

## VKRP Executive Summary

Excerpted from the VKRP  
Annual Report for the  
Chairmen of House  
Appropriations and Senate  
Finance Committees for the  
2023-2024 School Year



### Acknowledgments

This Executive Summary is excerpted from the [VKRP Annual Report \(2023-24\)](#). Prepared by the University of Virginia's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), supported through an appropriation from the Virginia General Assembly to the Virginia Department of Education subcontracted to CASTL. Correspondence concerning this report should be addressed to Jenna Conway, Deputy Superintendent of Early Childhood Care and Education, VDOE ([Jenna.Conway@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Jenna.Conway@doe.virginia.gov)). The Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) is implemented by CASTL under the direction of Amanda Williford ([williford@virginia.edu](mailto:williford@virginia.edu)).

**VKRP empowers educators, families, and leaders by providing actionable information about young students' learning and growth.**

## Executive Summary

The October 2024 data report<sup>1</sup> of the [Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program \(VKRP\)](#) to the General Assembly, details the fall and spring kindergarten data collected during the 2023-2024 academic year, kindergarten data trends from fall 2019 through spring 2024, and 2023-2024 pre-kindergarten data for 3- and 4-year-old publicly funded pre-kindergarten students. The report also provides an update on the progress of the VKRP Mid-year Assessment Pilot, an update on the mathematics, self-regulation, social skills, and mental health well-being assessment pilot in first through third grades (1-3 Assessment Pilot) and shares future goals of the VKRP system for the 2024-2025 year and beyond.

VKRP empowers Virginia's teachers and education leaders by providing a comprehensive assessment system that shines a spotlight on pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students' learning and growth. VKRP is a Virginia standards-aligned, multi-year early learning assessment system that produces actionable information to guide decisions at the student, classroom, school/program, and division level from the beginning of pre-kindergarten through the end of kindergarten to support student learning. VKRP provides assessments of mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills to complement Virginia's longstanding literacy screeners. In 2020-2021, during the pandemic, VKRP also added items for teachers to indicate their perceptions of students' mental health well-being. The 2023-2024 literacy data gathered from the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screener (PALS-K) and the Virginia Language & Literacy Screener: Pre-K (VALLS: Pre-K) come directly from the Virginia Literacy Partnerships (VLP). Literacy data in the 2023-2024 report includes the PALS-K which was used in

114 divisions. Literacy data from the 17 divisions that piloted the Virginia Language & Literacy Screener: K (VALLS: K) are not included in this report. Additional information on the literacy screeners can be found on the [VLP website](#).

From 2014 through 2018, the [Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning \(CASTL\) at the University of Virginia](#) implemented VKRP in kindergarten through a voluntary rollout where, each year, an increasing number of school divisions elected to administer VKRP. Virginia began statewide, mandatory kindergarten administration of VKRP in the 2019-2020 school year.

The VKRP team developed a 4-year-old pre-kindergarten extension of VKRP between 2018-2021. In the 2021-2022 school year, VKRP became available to all publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs to assess 4-year-old children's skills in fall of 2021 and spring of 2022. Additionally, the VKRP team developed a 3-year-old extension of VKRP, which became available to all publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs to assess 3-year-old children's skills in the 2022-2023 school year.

## Defining Readiness for Summative Purposes

Virginia defines school readiness as, "the capabilities of children, their families, schools, and communities that best promote student success in kindergarten and beyond." For summative purposes, kindergarten students are categorized as *ready or meeting the overall benchmark* (fall) or *meeting the overall benchmark* (spring) if their assessment scores indicate that they demonstrate the minimally expected skills for the fall or the spring (depending upon the data timepoint) of kindergarten for literacy, mathematics, self-regulation, **and** social skills. If kindergarten students' assessment scores do **not** indicate they are demonstrating the minimally expected skills **in one or more** areas at the respective timepoint (fall or spring), they are categorized as *not ready or below the overall benchmark* (fall) or *below the overall benchmark* (spring).

VKRP does not currently publish benchmarks for pre-kindergarten children's skills. Instead, starting in the 2022-2023 school year, in pre-kindergarten, VKRP piloted Skill Development Bands (Beginning, Growing, and Strong) to

<sup>1</sup> This report was submitted to satisfy the requirement that, "the Department shall submit such findings using data from the prior year's fall assessment to the Chairmen of House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees no later than October 1 each year."

help programs and educators interpret and use their VKRP pre-kindergarten data. Separate bands were established in the fall and spring to represent children’s skill development as compared to expectations at that particular point in time. VLP has created separate skill development bands for the VALLS: Pre-K, and the VLP team can provide more information about the VALLS: Pre-K bands. These bands are included to give guidance on where children are in their development of early learning skills so that teachers can provide appropriate support and instruction. They are not intended to serve as benchmarks.

The Mental Health Well-being items are not part of the overall benchmark in kindergarten or skill development bands in pre-kindergarten. Information from these items is shared with teachers to help facilitate conversations between teachers, instructional leaders, school counselors, other school personnel, and families on how best to support students.

### VKRP and the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, young students experienced sudden and long-lasting negative stresses to their care and early learning environments, negatively impacting their academic and social-emotional school readiness. Nationally and within the Commonwealth, there were missed opportunities to learn foundational early mathematics and literacy skills, pandemic-related learning losses, and

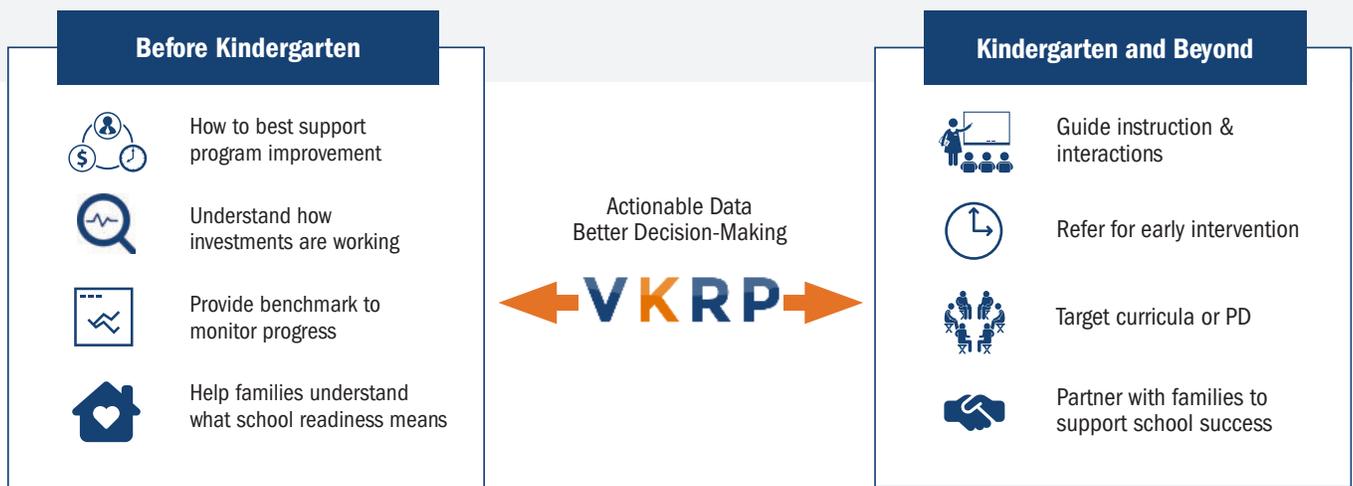
adverse impacts on young students’ mental health well-being. The pandemic had disproportionate impacts on students from families with low-income backgrounds and students who resided in neighborhoods with decreased access to early learning opportunities<sup>2</sup>. Importantly, if students are not provided with opportunities to catch up and these losses are not addressed, gaps in students’ early learning skills will continue to widen over time<sup>2</sup>. VKRP collects data on students’ early learning, social-emotional skills, and mental health well-being that can be used to understand early learning trends across time and inform investments.

