



Workplan 2025

Justin Brown

Senior Associate Director

- 2025 studies
 - School library book removal
 - Shifting demographic trends
 - Community college landscape & mission impact
 - K-12 accountability



Briefing: July 2025

School library book removal

Staff: Justin Brown, Jessica Sabbath

Study resolution

- Directs JLARC to survey each school division about
 - Books removed from school libraries since July 2020
 - Whether removed by a “challenge committee,” school board, or others
 - How the removal decision was initiated and who was involved in the process
 - Basis for the decision to remove, including § 22.1-16.8
 - Availability of state-level assistance for divisions to make book removal decisions

SJ 251 (2025 Session)

Research activities

- Interview relevant statewide educational associations
- Work with VCU's Survey and Evaluation Research Laboratory to develop, pre-test, and administer survey
 - Survey administration primarily in April
- Tabulate and summarize survey results



Briefing: November 2025

Shifting demographic trends

Staff: Justin Brown, Sarah Smith, PhD

Study resolution

- Directs JLARC to review Virginia's historical and projected demographic shifts
 - trends (state, local/regional) in births, deaths, and in- and out-migration
 - demographic characteristics (race and ethnicity, education, employment, income, and age)
 - revenue and economic impacts of trends
 - government functions that potentially could be impacted
 - identify topics for future JLARC studies

Commission resolution (November 7, 2024)

Research activities

- Work with UVA's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service to identify most appropriate demographic data sources
- Analyze data to identify relevant trends
- Interview relevant state agencies about potential impact of major trends on state and local government



Briefing: October 2025

Community college landscape & mission impact

Staff: Stefanie Papps, Kate Agnelli, Ellen Miller, Mitch Parry

Study resolution

- Directs JLARC to review how well the Virginia Community College System is adapting to the changing higher education landscape
 - trends in enrollment and tuition and fee revenue
 - student outcomes and how well the system meets Virginia's workforce needs
 - use of virtual instruction
 - high school students' use of dual/concurrent enrollment to gain a postsecondary credential or degree
 - how other states have adapted their community college systems

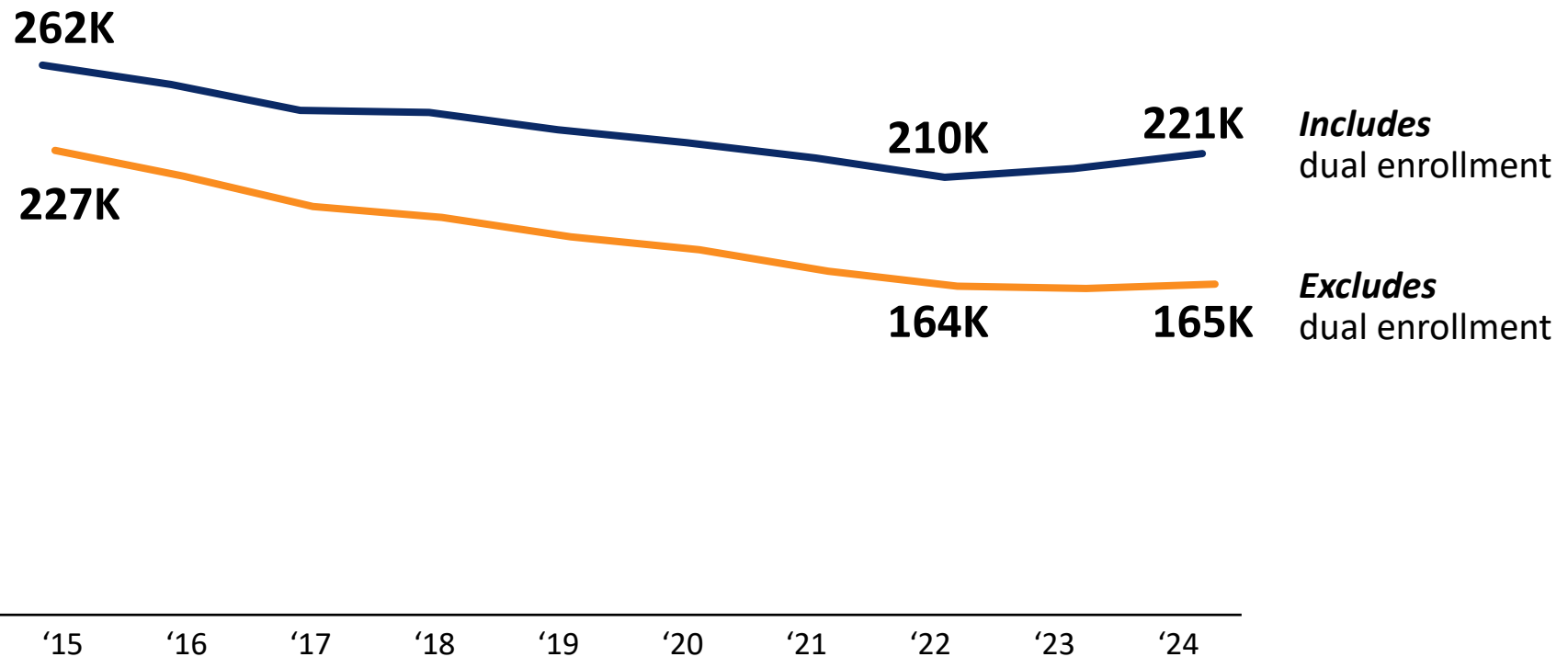
Commission resolution (November 7, 2024)

