have the option to participate.

In Practice Year 1, the Unified Measurement and Improvement System will utilize two nationally recognized quality standards to strengthen the quality of teaching and learning in publicly funded birth-to-five programs.

* Through measurement of the quality of teacher-child interactions, using a nationally recognized and verified tool, educators will receive frequent feedback on strategies to support learning and growth for all children.
* Through the use of a quality curriculum, educators in early childhood programs will be supported to access quality instructional materials as a foundational step in developing a comprehensive, culturally-responsive, learning environment.

Through measurement and frequent feedback, the unified system will identify and intervene where needed, dedicating targeted culturally-responsive supports, intervention, and state resources to support improvement in programs and classrooms where it is most critical. Improvement resources will be targeted toward programs with fewer resources, including a focus on child care and family day homes.

The proposal was developed in consultation with early childhood educators, researchers, educational leaders, and subject matter experts. Since the April Board meeting, the VDOE has continued to conduct extensive stakeholder engagement, including 18 presentations and listening sessions with educators and leaders from around the state. Educators and leaders from around the state expressed appreciation for the consistent and equitable expectations for all birth to five programs, the opportunity to practice before the requirement goes into effect and have been very positive about the measures selected. Building on existing partnerships and focusing on the needs of family day home providers and other small childcare programs was also a common sentiment expressed by the field. The VDOE has received feedback and questions about providing additional communication and resources regarding implementation and training. In response, an implementation guidebook, webinar series, and VDOE sponsored observation trainings have been initiated to prepare leaders and educators for Practice Year 1.

On May 19th, 2021 the VDOE received an endorsement from the Early Childhood Advisory Committee for the guidelines and implementation.

This item supports Priority 1 of the Board’s Comprehensive Plan to provide high-quality learning environments for all students by providing a framework to measure and improve the quality of early learning experiences.

## Action Requested:

Final review: Action requested at this meeting.

## Superintendent’s Recommendation: The Superintendent of Public Instruction recommends the Board of Education approve the *Guidelines for Practice Year 1 of the Early Childhood Unified Measurement and Improvement System*.

## Previous Review or Action:

Previous review and action. Specify date and action taken below:

**Date:** April 22, 2021

**Action:** First Review

**Background Information and Statutory Authority:**  
The Board of Education is required to establish a uniform quality rating and improvement system by July 1, 2021. The system must result in ratings for the public no later than July 1, 2024. The *Code of Virginia* (Section 22.1-289.05.) states:

1. The Board shall establish a uniform quality rating and improvement system designed to provide parents and families with information about the quality and availability of publicly funded providers. Such system shall include:
   1. Service provision and performance targets for children from birth to age five that align with standards for kindergarten readiness and early elementary grades;
   2. Consistent quality standards;
   3. Outcome-based measurements; and
   4. Incentives to encourage participation and improvement.
2. All publicly funded providers shall be required to participate in the quality rating and improvement system established pursuant to subsection A. All other child day programs may participate in such system. Any participation in such system shall comply with all applicable federal laws and regulations, including the federal Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. § 9801 et seq.), as amended, and associated regulations.
3. The Board shall establish consequences for publicly funded providers that fail to participate in the quality rating and improvement system established pursuant to subsection A or persistently fail to meet minimal quality standards.

This requirement is one component of the broader charge to the Board of Education to strengthen the early childhood and education system by supporting the development of one unified public-private system for early childhood care and education that ensures that every child has the opportunity to enter kindergarten ready to learn.

This legislative directive is the result of years of collaborative, bipartisan efforts to strengthen Virginia’s early childhood system. Through joint efforts across the general assembly, stakeholders, and local and state leaders, Virginia has taken many steps to prepare in building a more unified early childhood system that is grounded in local early childhood networks.

**Timetable for Further Review/Action:**  
Following the Board’s approval, these guidelines will be submitted to Town Hall for a 30-day public comment period, pursuant to the Administrative Process Act. Further, these guidelines will be shared via the Virginia Department of Education website, related newsletters, and via webinar or training series.

## Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

The Virginia Department of Education’s existing resources supported the development of the proposed guidelines. Any costs associated with the dissemination, training, or implementation related to the guidelines for Practice Year 1 will be supported through federal Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five funding, as has the costs incurred thus far.