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Report to the Governor and the General Assembly of Virginia

Virginia's K–12 Teacher Pipeline

2023



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WHAT WE FOUND

Statewide, teacher vacancies and reliance on less than fully licensed teachers has increased

Having enough, high quality teachers is among the most important factors necessary for a quality education system. The latest available data shows continued declines in the number of teachers in Virginia's K–12 system and the proportion of them who are fully licensed:

- 4.5 percent of teaching positions were vacant at the start of the 2023–24 school year, up from 3.9 percent in the prior school year (and less than 1 percent in years prior to the pandemic); and
- 16 percent of Virginia's teachers were not fully licensed or not teaching "in field" in SY2022–23, up from 14 percent in the prior school year (and 6 percent a decade ago).

WHY WE DID THIS STUDY

In 2022, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) directed staff to review the adequacy of the supply of qualified K–12 teachers in Virginia.

ABOUT VIRGINIA'S K-12 TEACHER PIPELINE

Virginia's "teacher pipeline" consists of the programs and processes that attract, prepare, license, recruit, and retain public K–12 teachers. While the Commonwealth's 134 local school divisions individually recruit and retain teachers, the state plays a role in the teacher pipeline through higher education institutions that administer teacher preparation programs, VDOE's licensure of teachers, and funding for initiatives to promote the teaching profession.

Some divisions are facing substantial teacher workforce problems, but other divisions are not

The severity of the teacher workforce problems varies widely across the state. Some divisions have *much* higher than average teacher vacancy rates, while others have very few or no vacant teaching positions. Virginia school divisions with large populations of Black students have especially high teacher vacancy rates.

As with vacancies, school divisions' reliance on teachers who are not fully licensed varies widely. For example, two divisions reported that *all* their teachers were fully licensed, while two reported that only about *half* of their teachers were. Similarly, two divisions reported that *all* their teachers were teaching "in field," while two reported only about *two-thirds* of their teachers were.

Direct pathways to licensure tend to better prepare teachers to be successful in the classroom

In general, teachers who use direct pathways to become a fully licensed teacher are better prepared for the classroom. The most common direct pathway by far in Virginia is graduating from a traditional higher education teacher preparation program as a fully licensed teacher. Traditional higher education-based preparation programs prepare

about 2,600 teachers annually in Virginia. These programs include important components of effective teacher preparation, including pedagogical coursework, student teaching and mentorship from experienced teachers, and college-level subject area coursework.

School divisions believe traditional higher education preparation programs better prepare people to teach than indirect pathways. For example, 46 percent of school divisions surveyed by JLARC reported that provisionally licensed teachers are *very poorly* or *poorly* prepared to be teachers, while only 3 percent of school divisions reported poor preparation among individuals who attended traditional higher education preparation programs.

Teacher residency programs also produce well prepared teachers. Residency programs involve an extended co-teaching placement while simultaneously completing coursework. Residency programs have a rigorous design and are low cost to participants because of the financial assistance provided. Residency programs, though, are expensive to administer and currently have limited capacity in Virginia. State-supported residency programs prepared just under 100 individuals for teaching in SY2022–23.

In January 2023, VDOE initiated a registered teacher apprenticeship program. VDOE has distributed funds to six partnerships between school divisions and higher education institutions to implement programs. Apprenticeship programs can produce teachers that are well prepared, according to experts. They also pay individuals during their preparation and have the advantage of being able to use federal workforce funds to cover a portion of program costs. If implemented effectively, Virginia's new registered apprenticeships should result in additional well-prepared teachers without the financial barriers associated with traditional preparation.

Indirect pathways give individuals flexibility to obtain credentials over time and cost less

In Virginia, **provisional teaching licenses** are non-renewable and valid for three years. In 2018, the General Assembly passed legislation allowing provisional licensees to receive up to two, one-year extensions if a teacher has satisfactory performance evaluations and receives a recommendation from the division superintendent.

In recent years, an increasing number of individuals have been entering teaching through Virginia's *indirect* pathways to fill current teacher vacancies. These indirect pathways include provisional licensure, career switcher programs, and division-led preparation programs. Individuals using these pathways to become a teacher are typically less well prepared in the short term, but can move through those pathways at substantially less cost and benefit from more flexible pacing and delivery format (figure, next page). For example, most provisionally licensed teachers take required courses at their convenience, often online, while working as a teacher. Tuition can still be costly for these courses, but many divisions offer tuition reimbursement for provisionally licensed teachers, and several divisions offer in-house preparation at no cost to participants.

Teacher pathways have tradeoffs between quality and affordability

	Program quality / Participant preparedness	Participant affordability
Direct pathways		
Traditional teacher preparation programs	●	○
Teacher residency programs	●	● [a]
Registered apprenticeship programs	– [b]	– [b]
Indirect pathways		
Provisional license, classes as needed over time	○ [c]	◑
Special education provisional license	◑	◑
Career switcher programs	◑	◑
Division-led preparation	Varies	●

SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis.
NOTES: Program quality / participant preparedness = High quality mentor provided; student teaching component; candidate finishes content and pedagogical coursework prior to being teacher of record. Participant affordability = cost of tuition and fees; ease of holding paid employment.
A new indirect pathway—online courses through a private provider called iTeach—has recently been approved in Virginia but is not yet operating.
[a] Teacher residency programs are affordable for participants but often costly for the state or sponsoring division.
[b] A new direct pathway—registered apprenticeship programs— is currently being implemented in Virginia. Virginia's program is too new to evaluate.
[c] Preparedness measured when provisional licensee becomes teacher of record; preparedness varies and is likely to increase as classes are completed.

Virginia-specific assessment required for traditional teacher preparation programs may be an unnecessary barrier

A Virginia-specific test (which is separate from the nationally used and recognized Praxis subject assessments) is preventing some individuals from enrolling in and completing traditional higher education teacher preparation programs. The Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA) is a Virginia-specific test with two subtests that measure reading comprehension and written communication skills. While 86 percent of test takers eventually pass the VCLA, an average of about 630 test takers (14 percent) did not pass it each year over the last six years.

The VCLA may present an unnecessary barrier to admission to or completion of traditional teacher preparation programs when the state needs more people to enter the teacher pipeline. According to staff at 11 of the 14 Virginia public teacher preparation programs, failure to pass required assessments such as the VCLA is a top reason individuals are unable to enroll in and/or complete preparation programs. The test, which was developed in 2007 and has not been updated, is outdated and tests prospective teachers on skills that are not relevant for some types of teachers to be effective.

Tuition, assessments, and unpaid student teaching present financial barrier to some participants in traditional preparation programs

Costs associated with traditional higher education teacher preparation programs are another barrier to participation in these high quality programs. Seventy-three percent of new teachers surveyed by JLARC who attended traditional preparation programs reported at least one cost associated with preparation (tuition and fees, cost of licensing tests, unpaid student teaching) to be a moderate or significant barrier to completing their preparation program. In addition, staff from 10 of the 14 traditional preparation programs at Virginia's public higher education institutions cited financial concerns as a top reason why teacher candidates did not enter or complete their program.

Virginia has a relatively small ongoing program to reduce the cost of tuition for traditional teacher preparation for some students. The Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program (VTSLP) awards up to $10,000 for tuition and fees to teacher candidates at public or private institutions pursuing teaching in a critical shortage discipline or who are minority teacher candidates. The program requires recipients to teach for at least two years in the critical shortage discipline or in a school where more than half of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Recently, $708,000 in annual VTSLP funding has facilitated scholarship loans to 75 recipients per year. This represents an estimated 10 percent of all graduates of Virginia's traditional teacher preparation programs who have financial need (based on Pell grant eligibility). Higher education teacher preparation programs report there is substantially more demand for this program than current funding levels support. For example, one large public institution reported having at least 50 additional individuals eligible for scholarship loans every year who were not able to receive them.