### How Statewide VKRP Data Can Be Used in Virginia

VKRP highlights the strengths of Virginia’s pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children, bringing attention to areas where students need support to maximize their learning (Figure 1). For teachers and school personnel, VKRP data can help drive day-to-day instruction, guide conversations with families, and inform decisions about educators’ professional development needs. At the state level, VKRP data informs policy decisions and helps identify schools, programs, divisions, and regions that may need more support or can serve as exemplars.

VKRP can be used by various stakeholders to better understand and support students’ academic and social-emotional learning and development, as well as

**FIGURE 1:** How Statewide Data Can Be Used in Virginia



<sup>2</sup> Schady, N., Holla, A., Sabarwal, S., & Silva, J. (2023). *Collapse and Recovery: How the COVID-19 Pandemic Eroded Human Capital and What to Do about It*. World Bank Publications. © Washington, DC: World Bank. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/39403>  
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their mental health well-being.

## An Integrated Approach to VDOE’s Early Childhood Data Systems: Virginia Connects for Kids

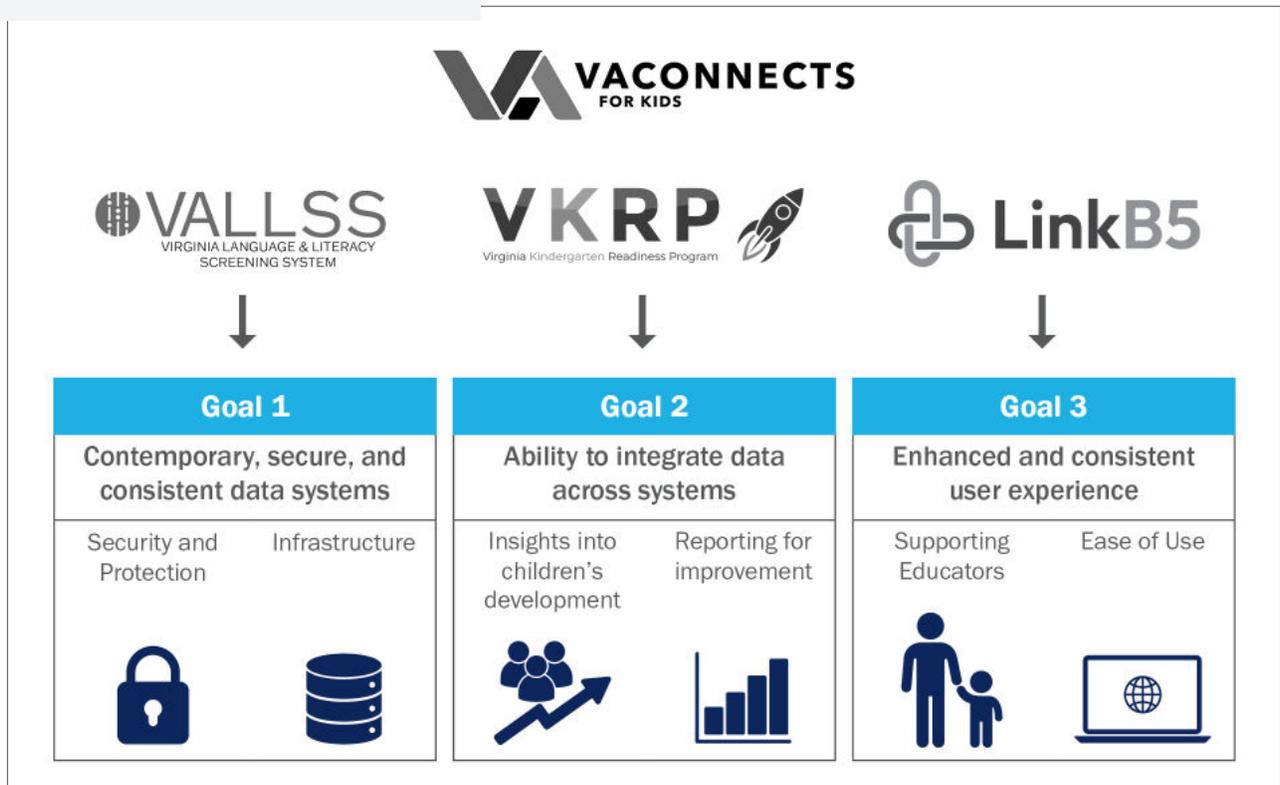
The existing early childhood data collection initiatives in Virginia include the Virginia Language & Literacy Screening System (VALLSS), VKRP, and LinkB5. LinkB5 is a uniform data system used to collect and analyze measurement and improvement data across early childhood programs participating in Virginia’s unified measurement and improvement system, Virginia Quality Birth to Five (VQB5). The use of LinkB5 is a requirement for all publicly-funded sites as part of VQB5.

In 2022, VDOE provided funding through the federal Preschool Development Grant Funds and American Rescue Plan Act to a team of researchers within UVA’s School of Education and Human Development (EHD) to

develop and implement a coordinated and integrated technology strategy and shared infrastructure between the growing state data collection initiatives (VLP, VKRP, and LinkB5) to maximize the impact and potential of these data systems. The integrated data system, Virginia Connects for Kids (VACONnects), ensures that each project can not only sustain individual growth and expansion but also work together to prioritize the integrity and continuity of data needed to inform and strengthen Virginia’s sizable investment in young learners—birth through third grade.