Background

- Number of high school graduates peaked this year and will decline in future years
- Attitudes toward higher education are changing
 - belief by some that a four-year college degree may not be worth the cost
 - more job opportunities through technical and vocational training and credentials
- Pandemic changed student expectations about how to learn; last year nearly three-fourths of VCCS students took at least some classes online

Background

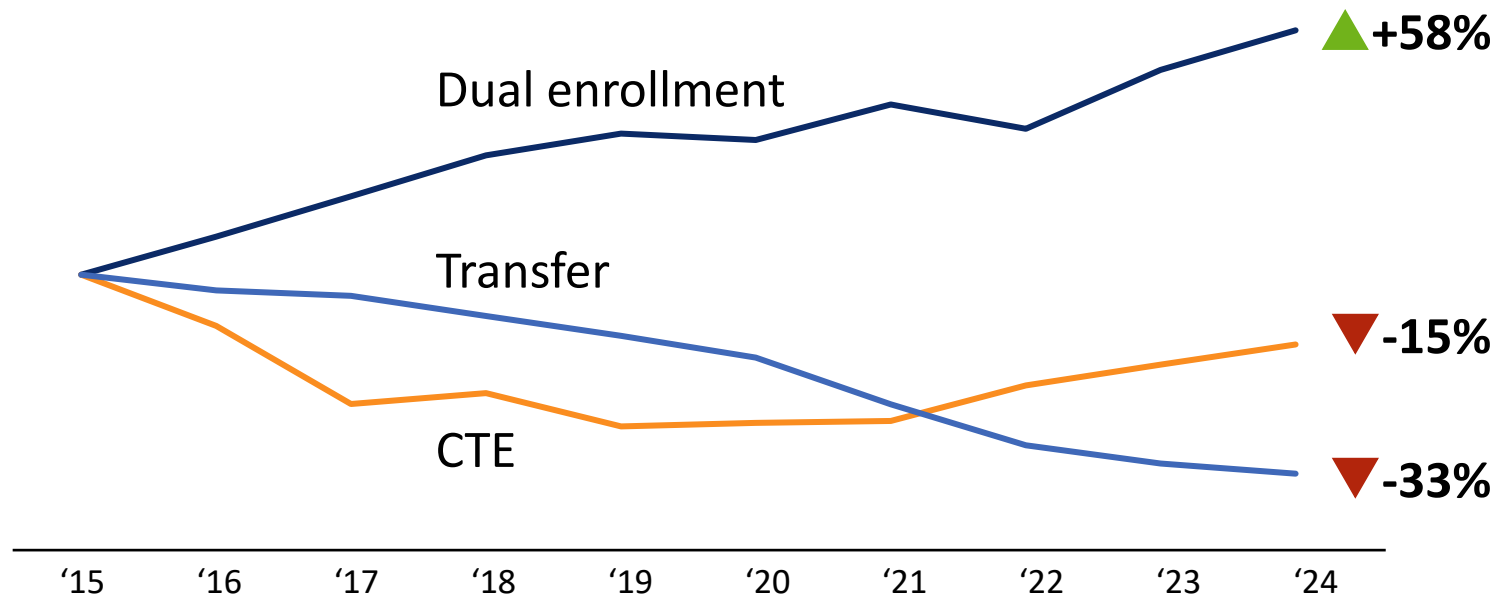
- VCCS enrollment had been declining but recently began to increase