Licensure requirements and process can seem complex and be unclear to some applicants

School division HR staff surveyed by JLARC expressed mixed opinions on how clearly defined the requirements are to obtain a Virginia teaching license. Thirty-six percent of division staff "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed" that teacher licensure requirements are sufficiently clear. When asked on a JLARC survey, one new teacher said: "The process to apply for a license is so complicated and draining."

The lack of clarity about licensure requirements can be especially challenging for teachers with provisional licenses and fully licensed teachers in other states interested in teaching in Virginia. VDOE does not publish information specifying which courses meet licensure requirements. As a result, provisionally licensed teachers may take courses that do not fulfill Virginia's licensure requirements, which can be costly and delay their ability to teach. Similarly, VDOE does not publish information on the specific license types and endorsement areas that are comparable between Virginia and other states. As a result, teachers from another state seeking a Virginia license must

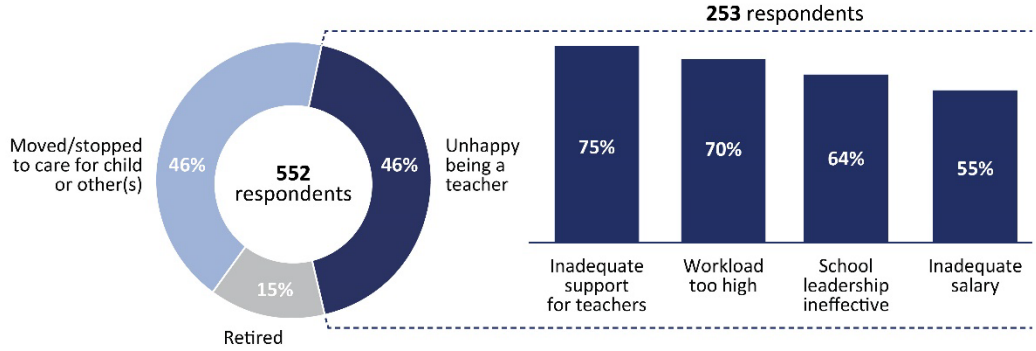
submit a full application to VDOE to learn whether their license and/or endorsement area will be accepted.

Factors other than barriers to preparation program participation and the licensure process are primary reasons for state's teacher shortage

Though the state can improve the teacher preparation and licensure processes, Virginia's teacher shortage will not materially improve until the root causes of the shortage are addressed. Teachers in Virginia have left the profession primarily either for personal reasons (e.g., family moving to another location), or because they were unhappy with the job. Inadequate support for teachers generally, high workload, ineffective school leadership, and low salary are the top reasons cited for their unhappiness with being a teacher (figure), according to a JLARC survey.

JLARC surveyed individuals with Virginia teaching licenses who were not working in Virginia public schools in July 2023. The survey was sent to individuals for whom VDOE had email addresses. JLARC received 1,164 responses for an overall response rate of 34 percent.

Reasons licensed teachers left positions in Virginia public schools



SOURCE: JLARC survey of licensed teachers who are not currently teaching in a Virginia public school.
NOTE: Respondents could select more than one response. Some respondents provided other reasons for leaving their jobs in Virginia public schools, including deciding to pursue another career and deciding they no longer wanted to work for pay.

Other, recent JLARC reports have recommended ways to address issues related to teacher support and workload (e.g., more instructional assistants), and salary (e.g., changing the SOQ formula inputs to more accurately reflect actual teacher salaries). Therefore, the potential benefits of the recommendations and policy options in this report related to the teacher pipeline must be considered in the context of these broader factors that more heavily influence teacher recruitment and retention.

WHAT WE RECOMMEND

Legislative action

- Authorize a waiver that allows higher education teacher preparation programs to recommend qualified individuals who have not passed the VCLA to receive full teacher licensure.
- Increase funding for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.

Executive action

- Replace the VCLA with a relevant and nationally recognized test, or remove it as a requirement for full teacher licensure.
- List on the VDOE website the (i) courses that fulfill licensure requirements in each endorsement area for provisionally licensed teachers pursuing full licensure and (ii) license types and endorsement areas that qualify for reciprocity with selected other states.
- Report on the program participation, size, and funding levels of the new registered teacher apprenticeship program.

The complete list of recommendations is available on page vii.

Recommendations and Policy Options: Virginia's K-12 Teacher Pipeline

JLARC staff typically make recommendations to address findings during reviews. Staff also sometimes propose policy options rather than recommendations. The three most common reasons staff propose policy options rather than recommendations are: (1) the action proposed is a policy judgment best made by the General Assembly or other elected officials, (2) the evidence indicates that addressing a report finding is not necessarily required, but doing so could be beneficial, or (3) there are multiple ways in which a report finding could be addressed and there is insufficient evidence of a single best way to address the finding.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act directing the Virginia Department of Education to report (i) which higher education institutions and school divisions have been approved to have apprentice programs, (ii) when they expect to begin preparing prospective teachers, (iii) how many individuals are expected to be prepared through each program annually, and (iv) how each program will be funded. The report should be submitted to the Board of Education and House Education and Senate Education and Health committees by June 30, 2024. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 2

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act directing the Virginia Board of Education to either (i) replace the Virginia Communications and Literacy Assessment with a nationally recognized teacher licensure test that is more relevant for assessing prospective teachers or (ii) eliminate the Virginia Communications and Literacy Assessment as a requirement for a full 10-year renewable Virginia teaching license. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 3

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Code of Virginia to create a waiver through which the Board of Education shall issue a full 10-year renewable Virginia teaching license to qualified individuals attending approved higher education teacher preparation programs who have not passed the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment but meet established criteria. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Virginia Board of Education should revise section 8-VAC-20-543-50 of the Virginia Administrative Code to remove the incentive traditional higher education teacher preparation programs currently have to establish admission policies that unnecessarily restrict the number of individuals enrolling in such programs. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 5

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language and funding in the Appropriation Act to increase the annual funding for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Virginia Department of Education should work with Virginia higher education institutions that offer teacher preparation courses to develop, publish on its website, and periodically update a list of specific professional studies and subject-matter courses that fulfill licensure requirements in each endorsement area for provisionally licensed teachers pursuing full licensure. (Chapter 4)

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Virginia Department of Education should list and periodically update on its website the specific teacher license types and endorsement areas in other states that qualify for a Virginia teaching license through reciprocity, prioritizing states from which Virginia receives the most reciprocity applications. (Chapter 4)

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Virginia Department of Education should report on the status of its teacher licensure process, staffing, and information technology improvements to the Board of Education and House Education and Senate Education and Health committees by December 15, 2023, and again by June 30, 2024. (Chapter 4)

RECOMMENDATION 9

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language and funding in the Appropriation Act directing the Virginia Department of Education to (i) hire a contractor to develop a database that can store and maintain teacher information; (ii) regularly collect information on the teacher preparation pathway, licensure status, place of employment, indicators of instructional quality, and public K–12 teaching tenure for each teacher who is prepared in Virginia; and (iii) share such information about these teachers with the Virginia preparation programs from which they graduated. (Chapter 5)

RECOMMENDATION 10

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Code of Virginia to direct the Virginia Department of Education to biennially report on the preparedness and tenure of teachers prepared through each of Virginia's teacher preparation pathways and programs and recommend improvements to specific preparation pathways and programs as needed. The report should be submitted to the Board of Education and House Education and Senate Education and Health committees by November 1 every other year. (Chapter 5)