The goals of the integrated data system are to build a robust, coordinated system with enhanced hosting infrastructure and security features; shared data warehousing reflecting effective data governance; consistent, aligned, and integrated reporting; and a more streamlined user interface (Figure 2). In 2023–2024, the VACONnects team worked in partnership with VDOE to establish security infrastructure, develop a Data

**FIGURE 2:** VACONnects Goals



Governance Framework, improve the user interface and reporting services, and was used to complete a pilot of VALLSS in 17 school divisions across Virginia within the VACnects system.

## 2023-2024 Kindergarten Students Assessed with VKRP

In the fall of 2023, kindergarten teachers assessed approximately 97% of eligible<sup>3</sup> kindergarten students on the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screener (PALS-K) literacy screener and the Early Mathematics Assessment System (EMAS) mathematics assessment. Similarly, approximately 97% of eligible kindergarten children were rated by teachers on self-regulation and social skills on the Child Behavior Rating Scale (CBRS) and Mental Health Well-being items. Statewide, 76%<sup>4</sup> of assessed kindergarten students had complete VKRP data on all four measures – literacy (PALS-K), mathematics (EMAS), and self-regulation and social skills assessments (CBRS) in the fall of 2023.

In the spring of 2024, approximately 97% of eligible kindergarten children were assessed on the PALS-K literacy screener and the EMAS mathematics assessment and were rated by teachers on self-regulation and social skills using the CBRS and Mental Health Well-being items. Statewide, 76% of

assessed kindergarten students enrolled in the spring of 2024 had complete VKRP data on the four assessments – literacy (PALS-K), mathematics (EMAS), self-regulation and social skills (CBRS) assessments.

Over 60,000 kindergarten students were assessed in both the fall of 2023 and the spring of 2024 in all four domains of literacy, mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills.

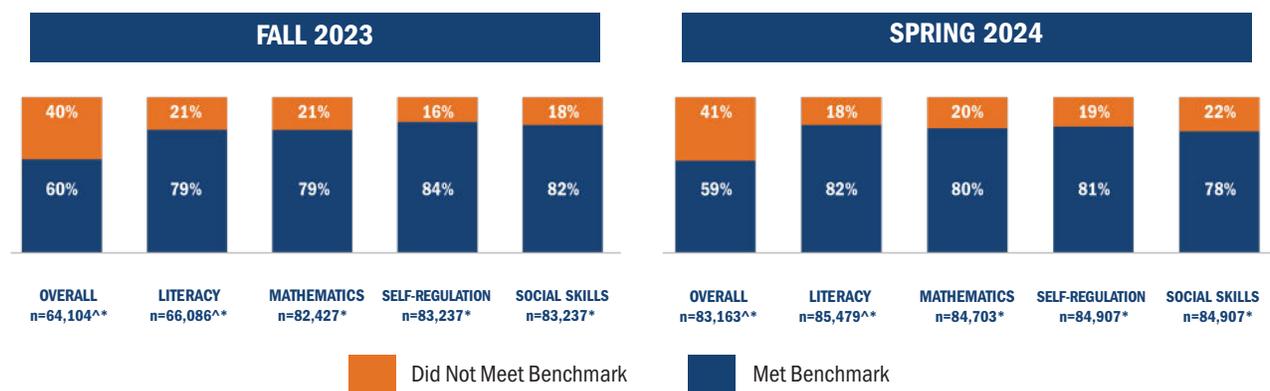
## 2023-2024 VKRP Kindergarten Key Findings

### Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 VKRP Kindergarten Data

In fall of 2023, approximately 60% of kindergarten students met the overall benchmark or minimum competency level in literacy, mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills. This means that 40% of Virginia’s kindergarteners began the school year still needing to build skills in literacy, mathematics, self-regulation, and/or social skills (Figure 3).

In the spring of 2024, approximately 59% of kindergarten students met the overall benchmark or minimum competency level in literacy, mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills. This means that 41% of Virginia’s kindergarten students ended the school year below expected levels in literacy, mathematics, self-regulation, and/or social

**FIGURE 3:** Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 Kindergarten Overall and Domain Benchmark Estimates



Note. If a kindergarten student does not demonstrate the minimally expected skill in one or more areas at the respective timepoint (fall or spring), they are categorized as not ready or below the overall benchmark (fall) or below the overall benchmark (spring).

<sup>^</sup> These data represent 114 divisions who used the PALS-K measure during the 2023-2024 school year. They do not include the 17 school divisions who piloted the Virginia Language and Literacy Screener: Kindergarten.

<sup>\*</sup> Students who complete data on each individual measure were included to obtain these estimates.

<sup>3</sup> Kindergarten students were eligible if they were in a public kindergarten classroom not participating in the VALLS: Kindergarten pilot and were not otherwise exempt from testing.

<sup>4</sup> These data represent 114 divisions who used the PALS-K measure during the 2023-2024 school year. They do not include the 17 school divisions who piloted the Virginia Language & Literacy Screener: Kindergarten.

skills. These results indicate a very small, 1% increase in kindergarten students not meeting the overall VKRP benchmark from fall 2023 to spring 2024.

### 2023-2024 VKRP Kindergarten Benchmark Estimates Across Demographics

Students falling below the overall VKRP benchmark at the beginning and/or end of kindergarten were disproportionately more likely to be students from low-income backgrounds, students with a disability, students who are English language/multilingual learners (EL), and students from historically marginalized racial/ethnic groups (see Table 1). These differential patterns in skill development illustrate the stark disparities in opportunities and access to high-quality educational experiences available to students and their families. These results elevate concerns that disparities in opportunity and access were likely exacerbated following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and mandated school closures in Virginia during the spring of 2020 and beyond.

### 2023-2024 VKRP Kindergarten Mental Health Well-being Data

Teachers continued to report concern for student well-being in the 2023–2024 school year. Teachers reported being moderately, very, or extremely concerned about the well-being of about 13% of kindergarten students in fall 2023 and 15% in spring 2024.

Additionally, in both fall of 2023 and spring of 2024, students whose teachers were concerned for their well-being were much more likely to *not* meet the overall benchmark, and to be below the benchmark academically and social-emotionally when compared to students whose teachers did not report social-emotional well-being concern (Figure 4). These results indicate teacher concern is an important indicator of students likely needing comprehensive and intensive supports to be successful in school.