Enrollment shown = student “headcount.” Includes FastForward non-credit enrollment.

Background

- Composition of VCCS enrollment has been changing
 - More dual enrollment students, fewer transfer students
 - Increasing CTE students after the pandemic



CTE = career & technical education

Study issues

- How well is VCCS adapting to a changing higher education landscape?
- What are the outcomes—and potential barriers to completion—of students seeking to transfer to a four-year institution from a community college?
- Do career and technical education students have positive outcomes and are programs aligned with employer demand?
- Are dual enrollment programs consistently available to eligible high school students, and what challenges need to be addressed to increase availability?

Research activities

- Review academic research literature and other state experiences on adapting to the changing landscape
- Interviews: VCCS, community college, and school division staff
- Data collection: school divisions about dual enrollment
- Data analysis
 - Individual college enrollment trends and composition
 - Student completion and outcomes, by student type and course instruction method (e.g., online vs. in-person)
 - Alignment of CTE courses with high demand jobs, by region
- Site visits to selected colleges (varying sizes & regions)



Briefing: December 2025

K-12 accountability

Staff: Joe McMahon, Kate Hopkins, Laura White, PhD

Study resolution

- Directs JLARC to review Virginia's recently revised accreditation standards for public K–12 education
 - appropriate role and purpose of school accountability systems
 - whether new system uses appropriate criteria and is sufficiently transparent and understandable
 - whether new system balances accountability, assistance, and educational quality improvement
 - whether new system is sufficiently aligned with federal and other applicable accountability frameworks