Policy Options to Consider

POLICY OPTION 1

The General Assembly could include language and funding in the Appropriation Act to create a pilot program for provisionally licensed teachers to complete a curriculum and instruction course or classroom and behavior management course by the end of their first semester as a teacher of record at no cost. (Chapter 3)

POLICY OPTION 2

The General Assembly could include language and funding in the Appropriation Act for the Virginia Department of Education to increase funding for teacher residency programs to help cover the cost of preparation for additional teacher residents. (Chapter 3)

POLICY OPTION 3

The General Assembly could include language and funding in the Appropriation Act to provide state general funds for the Competitive Grant for Praxis and Virginia Licensure and Certification Assessment program. (Chapter 3)

POLICY OPTION 4

The General Assembly could include language and funding in the Appropriation Act to provide state general funds for the Paid Internship Scholarship for Aspiring Virginia Educators program. (Chapter 3)

POLICY OPTION 5

The General Assembly could include language and funding in the Appropriation Act directing the Virginia Department of Education to administer a three-year pilot program that provides targeted mentorship assistance to divisions with high teacher vacancies using mentors trained and coordinated by Virginia higher education institutions. (Chapter 5)

1 Virginia's Public K–12 Teacher Pipeline

In 2022, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) directed staff to review the adequacy of the supply of qualified K–12 teachers in Virginia. Staff were directed to identify the number of K–12 teachers needed and available; evaluate factors contributing to the decline in individuals entering teacher preparation programs; evaluate the state process for determining the qualifications and credentials teachers need to be fully licensed; and identify effective or innovative practices used in other states to maintain or increase the number of individuals entering and graduating from teacher preparation programs and becoming fully licensed teachers (Appendix A).

To address the study resolution, JLARC analyzed data related to public K–12 teacher licensure and employment; surveyed new teachers in Virginia, individuals who are licensed in Virginia but not currently teaching, and school division human resources staff; interviewed staff at the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), staff at public and private teacher preparation programs, staff at local school divisions, stakeholder groups and associations, and state and national experts in teacher preparation and retention; and reviewed effective teacher pipeline practices in existing research literature and other states. (See Appendix B for a detailed description of research methods.)

Though this report specifically focuses on the public K-12 teacher pipeline, **JLARC has released other reports about K–12 education during the past decade.** These reports address a wide range of topics, including (i) Virginia's K–12 funding formula, (ii) the pandemic's effect on public K–12 education, (iii) the operations and performance of the Virginia Department of Education, (iv) special education services, and (v) urban high poverty schools.

Multiple entities, programs, and processes comprise Virginia's K–12 teacher pipeline

Virginia's "teacher pipeline" consists of multiple programs and processes that help attract, prepare, license, recruit, and retain public K–12 teachers. While the Commonwealth's 134 local school divisions individually recruit and retain teachers, the state plays a role in the teacher pipeline through higher education institutions that administer teacher preparation programs, VDOE's licensure of teachers, and funding for initiatives to promote or incentivize the teaching profession.

Virginia offers several options to become a teacher

There are several different pathways individuals can take to progress through Virginia's teacher pipeline. Virginia's *direct* pathways to licensure include traditional higher education programs and teacher residency or apprenticeship programs. The state's *indirect* pathways to licensure include career switcher programs, division-led preparation programs, special education provisional licensee programs, and individuals who take courses ad hoc after obtaining a provisional license. New teachers, as well as individuals licensed in other states who want to teach in Virginia, then submit teacher licensure applications to VDOE for review and approval. Virginia public school divisions recruit

teachers to fill needed positions and provide ongoing support to retain existing teachers.

Various entities are part of Virginia's teacher pipeline, making it highly decentralized. VDOE reviews and accredits teacher preparation programs and reviews and approves teacher licensure applications. Separately, 14 public higher education institutions, 23 private higher education institutions, several community colleges, and at least six local school divisions train teachers through teacher preparation programs and courses that are designed and implemented differently. Virginia's 134 local school divisions recruit and retain teachers, each using different strategies and incentives. Although some collaboration occurs, the entities involved in the pipeline generally operate independently.

Virginia recently created a registered teacher apprentice program. Virginia is one of several states approved by the U.S. Department of Labor to offer a teacher apprentice program. The new program will allow Virginia school divisions to hire unlicensed school employees (e.g., classroom aides, paraprofessionals, substitute teachers) and support them while they complete the coursework and training needed to become fully licensed teachers.

VDOE began automating the licensure system in 2019. The new system enabled individuals to submit licensure applications and pay licensure fees online. However, the new system had several limitations, including (1) additional documents could not be uploaded after applications were initially submitted; (2) applications for adding endorsements or converting from provisional to full licensure could not be completed online; (3) the system did not indicate whether applications had satisfied licensure requirements; and (4) applications could not be assigned to VDOE staff for review through the system.

VDOE administers Virginia's teacher licensure process

While likely not a major determining factor affecting people's interest in becoming a teacher, the process individuals must navigate to become licensed has historically been administratively complex and cumbersome. The process to obtain a license previously required mailing a check and paper application to VDOE. This manual process resulted in delays, longer than expected processing times, and frustration from applicants who could not easily obtain information about the status of their application.

Efforts over the last few years to re-engineer the licensure process have not fixed key deficiencies, but VDOE reports being close to having a new system available. In 2019, the General Assembly appropriated $348,500 for VDOE to automate the license application process. However, efforts to automate the process had several limitations (sidebar). During 2023, VDOE has been making new efforts to automate the process and make it more efficient. VDOE hired a new IT vendor in February 2023, and a new automated system is planned for implementation in October 2023.

State provides funding to support teacher preparation, recruitment, and retention

In FY23, the state provided over $16 million for at least 19 additional initiatives designed to help individuals advance through the teacher pipeline or remain in teaching positions. Additional state funding also helps support the operations of traditional teacher preparation programs. (See Appendix E for an inventory of programs and initiatives that comprise Virginia's K–12 teacher pipeline.)

VDOE also allocated $5 million of pandemic relief funding to a new registered teacher apprenticeship program. VDOE awarded over $1 million to six partnerships

between school divisions and higher education institutions in July 2023 to implement apprenticeship programs. As of early September 2023, at least one partnership enrolled an apprentice in fall 2023, and at least three partnerships plan to begin enrolling apprentices in spring 2024.

Several factors that affect interest in teaching profession have worsened since pandemic

Research has found that the classroom environment, compensation, and support outside of the classroom are among the factors people consider when deciding whether to be a teacher and in which division to teach. For example, a 2022 Annenberg Institute study found that in addition to salaries and benefits, teachers also value having access to key support staff (e.g., counselors) and other expertise (e.g., special education).

The pandemic's disruptions to K–12 education created several challenges for teachers. For example, according to a 2022 JLARC survey, teachers cited the following issues as the most serious problems they faced after the pandemic:

- Classroom environment - a more challenging student population, including behavior issues (56 percent indicated this was a very serious issue), student anxiety and mental health (43 percent), and higher workload because of unfilled vacancies (40 percent).
- Compensation - lower than desired salary given the demands of the profession (51 percent).
- Outside the classroom - lack of respect from parents and the public (47 percent).

This report is not evaluating these factors because prior JLARC reports have identified issues related to these factors and made recommendations to address them. For example, in 2022 JLARC recommended several ways to better support teachers in the classroom by addressing challenging student behavior, funding more instructional aides, or expanding student access to mental health supports. Similarly, in July 2023, JLARC recommended changing the K–12 funding formula to more accurately reflect actual teacher compensation in each division, which would increase state funding for teacher salaries. The recommendations and policy options in this report must be considered in the context of these broader factors that influence teacher recruitment and retention.