### 2023–2024 VKRP Kindergarten Benchmark and Growth Data

This is the third year that VKRP has examined growth from the fall to spring timepoints. In terms of overall benchmark status, 49% of kindergarten students met the overall benchmark for both fall 2023 and spring 2024,

**TABLE 1: 2023-2024 Kindergarten Demographics Percentages**

Kindergarten Student Demographic Characteristics	Percent Below the Overall Benchmark	
	Fall 2023	Spring 2024
From low-income background <sup>a</sup>	51%	52%
Has a disability <sup>b</sup>	62%	66%
Is an English language/multilingual learner <sup>c</sup>	66%	57%
Student race		
American Indian or Alaska Native	53%	48%
Asian	31%	29%
Black or African American	47%	53%
Hispanic/Latino of any race	55%	51%
White, not of Hispanic origin	31%	32%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	40%	36%
Non-Hispanic/Latino of any race, two or more races	35%	38%

*Note.* These data represent 114 divisions who used the PALS-K measure during the 2023-2024 school year. They do not include the 17 school divisions who piloted the Virginia Language & Literacy Screener: Kindergarten

<sup>a</sup> Source: SRC Disadvantaged Status Flag. Students are identified as having a low-income background if, at any point during the school year, the student: 1) is eligible for Free/Reduced Meals, 2) receives TANF, or 3) is eligible for Medicaid.

<sup>b</sup> Source: SRC Primary Disability Code. Students are identified as having a disability if any code is present except, “Qualified Individual under Section 504.”

<sup>c</sup> Source: Student Record Collection (SRC) EL Services Code. Students are identified as English language/multilingual learners (EL) if code is, “Identified as EL and receives EL services,” “Identified as EL but has refused EL services,” or “Identified as formerly EL for each of the four years after exiting EL services.”

**Teacher concern about a student’s well-being is an important indicator that the student may need early, comprehensive, and intensive supports to be successful in school.**

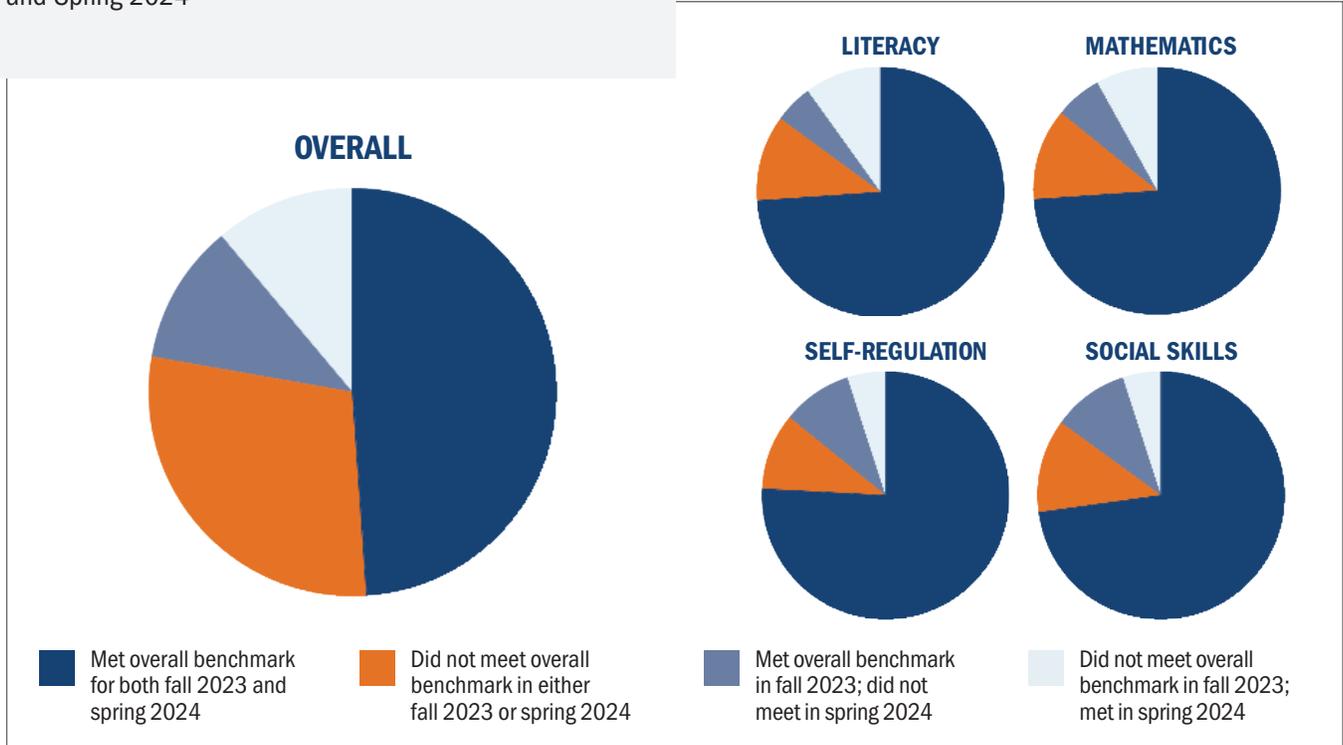
**FIGURE 4: Mental Health Well-Being Concerns and Benchmark Status**



while 29% did not meet the overall benchmark in either fall 2023 or spring 2024. Smaller percentages of students shifted in their overall benchmark status across the 2023–2024 school year—either meeting the overall benchmark in fall 2023 and not meeting in spring 2024 (11%) or not meeting the overall benchmark in fall 2023 and meeting in spring 2024 (11%) (Figure 5).

VKRP also examined trends in student growth<sup>5</sup> from fall 2023 to spring 2024 in mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills. Kindergarten students, on average, tended to display strong growth in mathematics skills and modest growth in self-regulation and social skills. However, there was variation in students’ growth across all domains with most students showing growth, some making robust gains, and a small percentage demonstrating negative growth from fall 2023 to spring 2024.

**FIGURE 5: Kindergarten Benchmark Status for Fall 2023 and Spring 2024**



<sup>5</sup> PALS-K was not designed to be used as a growth measure and is therefore not included in trends in student growth.

## 2019-2024 VKRP Kindergarten Trends Across Time Key Findings

Overall readiness estimates from fall 2019 to fall 2023 have remained relatively stable with a slight decrease in the percentage of students meeting the overall benchmark from fall 2019 to fall 2020, followed by slight increases in fall 2021 and fall 2022. The percentage of students meeting the overall benchmark remained stable from fall 2022 to fall 2023 (Figure 6).

Overall benchmark estimates from spring 2021 to spring 2023 increased and then remained stable from spring 2023 to spring 2024 (Figure 7). There was a large increase in students meeting the overall benchmark from spring 2021 (48%) to spring 2022 (56%). There was a slight increase from spring 2022 to spring 2023 (59%) in students meeting the overall benchmark. The percentage of students meeting the overall benchmark from spring 2023 to spring 2024 remained stable (59%). Spring VKRP data was not collected prior to the 2019–20 school year, and the spring assessment was not administered in 2020 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and universally mandated public-school closures.