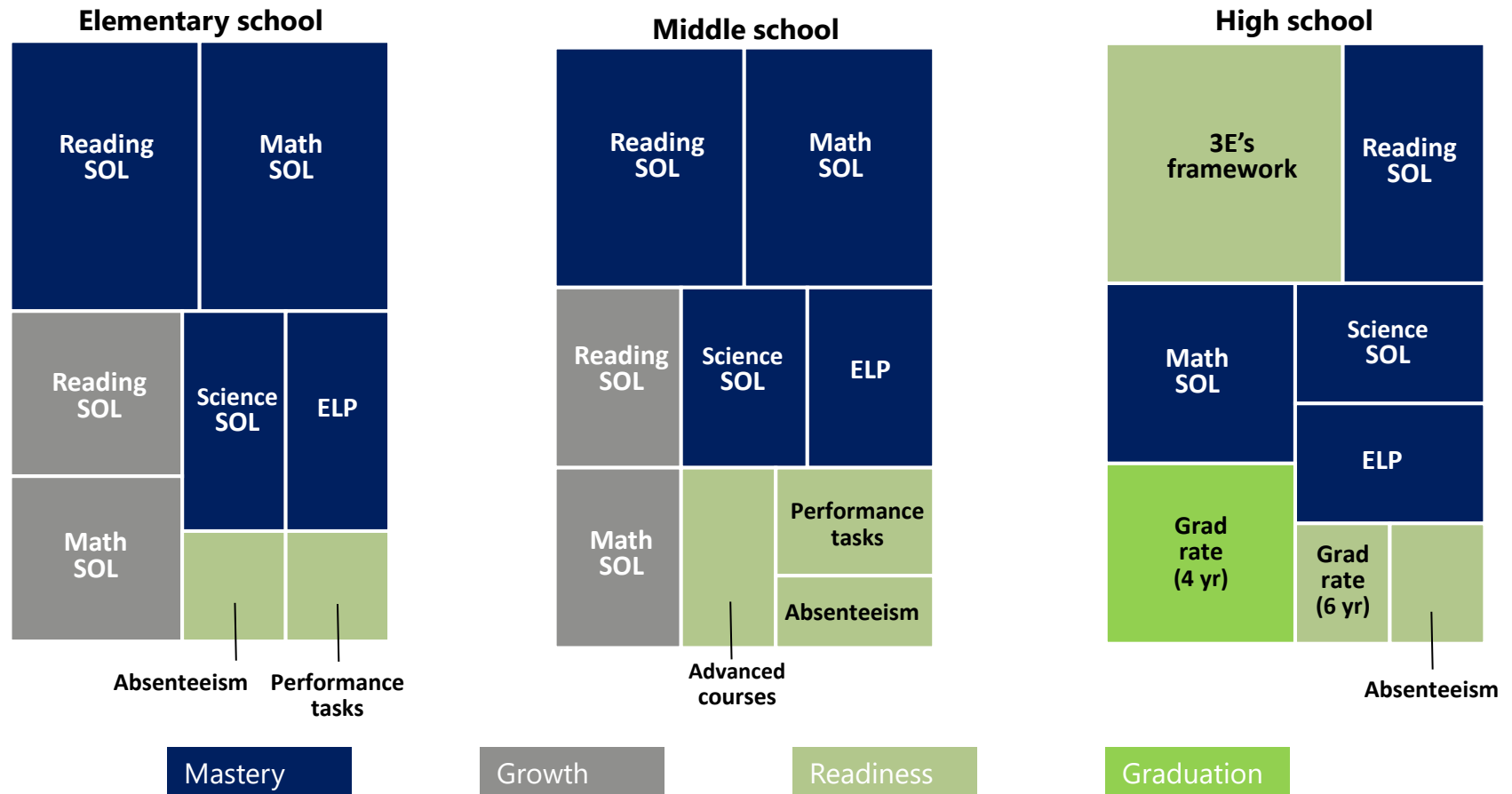
Commission resolution (November 7, 2024)

Background

- Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) passed new K–12 public school accountability regulations in October 2024
- VBOE sought to develop a new framework because of its belief that the prior accreditation system lacked transparency and was not adequately setting high expectations for schools and students*
- Framework will be used to measure school performance beginning in fall 2025 with data from the 2024–25 school year

*VBOE Comprehensive Plan, 2024–2029.

Background



Boxes scaled to represent proportion of total weighting.

ELP = English language proficiency; Absenteeism = Chronic (~18+ days); Performance tasks = 5C's (critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship); 3E's = Enlistment, employment, enrollment.

Background

- Schools will be scored on each of the new framework's indicators (e.g., growth: math SOLs)
- Indicator scores will be totaled to produce a summative score for each school, which falls into one of four categories
- Two lowest categories may receive state support

Total score	Category
90+	Distinguished
80 to 89	On track
65 to 79	Off track
Below 65	Needs intensive support

Study issues

- What is the purpose of an accountability system and how should it be designed?
- Are the indicators used in Virginia's framework appropriate for measuring school performance?
- Is the framework based on sound methodology, and what are the implications of its methodological design?
- Is the framework being effectively implemented, and are results presented in a fair and useful way?
- Does it appear that the framework will effectively link schools needing support with meaningful assistance?