Reduction in quantity and quality of teachers complicates quickly improving teacher pipeline

Several key teaching positions have historically been difficult to fill, such as special education teachers. However, in recent years, divisions had difficulty recruiting and

retaining enough teachers generally—as evidenced by the increase in vacant teaching positions (discussed in Chapter 2).

Divisions are not only having difficulty hiring and retaining *enough* teachers, but are also having difficulty finding and keeping enough *qualified* teachers. Recently, divisions have relied more on provisionally licensed teachers and teachers working outside their "endorsed" direct field of expertise or training (sidebars).

The challenges associated with hiring enough teachers to fill vacant positions has exacerbated the challenge of ensuring teacher quality. As divisions have had more difficulty filling vacant positions, their focus has understandably been on finding teachers for the positions, which has led to a willingness to hire more teachers who are not fully licensed or not endorsed in the area in which they are hired to teach. One division human resources director stated: "I'm surprised when we get an application from a fully qualified teacher."

Practically, until the supply and demand for teachers stabilizes, school divisions will need to continue to rely on teachers who are provisionally licensed or teaching outside their field. Reducing reliance on provisionally licensed teachers and teachers teaching outside their fields must, therefore, be a longer term goal.

The Virginia Administrative Code defines a **provisional license** as a "nonrenewable license valid for a period not to exceed three years issued to an individual who has allowable deficiencies for full licensure" (8VAC20-23-50). A provisionally licensed teacher is not required to have taken any teacher preparation courses. A school division can request a provisional license for an individual it hires to fill a teacher vacancy.

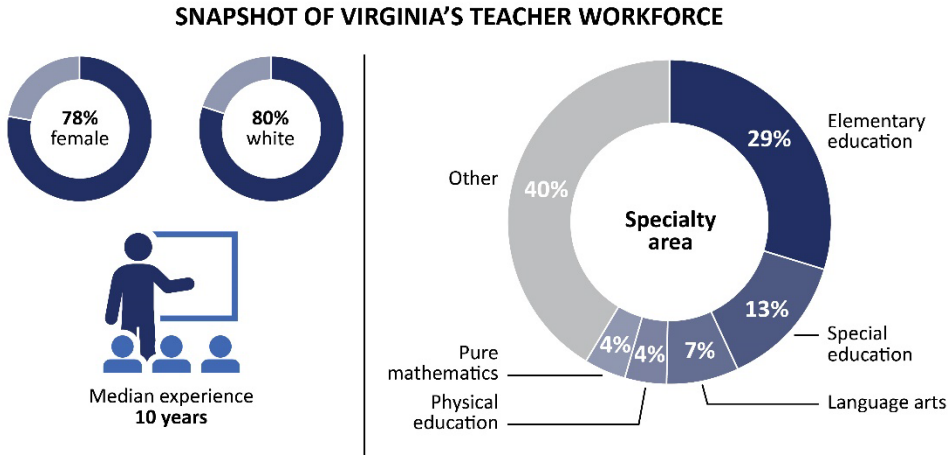
Teachers are "endorsed" in their content area if they have taken the appropriate courses and/or passed the appropriate licensing exam for the endorsed content area. VDOE must verify and approve that the requirements have been fulfilled for endorsement.

2 Trends in Virginia's Supply of K–12 Teachers

JLARC's 2022 review of the pandemic's impact on K–12 public education found that Virginia school divisions faced substantial recruiting and retention challenges. These challenges were also faced by other states. Legislative interest in helping to address these challenges prompted this JLARC review of the public K–12 teacher pipeline.

Virginia school divisions employed about 87,000 K–12 teachers in SY2022–23 (Figure 2-1). Most of Virginia's public K–12 teacher workforce is female and white. The median Virginia public K–12 teacher has 10 years of experience and is 43 years old. About 29 percent of teachers are elementary education teachers. Special education teachers were the next largest group (13 percent), followed by language arts teachers (7 percent).

FIGURE 2-1
Virginia had about 87,000 public K–12 teachers in SY2022-23



SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis of Virginia Department of Education data, school year 2022–23.
NOTES: Elementary education includes kindergarten through fifth grade. Pure mathematics is one of the state's categories of math teachers and can include subject areas such as algebra.

Virginia's public K–12 teacher workforce has similar demographic characteristics compared to other states' teacher workforces, according to results of the National Center for Education Statistic's 2020–21 National Teacher and Principal Survey. Teacher gender, ethnicity, and median age in Virginia were similar to the national average.

Teacher vacancies increased statewide, though some divisions still have no or few teaching vacancies

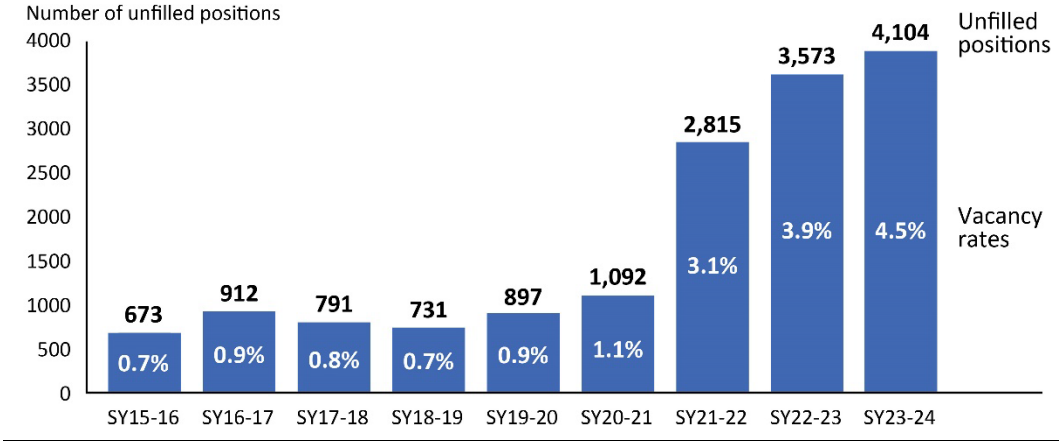
Teacher vacancies can create a variety of problems for teachers and students. Just one vacant teaching position can create substantial challenges for schools, requiring either the use of a long-term substitute or larger class sizes. For example, an elementary school with 80 third-grade students that planned to have four teachers may be forced to substantially increase class sizes if it can only hire three teachers. Rather than having four classes of 20 students, the school may start the year with three classes of either

26 or 27 students. Larger class sizes typically make it more challenging for teachers and can reduce the quality of instruction students receive—especially for students needing individualized or small group assistance. In addition, teacher vacancies can require schools to reduce the types of courses they offer, such as advanced placement or elective courses. Finally, teacher vacancies often create a greater workload for remaining staff, which contributes to lower morale and lower job satisfaction.

Statewide number of vacant teaching positions has substantially increased

The latest available data shows that 4.5 percent of teaching positions were reported vacant on the first day of SY2023–24. This represents a 15 percent increase from the prior year's vacancy rate of 3.9 percent. These vacancies represented a substantial increase from prior years (Figure 2-2).

FIGURE 2-2
School divisions reported over 4,000 vacant teaching positions at the start of SY2023–24



SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis of Virginia Department of Education data, school years 2015–16 to 2023–24.
NOTE: Vacant public K-12 positions are full-time equivalent positions reported by divisions as of October 1, 2022 for SY15–16 through SY22–23. SY23–24 vacancy data reflects actual or assumed to be vacant public K–12 full-time equivalent positions on the first day of school for 123 divisions.

