



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
Department of Education

April 3, 2015

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: 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 2015-2016 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 2015-2016 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 2015-2016 school year only, may also continue to use locally selected at-risk criteria for the enrollment of VPI students. The 2015-2016 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 report to the Department of Education the number of students enrolled in VPI for 2015-2016 by each local eligibility criterion.

Additionally, Item 136 C.14 d.2 of Chapter 665 states:

*“d.2) The Department of Education is directed to compile from each school division the aggregated information as to the number of enrolled students whose families are (i) at or below 130 percent of poverty, and (ii) above 130 percent but below 200 percent of poverty. The Department shall report this information annually, after the application and fall participation reports are submitted to the Department from the school divisions, to the Chairmen of House Appropriations and Senate*

*Finance Committees. In addition, the Department will post and maintain the summary information by division on the Department's Web site in keeping with current student privacy policies.”*

This reporting requirement related to the new VPI eligibility criteria will be in effect for the 2015-2016 school year. The data collection will also include the number of students enrolled in the VPI program based on existing local at-risk criteria, with the total number of students enrolled reported by each individual local at-risk criterion under which they were enrolled.

### **Technical Assistance Audio Conference**

The Virginia Department of Education will sponsor regional audio conferences to offer technical assistance in meeting new VPI program requirements on Thursday, April 16, 2015. To participate in the conference, call **1-866-842-5779** and enter the passcode **8042252877** followed by #. Regions and times are listed below:

Regions 1 & 2 – 9:30 a.m.

Regions 3 & 4 – 11 a.m.

Regions 5 & 6 – 1 p.m.

Regions 7 & 8 – 2:30 p.m.

Each audio conference will be no more than one hour long. As a courtesy to other participants, please secure a quiet location without interruptions.

Please contact Avis Scarborough, administrative assistant to Cheryl Strobel, at (804) 255-2877 or [avis.scarborough@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:avis.scarborough@doe.virginia.gov) if you or a designee would like to participate.

If you have program questions, please contact Cheryl Strobel, associate director, early childhood education, at (804) 371-7578 or [Cheryl.Strobel@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Cheryl.Strobel@doe.virginia.gov). Budget questions should be directed to Chris Sorensen, budget director, at (804) 225-2025 or [Chris.Sorensen@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Chris.Sorensen@doe.virginia.gov).

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