Research activities

- Review academic research literature, federal requirements, and other state K–12 accountability systems
- Interview experts, VDOE, VBOE, and school staff
- Survey school divisions about implementation and effects of new framework
- Analyze framework's indicators, assumptions, weighting, and underlying data
- Analyze methodological soundness of framework (e.g., scenario and sensitivity analysis)
- Compare planned state support to effective practices

Tracey Smith

Associate Director

- 2025 studies
 - Potential transfer of DJJ to HHR
 - Capital construction & maintenance
 - Correctional education & vocational training
 - Effects of gun violence



Briefing: June 2025

Potential transfer of DJJ to HHR

Staff: Brittany Utz, Tess Hinteregger

Study resolution

- Directs JLARC to study the feasibility, costs, and benefits of transferring responsibility for DJJ from the Secretariat of Public Safety and Homeland Security to the Secretariat of Health and Human Resources

Commission resolution (November 13, 2023)

Background

- DJJ is one of 10 agencies within the public safety secretariat
- DJJ's mission is to “protect the public by preparing court-involved and committed youth to become successful citizens”
- DJJ changed its programming with the goal of achieving a better balance between punishment and rehabilitation
- About 3K youth are involved in the juvenile justice system at any given time, many of whom are eligible for services delivered by agencies in the health and human resources secretariat
 - CSA services, foster care, self-sufficiency programs, etc.

Study issues

- How would transferring DJJ to the HHR secretariat affect
 - youth and their families,
 - public safety,
 - DJJ's ability to collaborate with criminal justice agencies and programs,
 - DJJ's ability to collaborate with HHR agencies and programs, and
 - state and local costs?

Research activities

- Interviews with state agency staff, including staff in the governor's cabinet, public safety agencies, health and human resources agencies
- Interviews with federal funding agencies, staff in other states, and national experts
- Interviews with various stakeholder groups, including advocates for youth
- Reviews of other states' agency structures and cross-agency agreements
- Review of literature on organizational management and juvenile justice best practices
- Analysis of agency budget and expenditure data



Briefing: October 2025

Capital construction & maintenance

Staff: Lauren Axselle, Sarah Berday-Sacks, Madison McCaffrey, Christine Wolfe

Study resolution

- Evaluate state's process for identifying needs, prioritizing, planning, and funding
 - maintenance of existing capital assets
 - new construction
- Determine
 - availability and usability of data on state capital asset condition and utilization
 - why some capital outlay projects are not completed on time and how timeliness could be improved
- Review roles of 6PAC, DGS, and SCHEV*

*Six-Year Capital Outlay Plan Advisory Committee, Department of General Services, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.
Commission resolution (November 2024)

Background

- State owns ~7,600 buildings, totaling 128.5M sq ft
 - Higher eds own 41% of buildings/74% of square footage
 - DGS manages most state-owned buildings, systems in Capitol Square
 - ~60 agencies/higher eds manage own buildings/systems
- State invested ~\$15B in capital assets over the past decade (i.e., maintenance, renovations, construction)
 - \$4.7B for FY25–26
- State-owned buildings and systems have significant deferred maintenance needs

Study issues

- What capital assets does the state own, what is their condition, and to what extent are they being used?
- Are agencies/higher eds effectively identifying and planning for future construction/maintenance needs?
- Do state's policies and processes effectively identify, fund, and complete both lower-cost maintenance projects (maintenance reserve) and larger maintenance and construction projects (capital outlay)?
- Have capital outlay projects experienced avoidable delays, and if so, why, and how can delays be avoided in the future?