Statewide, over half (57 percent) of teacher vacancies are in elementary education or special education positions. Elementary education (defined to include pre-kindergarten through sixth grade) has the most vacancies, representing 30 percent of all teacher vacancies statewide at the start of SY2023–24. Special education accounted for over one-fourth (27 percent) of all vacancies at the start of SY2023–24. Special education and elementary education had such a large number of teacher vacancies in part because a large portion of the state's total teaching positions are in these two areas.

Some divisions have no vacancies; others have substantial vacancies, especially those with more Black students

While the statewide average rate for teacher vacancies is 4.5 percent, some divisions have no vacancies, while others have very high vacancy rates (Table 2-1 and Appendix C). Ten divisions reported no vacant teaching positions at the start of SY2023–24. In contrast, 13 divisions reported at least 10 percent of their teaching positions vacant.

TABLE 2-1
Some Virginia school divisions have high vacancy rates while others have no vacancies

10 divisions with highest teacher vacancy rates		10 divisions with lowest teacher vacancy rates	
Division	*Vacant*	*Division*	*Vacant*
Charles City County	21.5%	Botetourt County	0%
Suffolk City	17.7	Carroll County	0
Lancaster County	17.0	Clarke County	0
Norfolk City	16.8	Colonial Beach	0
Essex County	15.1	Falls Church City	0
Cumberland County	14.7	Fluvanna County	0
Poquoson City	14.3	Grayson County	0
Caroline County	13.7	Lexington City	0
Surry County	11.9	Russell County	0
Nottoway County	11.6	Staunton City	0

Source: JLARC analysis of Virginia Department of Education data, school year 2023–24.
NOTE: Vacancy data includes actual or assumed to be vacant public K–12 full-time equivalent positions on the first day of school for 123 divisions. See Appendix C for a complete list of teacher vacancies by school division.

As with individual divisions, there is variation in teacher vacancy rates across regions. The Southside region had the state's highest rate of vacant teaching positions, 6.8 percent, a decline from the prior year's vacancy rate of 7.4 percent. The Tidewater and Eastern Shore region included divisions with, on average, 6.3 percent of their teaching positions vacant, slightly higher than last year. The Northern Virginia and Middle Peninsula region's teacher vacancy rate of 4.5 percent was the same as the state average and substantially increased from the prior year's vacancy rate of 2.9 percent.

Virginia school divisions with large populations of Black students tend to have higher teacher vacancy rates. According to a data analysis conducted by JLARC staff (sidebar), divisions with mostly Black students had teacher vacancy rates in SY2022–23 that were 6 percentage points higher than divisions with almost no Black students, controlling for other differences across divisions.

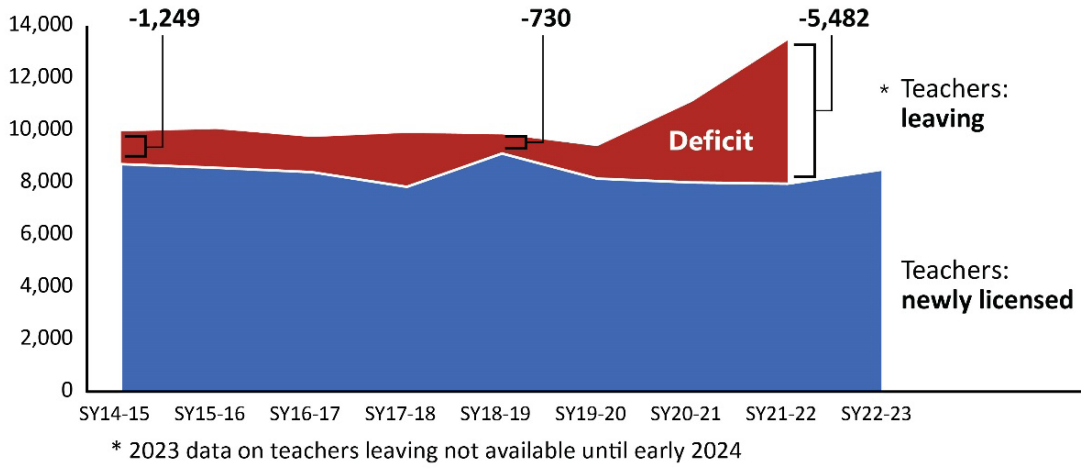
JLARC staff conducted a multivariate regression analysis to estimate the factors most strongly related to division-level variations in teacher vacancy rates in SY2022-23. The dependent variable was the public K-12 teacher vacancy rate, and the independent variables included: (1) % students by race and ethnicity; (2) % disadvantaged students; (3) % disabled students; (4) composite index; (5) VDOE region; and (6) degree of in-person instruction during COVID-19 pandemic. See Appendix B for more information on the methodology and results of this analysis.

Deficit of teachers has grown because more teachers are leaving than entering the profession in Virginia

Increasing vacancies can be partially explained by the widening deficit between teachers leaving the profession and newly licensed teachers (Figure 2-3). The deficit between newly licensed teachers and those leaving averaged about 1,250 annually in the years preceding the pandemic. (Individuals licensed to teach for the first time in Virginia are a key indicator of the total teacher supply, because they account for more than 85 percent of the total number of teachers entering Virginia's teacher workforce each year.)

After the pandemic, though, the number of teachers leaving began to far outpace the number of newly licensed teachers. The deficit between newly licensed teachers and those leaving the profession was about 3,000 after SY2020–21, and jumped to nearly 5,500 after SY2021–22. In a positive development, the number of newly licensed teachers stabilized in SY2022–2023. Data about teachers who have left the profession after SY2022–23 will not be available until early 2024.

FIGURE 2-3
More teachers have been leaving than are newly licensed, creating a deficit



SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis of Virginia Department of Education data, school years 2015–16 to 2022–23.
NOTES: *2023 data on teachers leaving not available until early 2024. Counts of newly licensed teachers entering the workforce each school year reflect VDOE's licensure data as of June 2023 and differ from data cited in JLARC's 2022 review of Pandemic Impact on Public K–12 Education because of data updates.

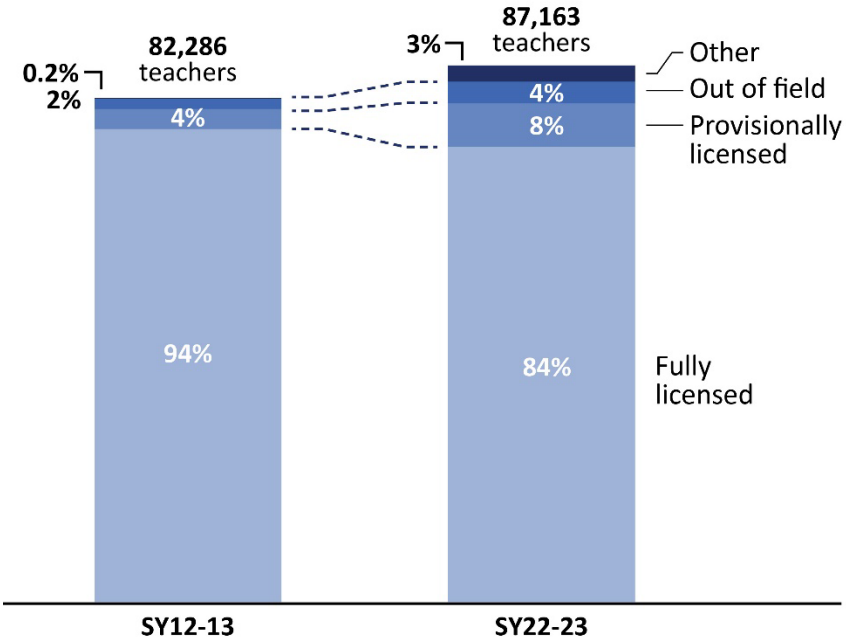
Fewer teaching positions are occupied by teachers who are fully licensed and teaching "in field"

As more teachers leave Virginia's teacher workforce, divisions are increasingly relying on teachers who are not yet fully licensed or teaching out of their endorsed field. For example, the combined proportion of Virginia's public K–12 teacher workforce that

was not fully licensed or teaching out of field was 6 percent in SY2012–13 but increased to 14 percent by SY2021–22 and 16 percent by SY2022–23 (Figure 2-4). Teachers who lack full licensure may not have completed the coursework on methods of teaching (pedagogy) that Virginia requires for full licensure, which contributes to teacher effectiveness. Teachers who are teaching out of field have not demonstrated a minimum level of competency in the content area they are teaching and may be less effective.

