

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.

Teachers reported being very worried about **1** in every **10** 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.