Research activities

- Analysis of data on
 - number, size, and utilization of state-owned buildings
 - condition of state-owned buildings and components
 - allocation of maintenance reserve funding across agencies/higher eds and how it is spent
 - timeliness of capital outlay projects
- Interviews with staff of DGS, SCHEV, DPB, money committees, governor's office, agencies/higher eds
- Interviews with subject-matter experts from national organizations, other states, federal government
- Reviews of numerous state policy and capital project documents



Briefing: November 2025

Correctional education and vocational training

Staff: Drew Dickinson, Hannah Garfinkel, Tess Hinteregger, Scarlett Saunders

Study resolution

- Inventory education and vocational training programs at each state correctional institution, including their funding and staffing
- Evaluate availability of programs and assess their alignment with labor market needs
- Compare DOC's programs to evidence-based practices
- Evaluate participant outcomes
- Evaluate feasibility and potential effectiveness of providing education and vocational training programs in local and regional jails

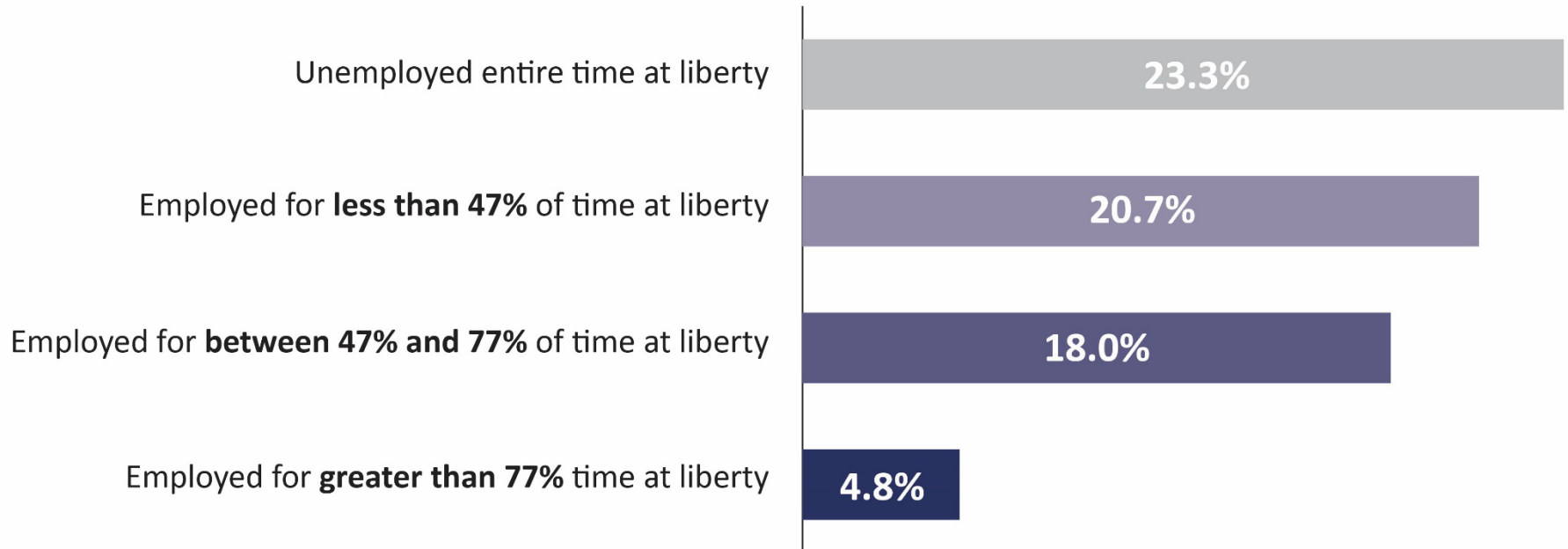
Commission resolution (November 2024)

Background

- Approximately 26K state-responsible inmates, most of whom (~80%) are in one of 37 DOC-operated prisons
- State law requires DOC to establish and maintain academic and career and technical education programs
- DOC requires inmates without a HS diploma or equivalent to participate in education programs; CTE is optional
- DOC provides adult education and GED preparation, CTE, and post-secondary degree programs
 - All facilities provide adult education, but availability depends on staffing and security constraints
 - Not all facilities offer CTE or post-secondary education; those that do have waitlists

Recidivism rates are lower among former DOC inmates who maintain employment

THREE-YEAR RE-INCARCERATION RATE (FY2019 RELEASES)



Source: 2024 DOC Recidivism Report for FY19 State Responsible Releases.