There is wide variation across divisions in the proportion of teachers who are not yet fully licensed or teaching out of field. In SY2022–23, two divisions reported having all their teachers fully licensed, while two others each had only about half of their teachers fully licensed. Similarly, two divisions reported all their teachers were teaching in their field, while two others had only about two-thirds of their teachers teaching in their field of expertise.

FIGURE 2-4
Smaller proportion of teachers are fully licensed than a decade ago



SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis of Virginia Department of Education data, school years 2012–13 and 2022–23.
NOTE: "Other" includes individuals such as long-term substitutes.

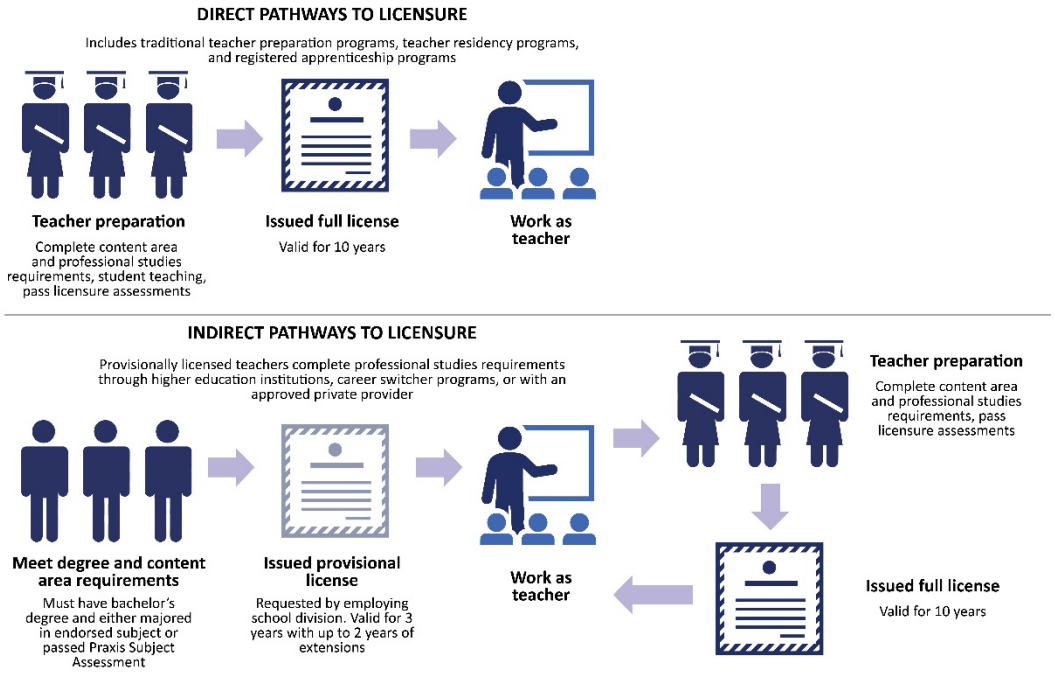
3 Virginia's Teacher Preparation Pathways

An effective K–12 system needs fully prepared teachers. Teachers who are less than fully prepared typically do not provide the same quality of educational experience for students, according to research literature.

Virginia has multiple pathways individuals can follow to complete the preparation courses and training needed to become public K–12 teachers. Some pathways, such as traditional higher education-based programs and teacher residency programs, provide a *direct* route to full licensure and qualify individuals for a 10-year renewable teaching license upon completion (Figure 3-1). Other pathways, such as career switcher programs, division-led programs, and taking courses ad hoc are *indirect*, allowing individuals to teach under a temporary provisional license (sidebar) while they complete the preparation courses required for full licensure.

In Virginia, **provisional teaching licenses** are non-renewable and valid for three years. In 2018, the General Assembly passed legislation allowing provisional licensees to receive up to two, one-year extensions if a teacher has satisfactory performance evaluations and receives a recommendation from the division superintendent.

FIGURE 3-1
Direct and indirect pathways offer different routes to teacher licensure



NOTE: Career switcher programs have a different indirect pathway, where students receive the majority of their instruction prior to being issued a provisional license.

TABLE 3-1
Indirect pathways for K-12 teaching in Virginia

Indirect pathway	Description
Provisional license, classes as needed over time	Individual works as teacher of record while completing requirements for full licensure (e.g., professional studies courses, assessments).
Special education provisional license	After completing prerequisite course, individual works as teacher of record while completing remaining requirements for full licensure. Some candidates complete an approved program at a higher education institution, while others complete courses at their own pace.
Career switcher programs	Individuals complete accelerated coursework and brief field experience before becoming teacher of record on a career switcher provisional license. Career switchers can be granted full licensure after at least one year of teaching and 20 hours of additional seminars.
Division-led preparation	Individuals work as teacher of record while completing professional studies coursework for full licensure provided by division staff or in partnership with external providers (e.g., iTeach).

SOURCE: Virginia Administrative Code and interviews with VDOE staff.
NOTE: Teacher of record is the teacher who is responsible for the delivery of instruction. The teacher of record must hold a license issued by the Virginia Board of Education.

About half of newly licensed teachers were prepared outside of Virginia in SY2021–22. These individuals include new graduates from preparation programs in other states who pursue initial licensure in Virginia and experienced teachers licensed by reciprocity. Some licensed teachers from out of state who do not qualify for reciprocity initially teach in Virginia with a provisional license.

Limited data is available on the proportion of individuals who pursue teaching through Virginia's various direct and indirect preparation pathways. Data that is available indicates just less than half of all newly licensed teachers are provisionally licensed, while the remainder are prepared through a direct pathway or licensed through reciprocity with another state. The percentage of newly licensed teachers in Virginia using *indirect* pathways has grown as school divisions are increasingly hiring provisionally licensed teachers to fill teacher vacancies. Half of Virginia's newly licensed teachers each year are prepared *in* Virginia, and half are prepared in other states (sidebar). (See Chapter 2 for more information on trends in Virginia's teacher supply.)

Direct pathways prepare teachers better but require more time and cost more than indirect pathways

Ideally, Virginia school divisions would be able to fill all teaching positions with well-prepared teachers. However, there are not enough teachers completing direct, higher education preparation programs to fill vacancies with fully licensed teachers. Many divisions are increasingly relying on provisionally licensed teachers who have not completed their preparation.

An individual's path to become a teacher is not always determinative of their effectiveness in the classroom. School division staff and experts frequently cite examples of teachers from varied backgrounds and training who are extremely effective teachers. No reliable or comprehensive data exists, however, about the effectiveness of

each teacher in Virginia. In the absence of this information, staff developed a methodology to help understand the relative differences among pathways to become a teacher.