## 2023-2024 VKRP Pre-kindergarten Students Assessed With VKRP

Beginning in the 2022–2023 school year, VKRP was administered to publicly-funded 3- and 4-year-old children in Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) and Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) Mixed Delivery classrooms in the fall of 2022 and in the spring of 2023.

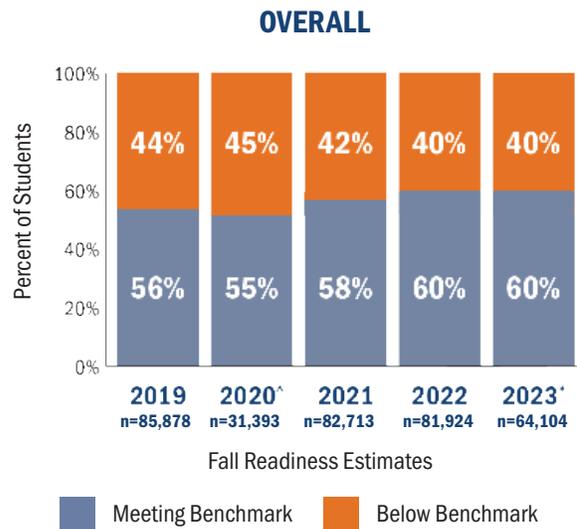
Pre-kindergarten classrooms in public schools that are not funded by VPI (such as a full Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) classroom, Head Start classroom, Title I classroom, or other locally supported pre-kindergarten classroom) may have chosen to administer the VKRP assessments, but it was not required.

### Three-Year-Old Assessment Completion Data

In the fall of 2023, teachers assessed approximately 86% of eligible<sup>6</sup> 3-year-old pre-kindergarten children on the VALLS: Pre-K and 84% of eligible 3-year-old pre-kindergarten children on the EMAS. Approximately

<sup>6</sup> Three- and four-year-old pre-kindergarten children were eligible if they were in a participating VKRP classroom and were not otherwise exempt from testing.

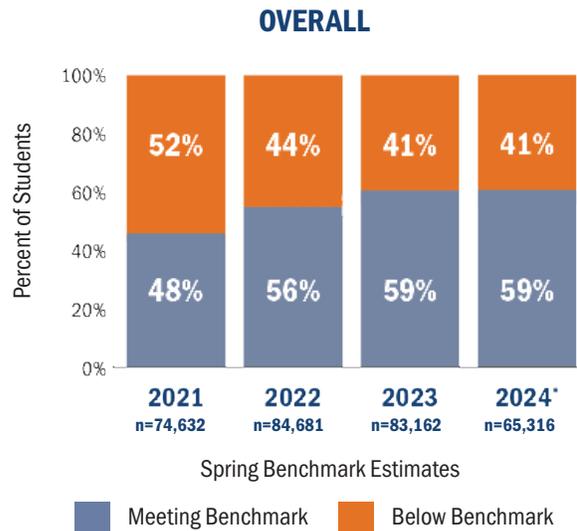
**FIGURE 6:** Fall Overall Kindergarten Readiness Estimates 2019-2023



<sup>^</sup> These data represent students who were assessed in-person in the fall of the 2020–2021 school year, prior to the availability of remote assessments.

<sup>\*</sup> These data represent 114 divisions who used the PALS-K measure during the 2023–2024 school year. They do not include the 17 school divisions who piloted the Virginia Language & Literacy Screener: Kindergarten.

**FIGURE 7:** Spring Overall Kindergarten Benchmark Estimates 2021-2024



<sup>\*</sup> These data represent 114 divisions who used the PALS-K measure during the 2023–2024 school year. They do not include the 17 school divisions who piloted the Virginia Language & Literacy Screener: Kindergarten.

86% of eligible 3-year-old pre-kindergarten children were rated by teachers on self-regulation and social skills on the CBRS and Mental Health Well-being items. Statewide, 81% of assessed 3-year-old pre-kindergarten children had complete VKRP data on all four measures – literacy (VALLS: Pre-K), mathematics (EMAS), and self-regulation and social skills assessments (CBRS) in the fall of 2023.

In the spring of 2024, approximately 85% of eligible 3-year-old pre-kindergarten children were assessed on the VALLS: Pre-K literacy screener, 80% were assessed on the EMAS, and 81% were rated by teachers on self-regulation and social skills using the CBRS and Mental Health Well-being items. Statewide, 82% of assessed 3-year-old pre-kindergarten children enrolled in the spring of 2024 had complete VKRP data on the four assessments – literacy (VALLS: Pre-K), mathematics (EMAS), self-regulation and social skills (CBRS) assessments in the spring of 2024.

Over 6,500 3-year-old pre-kindergarten children were assessed in both the fall of 2023 and the spring of 2024 in all four domains of literacy, mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills.

#### Four-Year-Old Assessment Completion Data

In the fall of 2023, teachers assessed approximately 97% of eligible 4-year-old pre-kindergarten children on the VALLS: Pre-K and 94% of eligible 4-year-old pre-kindergarten children on the EMAS. Approximately 97% of eligible 4-year-old pre-kindergarten children were rated by teachers on self-regulation and social skills on the CBRS and Mental Health Well-being items. Statewide, 92% of assessed 4-year-old pre-kindergarten children had complete VKRP data on all four measures – literacy (VALLS: Pre-K), mathematics (EMAS), and self-regulation and social skills assessments (CBRS) in the fall of 2023.

In the spring of 2024, approximately 96% of eligible 4-year-old pre-kindergarten children were assessed on the VALLS: Pre-K literacy screener, 93% were assessed on the EMAS, and 95% were rated by teachers on self-regulation and social skills using the CBRS and Mental Health Well-being items. Statewide, 93% of assessed 4-year-old pre-kindergarten children enrolled in the spring of 2024 had complete VKRP data on the four assessments

– literacy (VALLS: Pre-K), mathematics (EMAS), self-regulation and social skills (CBRS) assessments in the spring of 2024.

Over 25,000 4-year-old pre-kindergarten children were assessed in both the fall of 2023 and the spring of 2024 in all four domains of literacy, mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills.

