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

UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL READINESS DURING A WORLDWIDE PANDEMIC

• In fall of 2020, 80,586 children entered kindergarten—a 12.8% drop in enrollment compared to the fall of 2019.
• The vast majority (84%) of those children began the school year engaged in virtual instruction.
• Teachers worked tirelessly to establish connections with their students and understand their incoming school readiness skills. Teachers:
  • Used PALS to assess most students’ (87%) literacy skills in-person or remotely.
  • Reported on most students’ self-regulation (90%) and social skills (90%) using the CBRS.
  • Completed the math assessment (EMAS) when they could, assessing 40% of students.

STATEWIDE KINDERGARTEN READINESS LANDSCAPE

45% of Virginia’s kindergarteners need support to build foundational skills in Literacy, Math, Self-Regulation, and/or Social Skills*

• COVID had a negative impact on learning, with an increase in the overall percentage of students who need additional support in one or more areas, compared with 2019.
• Many more children (27%) fell below the benchmark in literacy. This represents a 10% point increase in the number of children being identified as significantly at risk for future reading failure. (Read the full report at https://pals.virginia.edu/public/research-findings.html)
• Readiness estimates looked similar to prior years for math, self-regulation, and social-skills.
• Teachers struggled to understand children’s self-regulation and social skills and were unsure of their ratings.

“Giving the VKRP this fall was a challenge. Students had not interacted with any of their peers, as we were totally virtual at the time of testing.”
- Kindergarten Teacher

“The social part was very difficult to assess on a virtual student because as a teacher, we did not know the child well enough to answer questions.”
- Kindergarten Teacher

*This sample includes students with complete data on all measures. However, estimates are similar when complex statistical modeling is used to account for missing data.

YOUNG CHILDREN’S MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

• The COVID-19 pandemic has had a traumatic impact on many children’s lives. Parents and caregivers lost their jobs, students lost connections to their peers, and students lost loved ones.
• VKRP added new items to better understand students’ mental health and well-being.
• Teachers reported being moderately, very, or extremely concerned about the mental health and social-emotional well-being for about ~11% of kindergarten students.

“I am very worried about this child’s social-emotional learning because he cannot have the kindergarten experience necessary to promote early childhood development.”
- Kindergarten Teacher

MORE VKRP DATA COMING SOON

• Spring data is being collected now and includes a remote option for the EMAS. This is the first spring window for VKRP, and data will help us understand the impacts of COVID on kindergarten learning.
• Starting in the 2021-2022 school year, VKRP will be available to all publicly-funded preschool programs to assess children’s skills in fall and spring.

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