In general, teachers who use direct pathways to become a fully licensed teacher are better prepared for the classroom (Table 3-2). These programs, though, typically cost more for the participant or provider because they take longer and are more comprehensive. Teacher residency programs, which involve an extended co-teaching placement while simultaneously completing coursework, have the most rigorous design and are low cost to participants because of the financial assistance provided. Residency programs, though, are expensive to administer and currently have limited capacity in Virginia. The state is beginning to build teacher apprenticeship programs, which can also effectively foster preparation through required coursework and in-classroom experience.

Individuals using indirect pathways are typically less well prepared in the short term, but can move through those pathways at substantially less cost and benefit from more flexible pacing and delivery format. Individuals using indirect pathways are also typically able to maintain paid employment while they are taking the required coursework or assessments.

TABLE 3-2
Teacher pathways have tradeoffs between quality and affordability

	Program quality / Participant preparedness	Participant affordability
Direct pathways		
Traditional teacher preparation programs	●	○
Teacher residency programs	●	● [a]
Registered apprenticeship programs	– [b]	– [b]
Indirect pathways		
Provisional license, classes as needed over time	○ [c]	◑
Special education provisional license	◑	◑
Career switcher programs	◑	◑
Division-led preparation	Varies	●

SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis.
NOTES: Program quality / participant preparedness = High quality mentor provided; student teaching component; candidate finishes content and pedagogical coursework prior to being teacher of record. Participant affordability = cost of tuition and fees; ease of holding paid employment.
A new indirect pathway—online courses through a private provider called iTeach—has recently been approved in Virginia but is not yet operating.
[a] Teacher residency programs are affordable for participants but often costly for the state or sponsoring division.
[b] A new direct pathway—registered apprenticeship programs— is currently being implemented in Virginia. Virginia's program is too new to evaluate.
[c] Preparedness measured when provisional licensee becomes teacher of record; preparedness varies and is likely to increase as classes are completed.

The differences in the quality and nature of preparation between direct and indirect pathways likely matter less as a teacher gains experience in the classroom. Research shows that teacher experience is positively associated with student achievement throughout their career. As teachers gain experience and learn on the job, differences in initial preparation may have less of an impact over time.

JLARC surveyed human resources staff from Virginia school divisions in July 2023 to ask about the state's teacher licensure process, new teacher support programs, and divisions' supply of public K–12 teachers. JLARC received responses from 75 divisions for an overall response rate of 56 percent.

JLARC staff surveyed new K–12 public school teachers in Virginia about their teacher preparation, experiences with the state licensure process, and first year of teaching. New teachers were defined to include individuals who began teaching in a Virginia public school after January 1, 2022. JLARC received responses from 917 teachers (25 percent response rate). See Appendix B for more information.

Direct pathways through traditional higher education programs typically produce teachers who are better prepared for the classroom

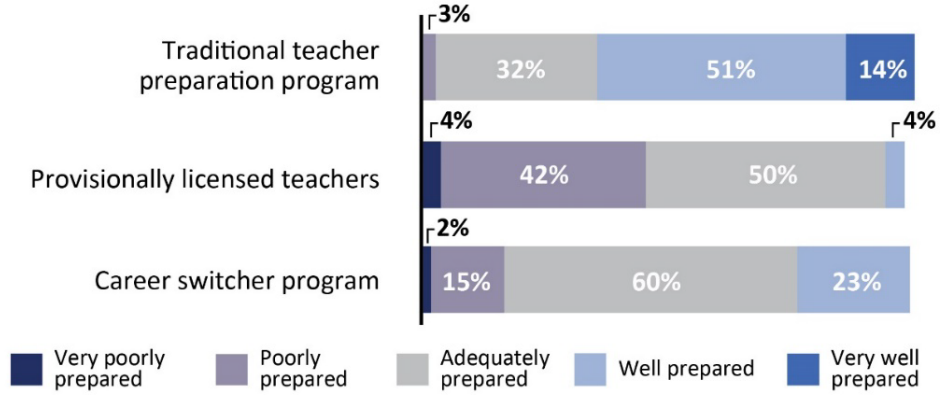
Direct pathways through traditional higher education preparation programs generally produce higher quality new teachers than indirect pathways. Traditional higher education-based programs include important components of effective teacher preparation, including pedagogical coursework, student teaching and mentorship from experienced teachers, and college-level subject area coursework. (See Appendix F for more information on Virginia's traditional teacher preparation programs at public institutions.) In contrast, individuals using indirect pathways can become responsible for a classroom (called the "teacher of record") without completing any pedagogical preparation or obtaining classroom experience through student teaching.

School divisions and new Virginia teachers believe traditional higher education preparation programs (direct pathway to full licensure) better prepare people to teach than indirect pathways. For example, 46 percent of school divisions surveyed by JLARC (sidebar) reported that provisionally licensed teachers are *very poorly* or *poorly* prepared to be teachers, while only 3 percent of school divisions reported poor preparation among individuals who attended traditional higher education preparation programs (Figure 3-2). Similarly, 44 percent of new teachers who responded to a JLARC survey (sidebar) and attended a traditional higher education preparation program reported feeling prepared in their first year of teaching, compared with 30 percent of new teachers who took an indirect pathway for preparation (e.g., career switcher, provisional licensee) (Figure 3-3).

Subject matter experts like the National Council on Teacher Quality say that **high quality preparation is important for teacher retention**, particularly in the early years of a new teacher's career. Student teaching is a critical component of preparation, and candidates who are trained under a quality mentor have been shown to be more effective instructionally.

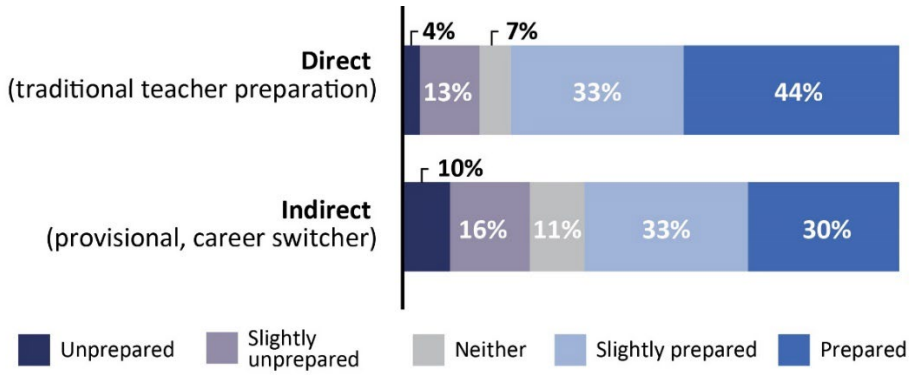
Research literature indicates that provisionally licensed teachers have shorter tenures than fully licensed teachers; yet Virginia's experience has shown only a small difference. Subject matter experts emphasize that preparation plays a role in teacher retention and effectiveness (sidebar). According to Virginia data over the last decade, teachers with provisional licenses typically have a slightly shorter tenure than fully licensed teachers. Comparing the bottom quartile by tenure of fully licensed and provisionally licensed teachers, the bottom quartile of fully licensed teachers leave within *four years* or less; the bottom quartile of provisionally licensed teachers leave within *three years* or less. In addition, in Virginia, 27 percent of provisionally licensed teachers over the past 20 years did not go on to obtain full licensure after three years. However, it is too soon to assess how these trends may have changed during the pandemic (provisional licenses issued after 2019 are still valid).

FIGURE 3-2
Divisions reported teachers from traditional higher education preparation programs were the most prepared to be a teacher



SOURCE: JLARC survey of Virginia school divisions, summer 2023.
NOTE: Because there are only a small number of residency programs in the state, most divisions do not have new teachers who graduated from residency programs.

FIGURE 3-3
New teachers from Virginia's traditional preparation programs reported feeling more prepared than teachers using indirect pathways



SOURCE: JLARC survey of new Virginia teachers, summer 2023.
NOTE: Results for residencies not reported because of small number of respondents.