## 2023-2024 VKRP Three-Year-Old Pre-kindergarten Key Findings

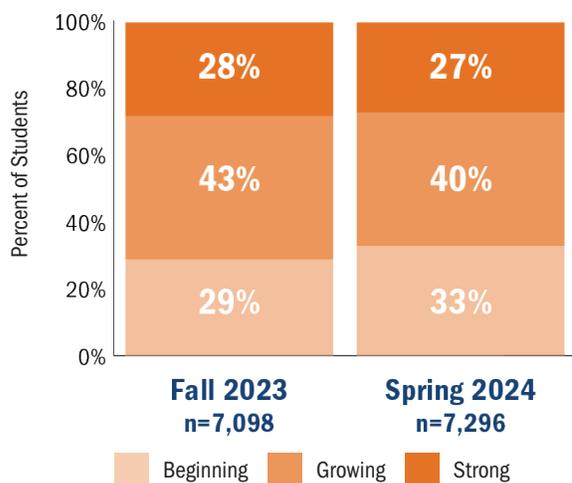
### Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 Three-Year-Old VKRP Pre-kindergarten Data

In 2023–2024, VKRP and VLP piloted Skill Development Bands (Beginning, Growing, and Strong) to help programs and educators interpret and use their VKRP pre-kindergarten data. Pre-kindergarten Literacy Skill Development Bands that were created by VLP for the VALLS: Pre-K measure are still being scaled and, therefore, are not included in this report. For more information regarding the Literacy Skill Development Bands, please contact the [VLP office](#).

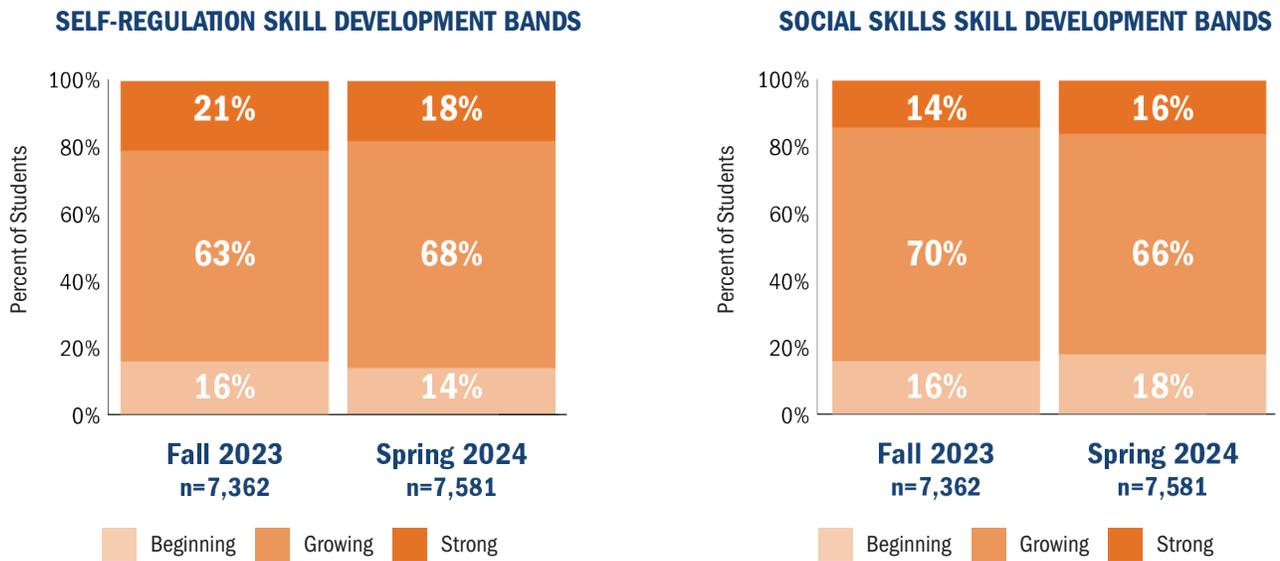
For mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills, separate bands were established in the fall of 2023 and spring of 2024 to represent children’s development as compared to expectations at that point in time.

For mathematics, in the fall of 2023, the largest percentage of children’s scores fell into the Growing Skill Development

**FIGURE 8:** Three-Year-Old Mathematics Skill Development Bands



**FIGURE 9:** Three-Year-Old Self-Regulation and Social Skills Skill Development Bands



Band in the fall of 2023 (43%) and in the spring of 2024 (40%) (Figure 8).

For self-regulation and social skills, the largest percentage of children’s scores fell into the Growing Skill Development Band in both the fall of 2023 (63% and 70%, respectively) and in the spring of 2024 (68% and 66%, respectively) (Figure 9).

**2023-2024 VKRP Three-Year-Old Pre-kindergarten Mental Health Well-Being Data**

In the fall of 2023, teachers reported being moderately, very, or extremely concerned about the mental health well-being of 23% of 3-year-old children enrolled in VKRP. Elevated teacher concern for 3-year-old pre-kindergarten children remained consistent in the spring of 2024 where teachers reported being moderately, very, or extremely concerned about 22% of children.

**2023-2024 VKRP Three-Year-Old Pre-kindergarten Growth Data**

As with the kindergarten data, VKRP examined trends in growth<sup>7</sup> in children’s scores from fall 2023 to spring 2024 in mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills. Three-year-old pre-kindergarten children tended to display strong growth in mathematics skills and modest growth in self-regulation and social skills. There was

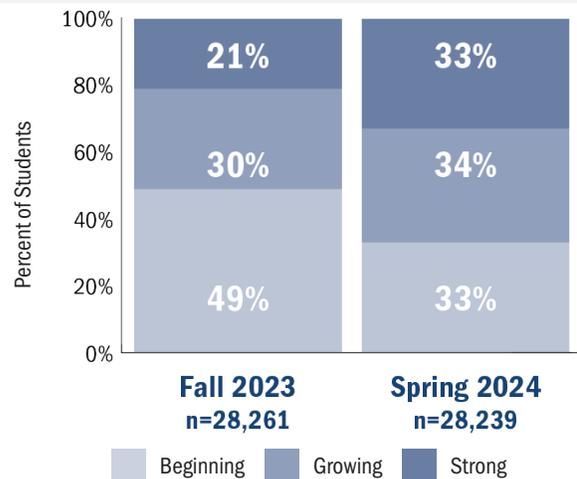
variation in children’s growth across all domains with most children growing in their skills, some children making robust gains, and a small percentage of children losing ground from fall 2023 to spring 2024.