Note: Figure includes state-responsible inmates released in FY19 from state prisons and local and regional jails. Timeframe categories created by DOC staff.

Study issues

- What correctional and education programs are available at DOC facilities?
- What proportion of eligible inmates enroll in and complete these programs, and what prevents enrollment and completion?
- Are DOC's policies, procedures, staffing, and oversight of education programs sufficient to ensure that they are effective?
- Do education programs prepare inmates for skills needed in the labor market, and what prevents DOC from modifying or expanding its program offerings?

Study issues (cont.)

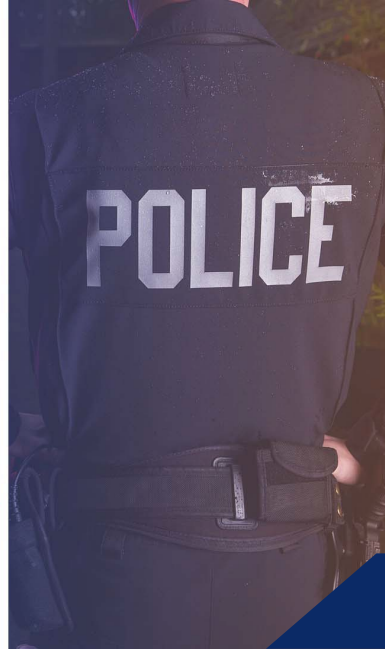
- Do participants obtain and sustain employment after release?
- What education programs are provided in local and regional jails and is it feasible and advantageous to expand them to more jails and jail inmates?

Research activities

- Analysis of data on
 - inmates' educational backgrounds, education program enrollment and completion, credential attainment, and recidivism
 - program offerings and staffing (teachers, principals, etc.)
 - former inmates' employment and earnings
- Surveys of
 - DOC staff, including teachers, principals, & wardens
 - Members of the 44 reentry councils, which aid in transitions from prison to the community
 - Local and regional jail superintendents

Research activities (cont.)

- Interviews with DOC central office and prison staff, jail superintendents, and national subject matter experts
- Reviews of correctional education programs in other states and interviews with their staff
- Review of national research literature on best practices for adult education and CTE programs in correctional settings and effectiveness of such programs



Briefing: December 2025

Effects of Gun Violence

Staff: Mark Gribbin, Sarah Smith, PhD, Brittany Utz, Dillon Wild

Study resolution

- Directs JLARC to study the impact of gun violence on the
 - physical, mental, and emotional health of individuals living in affected communities
 - social and economic health of affected communities
- Directs JLARC to consider and propose policy recommendations to address gun violence and its effects

HJR 76 (2024)

Background

- Virginia experienced an increase in firearm-related violence between 2019 and 2023*
 - Firearm-related homicides increased 20%
 - Virginia ranked 22nd in firearm-related homicides among states and Washington, D.C., in 2023, equivalent to national average
- Localities with the highest numbers of homicides, and the highest homicide rates, include the cities of Richmond, Portsmouth, Petersburg, Norfolk, and Roanoke

*Most recent 5-year period for which national data is available.

Background (cont.)

- Several state agencies have initiatives or responsibilities related to firearm-related violence
 - DCJS's Office of Safer Communities, est. in 2023 budget
 - OAG's Ceasefire Virginia
 - VDH and VSP track data on deaths, injuries, and crimes
- Virginia criminal laws provide punishments for violent crimes in general (e.g., murder, robbery) and for gun crimes (e.g., illegal sale or possession)
- Virginia law contains provisions related to legal firearm acquisition, ownership, and possession
 - universal background checks, concealed carry permits

Study issues

- What are the trends and current prevalence in firearm-related violence, specifically community violence?
 - Study will focus on community violence more than domestic violence or self-harm
- What are the specific physical, mental, emotional, economic, and social impacts of exposure to firearm-related violence on individuals and their communities?
- Are there programs, policies, and laws that have been effective at preventing, reducing, or addressing the effects of firearm-related violence? To what extent are they used in Virginia?