**2023-2024 VKRP Four-Year-Old Pre-kindergarten Key Findings**

**Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 Four-Year-Old VKRP Pre-kindergarten Data**

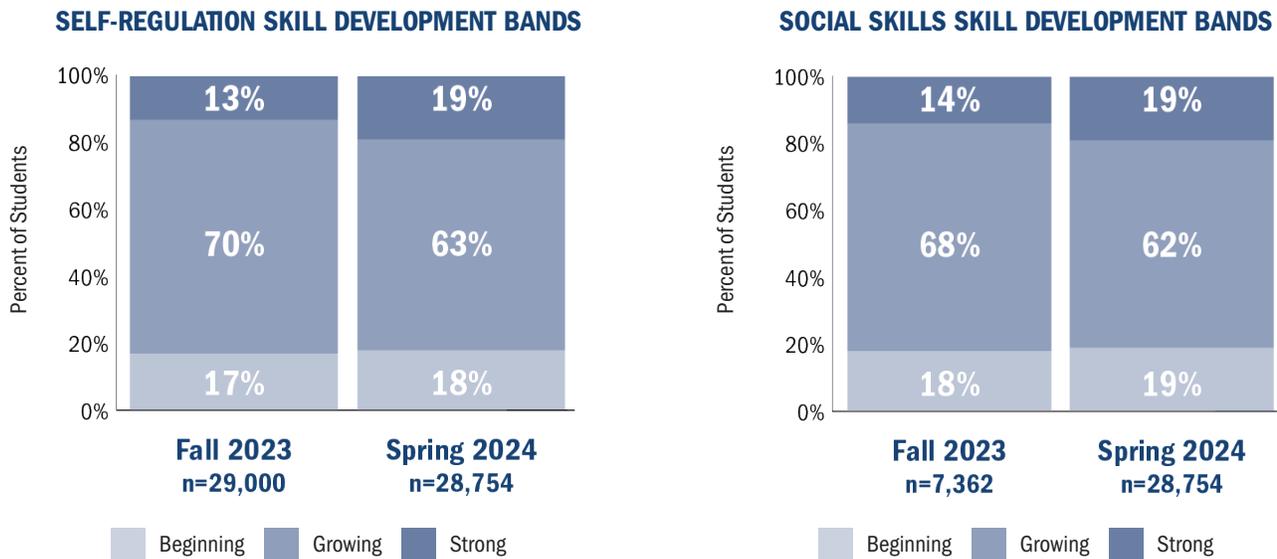
Four-year-old pre-kindergarten children also displayed a

**FIGURE 10:** Four-Year-Old Mathematics Skill Development Bands



<sup>7</sup> Three- and four-year-old pre-kindergarten children were eligible if they were in a participating VKRP classroom and were not otherwise exempt from testing.

**FIGURE 11:** Four-Year-Old Self-Regulation and Social Skills Skill Development Bands



range of skills across mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills in fall 2023 and spring 2024 (Figure 10).

For mathematics, in the fall of 2023, the largest percentage of children’s scores (49%) fell into the Beginning Skill Development Band. In the spring of 2023, there were relatively equal percentages of children’s scores that fell into each of the three bands, Beginning (33%), Growing (34%), Strong (33%).

For self-regulation and social skills, the largest percentage of 4-year-old children’s scores fell into the Growing Skill Development Band in both the fall of 2023 (70% and 68%, respectively) and in the spring of 2024 (63% and 62%, respectively) (Figure 11).

**2023-2024 VKRP Four-Year-Old Pre-kindergarten Mental Health Well-Being Data**

In the fall of 2023, teachers reported being moderately, very, or extremely concerned about the mental health well-being of 19% of their 4-year-old children. Elevated teacher concern for 4-year-old pre-kindergarten children decreased slightly in the spring of 2024 where teachers reported being moderately, very, or extremely concerned about 17% of their 4-year-old children.

**2023-2024 VKRP Four-Year-Old Pre-kindergarten Growth Data**

We examined trends in growth<sup>8</sup> of 4-year-old children’s scores from fall 2023 to spring 2024 in mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills. Four-year-old pre-kindergarten children tended to display robust growth in mathematics skills and modest growth in self-regulation and social skills. There was variation in children’s growth across all domains with most children making gains, some making strong gains, and a small percentage losing ground from fall 2023 to spring 2024.

Preschool teachers reported being significantly concerned about **1 in 5 four-year-olds** during Fall 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Growth scores on the pre-kindergarten literacy screener are still being finalized. Currently, pre-kindergarten literacy scores represent children’s outcomes at each distinct timepoint (i.e., fall and spring).

## Mid-Year Assessment Pilot

Program, school, and division leaders, teachers, and families across Virginia have expressed interest in understanding how to better monitor students' progress and growth across the school year and to better align with Virginia's literacy assessment practices.

During the 2022–2023 year, as required by the 2022–2023 Biennial Budget, VKRP gathered information about the goals of a mid-year assessment from VDOE and educator stakeholders and coordinated with VLP, to inform the design of a mid-year assessment timepoint. During the 2023–2024 year, VKRP conducted a pilot and engaged in refinement of the VKRP assessment system for a mid-year timepoint.

In the spring of 2023, the VKRP team developed new mathematics items to be used as part of the mid-year EMAS in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. These items were piloted by a team of data collectors in classrooms across Virginia throughout the fall of 2023. Psychometric analysis was conducted on the items, and feedback was gathered from data collectors and teachers who reviewed the items. This information was triangulated to develop pilot EMAS mid-year forms.

In January 2024, VKRP conducted a VKRP Mid-Year Assessment Pilot that incorporated pilot EMAS mid-year forms, the CBRS, and the Mental Health Well-being items. The VKRP team recruited teachers for participation across divisions and programs in the Commonwealth to participate in the pilot. In kindergarten, 82 teachers and 1,176 kindergarten students participated in the pilot. In pre-kindergarten, 337 teachers, 1,002 3-year-old children, and

3,887 4-year-old children participated in the pilot.

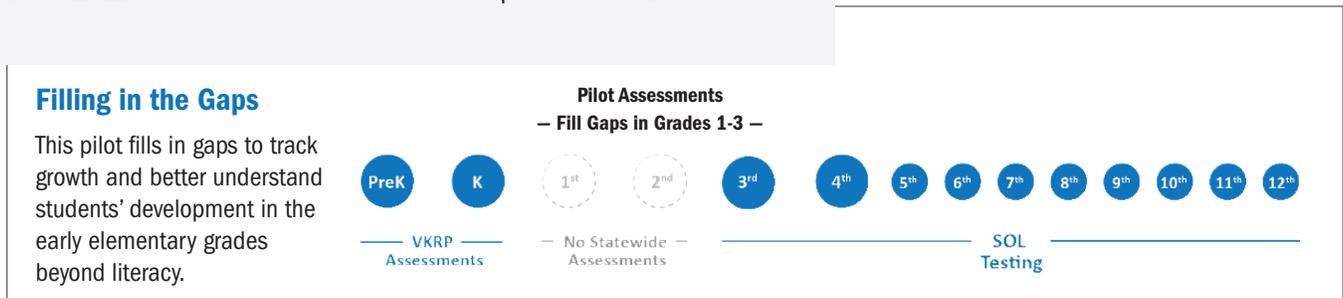
At the conclusion of the VKRP Mid-Year Assessment Pilot, the VKRP team sent a survey to teachers that asked questions about how teachers would use mid-year data. Results showed that pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers were likely to use the VKRP mid-year data for a wide range of purposes including identifying gaps in student knowledge, planning instruction for small groups, communicating with families about student development, and planning instruction to meet the needs of individual students.