Research activities

- Analyses of data on
 - firearm deaths and injuries from the VDH Violent Death Reporting System, Virginia Medical Examiner Database, hospital systems (inpatient, emergency room, and cost data), and the CDC
 - firearm-related crimes from VSP, FBI, and ATF
 - mental and emotional health from VDH and DBHDS
 - K-12 staffing, absenteeism, student behavior, and school climate and safety from VDOE
 - economic and social health indicators (e.g., property values, business activity, etc.)
- Survey of law enforcement officials in selected communities

Research activities (cont.)

- Interviews with leaders and key stakeholders in selected Virginia communities, national researchers, and subject matter experts
 - Focus on communities with high rates of firearm-related violence
- Reviews of national research literature on the effects of firearm violence and effectiveness of programs, policies, and practices designed to address its effects and prevent or reduce it

Kimberly Sarte

Associate Director

- Ongoing evaluation and oversight
 - Evaluation of economic development incentives
 - Oversight of VRS, Commonwealth Savers, and VITA
 - Racial and ethnic impact statements
- Fiscal analysis
 - Annual reports
 - Fiscal impact reviews



Briefings: June and November 2025

Ongoing Evaluation of Economic Development Incentives

Staff: Ellen Miller

Effectiveness of workforce and industry incentives (June 2025)

- Worker training and recruitment incentives
- Incentives targeting specific industries

Annual economic development incentives report (November 2025)

- Spending for all incentives
- Performance of completed projects receiving grants



Briefings: Ongoing in 2025

Ongoing Oversight: VRS, Commonwealth Savers, and VITA

Staff: Alex Jansson

Virginia Retirement System

- Oversight update (July)
- Update from VRS director and chief investment officer (July)
- Oversight report (December)
- VRS Legislator's Guide (February 2026)
- Attend meetings of the board and advisory committees (year-round)

Commonwealth Savers Plan

- Independent actuarial audit of Commonwealth Savers (July)
- Update from Commonwealth Savers chief executive officer and investment director (July)
- Commonwealth Savers Legislator's Guide (February 2026)
- Attend meetings of the board and advisory committees (year-round)

Virginia Information Technologies Agency

- JLARC staff status update (September)
- Update from VITA leadership (September)
- Attend meetings of IT advisory groups

Racial and ethnic impact statements

- Impact on racial and ethnic disparities of proposed criminal justice legislation (2026 session)
- 1 racial and ethnic impact statement conducted during 2025 session

NOTE: Reviews must be requested by House or Senate Courts of Justice committee chairs.



Fiscal Analysis

Staff: Kimberly Sarte, Justin Brown, Ellen Miller

Annual reports

- Review of State Spending (October)
- State Spending on K–12 Standards of Quality (December)
- Virginia Compared with Other States (January 2026)

Fiscal impact reviews

- Second opinions on fiscal impact of proposed legislation (2026 session)
- Fiscal impact reviews of executive orders issued by governor (as requested)

NOTE: Reviews must be requested by committee chairs.

Proposed meeting schedule for 2025

JUNE 4	Potential transfer of DJJ to HHR Workforce and industry incentives APA report on FY24 work	OCTOBER 6	Community colleges Capital construction & maintenance State spending
JULY 14	Library book removal VRS Commonwealth Savers	NOVEMBER 10	Correctional education Demographic trends Economic development incentives
AUGUST	<i>No meeting</i>	DECEMBER 15	K-12 accountability Effects of gun violence VRS State spending: SOQ
SEPTEMBER 8*	VITA		
*Meeting TBD			

Future work

- 2 study resolutions passed
 - SJ 259 – Allocation of judicial resources (to be completed in 2026)
 - HJ 434 – Allocation of funding for coastal storm risk management studies (to be completed by 2028)
- Study topic subcommittee to meet later this year to assign future work