## Grade 1-3 Assessment Pilot

VKRP, in partnership with VDOE, began conducting a mathematics, self-regulation, social skills, and mental health well-being assessment pilot in grades one through three (1-3 Assessment Pilot) in 2022–2023. The purpose of the pilot, required by Virginia's 2022–2023 Biennial Budget, was to explore the utility of building longitudinal measures of mathematics, self-regulation, social skills, and mental health well-being that could potentially extend into grades one through three.

Currently, there are several gaps in existing assessments (Figure 12). Apart from literacy, there are no statewide assessments that measure students' early learning in these areas in grades one and two. Additionally, there are no statewide assessments that universally track students' growth within the academic year and across academic years in these areas from pre-kindergarten through grade three (noting there are growth assessments in mathematics starting in grade three).

**FIGURE 12:** How the Assessment Pilot Fills Gaps in Grades 1-3



## Key Pilot Activity Updates

### 1-3 Divisions Assessment Survey

A survey was developed and distributed across Virginia school divisions during the 2023–2024 year to learn what assessments are currently being used in grades one through three to assess mathematics, social-emotional skills (with a particular interest in self-regulation and social skills), and mental health well-being. At least two division leaders from the 130 divisions across the state were identified, contacted, and asked to complete the survey. A total of 181 individuals across 109 divisions completed the survey. Results indicated that most divisions do not have an assessment to measure social-emotional skills or mental health well-being in grades one, two, or three. In contrast, most respondents reported having a divisionwide assessment for mathematics in grades one, two, and three.

Respondents also shared qualitative feedback about how assessments are used to support students and families and their thoughts about a possible state-supported assessments for mathematics, social-emotional skills, and mental health well-being. A subset of common themes that emerged from responses across domains are shared below.

#### *Themes about Opportunities for Possible State-Supported Assessments for Mathematics, Social-Emotional Skills, or Mental Health Well-being*

- **Longitudinal Tracking and Growth Analysis:** Assessments could track growth and changes over time from pre-kindergarten through third grade.
- **Informed Decision-Making:** Assessments could provide insights to inform decision-making, aiding timely interventions and appropriate resource allocation.
- **Tailored Support and Instruction:** Assessments could enable tailored support and data-driven instruction tailored to individual needs.

#### *Themes about Challenges for Possible State-Supported Assessments for Mathematics, Social-Emotional Skills, or Mental Health Well-being*

- **Instructional Time and Workload Impact:** There were concerns about the potential impact on instructional time and increased workload for educators responsible

for administering additional assessments, potentially leading to reduced teaching time.

- **Teacher Support and Professional Development:** The necessity for adequate support, training, and professional development for teachers to effectively utilize assessment data for instructional improvement were emphasized for both assessments.

### EMAS Item Development and Piloting

#### *EMAS Item Development*

During the 2022–2023 school year, the VKRP team worked with consultants with mathematics expertise to create 237 new items across five domains (Numeracy = 52, Geometry & Measurement = 43, Patterning = 36, Computation = 84, and Probability & Statistics = 22) that were then reviewed by VDOE. Piloting these new items in grades one through three began during the 2022–2023 year and continued into the 2023–2024 year.

#### *EMAS Item Piloting*

The VKRP team recruited 18 school divisions to participate in an EMAS item pilot. The VKRP team intentionally recruited a diverse group of divisions that included variability based on urbanicity and size. VKRP hired and trained data collectors to pilot test items in first through third grade classrooms. To date, data has been collected on 6,635 students across grades one through three.

### Future Directions

In the 2024–2025 school year, VKRP will:

- **Support pre-kindergarten and kindergarten implementation.** VKRP will continue to support teachers', administrators', and divisions/programs' implementation of VKRP by providing in-person trainings, webinars, and online trainings and resources for teachers and school/division/program-level administrators.
- **Support 3- and 4-year-old pre-kindergarten participation.** VKRP will continue to be available for use in publicly funded 3- and 4-year-old pre-kindergarten classrooms with continued implementation support for programs required to participate (e.g., VPI funded classrooms, VECF Mixed Delivery) or who are voluntarily participating and

targeted outreach to those who are not yet participating but may choose to participate.

- **Provide VKRP Assessment System at a mid-year time point statewide.** VKRP will be available to all divisions and programs at a mid-year timepoint, beginning in winter 2025.
- **Refine the grades 1-3 Assessment Pilot.** The VKRP team will refine the measures, resources, and reports for mathematics, self-regulation, social skills, and mental health well-being in 2024–2025 with a focus on grades one and two.
- **Collaborate with VLP.** Continuing in 2024–2025, VKRP will closely collaborate with the VLP team around their statewide implementation of the Virginia Language & Literacy Screening System (VALLSS).
- **Collaborate with STREAMin<sup>3</sup>.** The STREAMin<sup>3</sup> curriculum model supports skills and interactions that align to the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) and highly encourages use of VKRP as a progress monitoring tool. To support VKRP use in new STREAMin<sup>3</sup> programs, the VKRP and STREAMin<sup>3</sup> teams collaborate to encourage new programs, many of whom were small private childcare and family childcare programs, to use VKRP.
- **Improve and expand reports.** VKRP includes a robust reporting system that provides a detailed snapshot of students' academic and social-emotional skills in the fall and spring of each academic year. VKRP is enhancing reports that show growth in students' skills for both teachers and families. Additionally, the VKRP team is developing a suite of mid-year reports.
- **Develop enhanced resources for families.** VKRP, in collaboration with VDOE, continues to prioritize elevating families' voices and improving families' experiences with VKRP. Feedback from family focus groups held in 2023–2024 was used to improve the Pre-kindergarten VKRP Family Information Report. Similar improvements are being made to the Kindergarten VKRP Family Information Reports for the 2024–2025 academic year.
- **Collaborate with Virginia Connects for Kids.** The VKRP team continues to collaborate with VLP and the LinkB5

teams to develop a coordinated integrated data system, Virginia Connects for Kids (VAConnects). This system will integrate statewide early childhood data collection initiatives to leverage data to maximize the impact of the three separate data systems. In fall 2024, VALLSS will launch statewide in VAConnects in grades kindergarten through third in all school divisions across Virginia. Throughout 2024–2025, VKRP and LinkB5 will be integrated into the VAConnects application. All three programs will launch in VAConnects in fall 2025. ♦