To better prepare new provisionally licensed teachers for success in the classroom from the outset, the state could consider piloting a program that would eventually require all provisionally licensed teachers to complete a curriculum and instruction course or a classroom and behavior management course by the end of their first semester of employment as a teacher of record (sidebar). Both of these courses are already required for full licensure. A curriculum and instruction course covers competencies that include the principles of learning, methods of communication with students, and the selection and use of materials, curricula, and methodologies to support student learning. A classroom and behavior management course covers research-based

Provisionally licensed teachers are required to complete six professional studies courses for most endorsement areas: curriculum and instruction, classroom and behavior management, assessment of and for learning, human development and learning, foundations of education and the teaching profession, and language and literacy. Provisionally licensed teachers currently must complete these courses prior to the expiration of their license.

classroom and behavior management techniques, classroom community building, positive behavior supports, and individual interventions.

The state could initially award grants to several higher education institutions to provide the course to all new provisionally licensed teachers in a subset of divisions. The program could be evaluated based on the feedback of participating provisionally licensed teachers and school administrators. The course would be most effective if it is offered online at times compatible with the teacher workday, taught live by a qualified instructor who is available to help students outside of class time, and is free of charge to participants. The program could be applied to new teachers once it becomes available, not retroactively.

POLICY OPTION 1

The General Assembly could include language and funding in the Appropriation Act to create a pilot program for provisionally licensed teachers to complete a curriculum and instruction course or classroom and behavior management course by the end of their first semester as a teacher of record at no cost.

Indirect pathways give individuals flexibility to obtain credentials over time and cost less

More individuals have been entering teaching through Virginia's *indirect* pathways to fill current teacher vacancies. To help their provisionally licensed teachers achieve full licensure, more divisions have shown interest in offering in-house preparation or partnering with external entities to offer required professional studies coursework. In 2019, the General Assembly allowed divisions to petition the Board of Education to approve alternative coursework and assessments to meet requirements for licensure. Under this regulation, iTeach, the online private provider, has recently been approved to offer preparation to provisionally licensed teachers in multiple divisions.

Though generally lower quality than direct pathways, indirect pathways to becoming a teacher typically allow more flexibility and are lower cost. For example, most provisionally licensed teachers take required courses at their convenience, often online, while working as a teacher. Tuition can still be costly for these courses, but many divisions offer tuition reimbursement for provisionally licensed teachers, and several divisions offer in-house preparation at no cost to participants. In contrast, teacher candidates at traditional preparation programs often pay tens of thousands of dollars in tuition and fees (Table 3-3). Possibly as a result of being lower cost and more flexible, indirect pathways have attracted more Black teachers than direct pathways, which can be beneficial for student learning outcomes (sidebar).

Researchers have found that **diverse teacher workforces that mirror their student population are important for student outcomes**. Students with at least one teacher with the same racial or ethnic background tend to have higher test scores, lower rates of chronic absenteeism, fewer suspensions, and higher rates of high school graduation and college enrollment.

TABLE 3-3
Indirect pathways are more affordable than traditional teacher preparation

	Traditional program	Career switcher program	Division preparation program	Provisional license, taking classes as needed
Cost to participant	$15K-$96K	$2K-$6K	$0	$0K-$12K [a]

SOURCE: JLARC data collection from public higher education institutions, interviews with division staff, and analysis of publicly available tuition data

[a] Provisionally licensed teachers can take classes online or in-person at higher education institutions, community colleges, or with approved providers. Many divisions offer tuition reimbursements for courses taken by provisional licensees pursuing full licensure. Reimbursement amounts vary, but some divisions cover the full cost of courses. In addition, some higher education institutions offer discounted tuition to provisionally licensed teachers.

Teacher residency programs produce well-prepared teachers and prepare them to work in hard-to-staff schools

Residency programs are Virginia's most rigorous teacher preparation pathway (sidebar), but they have limited capacity and therefore prepare a small number of teachers. Virginia currently has three state-supported teacher residency programs that prepare individuals for teaching through a co-teaching placement of at least a year while participants simultaneously complete coursework. State-supported residency programs prepared just under 100 individuals for teaching in SY2022–23 (traditional higher education-based preparation programs prepared approximately 2,600 teachers in the most recent year for which data is available). Residency programs are costly to administer because they typically cover the cost of preparation and provide a stipend to participants, limiting the number of resident positions available. Several divisions also have partnerships with traditional higher education teacher preparation programs to offer residency placements for selected teacher candidates (sidebar).

Subject matter experts consider teacher residencies the most effective method for training teachers because research shows residency participants have higher teacher retention and feel better prepared to teach. Residencies also attract diverse candidates and fill critical vacancies.

In addition to providing high quality teacher preparation, teacher residencies also help improve teacher recruitment in divisions with high teacher vacancies. (JLARC recommended expanding teacher residency programs in its 2014 *Low Performing Schools in Urban High Poverty Communities*.) Virginia residency program participants are placed in hard-to-staff schools, and they are required to teach in those schools for several years after completing residency programs. These requirements help divisions experiencing significant teacher vacancies recruit new teachers. Many Virginia school divisions with large populations of Black students and limited resources have especially high teacher vacancy rates, according to a JLARC staff analysis, making teacher residency programs an especially useful recruiting tool in these schools. (See Chapter 2 and Appendix C for more information about divisions' teacher vacancies.)

Division-funded teacher residency partnerships offer financial support and an extended field placement to students in traditional teacher preparation programs. Partnerships vary in design, but residents may fill vacant support positions like long-term substitutes or instructional aides. Partnerships may also include a service obligation.

Additional state funding for teacher residency programs in Virginia could increase the number of students able to receive high quality preparation each year and direct more well-prepared teachers to divisions with the most teacher vacancies. State funding

could either be used to develop new or expand existing higher education-based teacher residency programs or division teacher residency partnerships, as both models are designed to provide high quality preparation to prospective teachers.

POLICY OPTION 2

The General Assembly could include language and funding in the Appropriation Act for the Virginia Department of Education to increase funding for teacher residency programs to help cover the cost of preparation for additional teacher residents.

New registered teacher apprenticeship program should provide rigorous preparation and be cost-effective due to federal funding

Registered teacher apprenticeship programs are another pathway that can provide high-quality teacher preparation, while addressing the financial barriers that can prevent individuals from pursing teaching. Apprenticeship programs can produce teachers that remain in teaching positions longer and feel better prepared to teach than individuals who use less rigorous pathways, according to experts. Apprenticeship programs also pay individuals during their preparation, which research shows facilitates a more diverse teacher workforce.

Registered teacher apprenticeship programs use a preparation model that is similar to teacher residency programs, but their funding sources can differ, and apprenticeship programs must meet certain federal requirements. Similar to residencies, registered apprenticeship programs require individuals to complete extensive on-the-job training while simultaneously completing courses required for teacher licensure. In addition, individuals are paid during the program, and they work with experienced teachers rather than immediately becoming the "teacher of record." Unlike residencies, however, registered apprenticeship programs can receive federal workforce funds to cover a portion of program costs. Registered apprenticeship programs must also meet certain federal requirements, including providing 2,000 on-the-job training hours per year, 144 hours of related technical instruction hours per year (e.g., degree and statutory requirements), and progressive wage increases as apprentices gain skills.

If implemented effectively, Virginia's new registered apprenticeships should result in additional well-prepared teachers and remove the financial barriers associated with traditional preparation. VDOE distributed funding to six partnerships between school divisions and higher education institutions in July 2023 for registered apprenticeship programs. As of early September 2023, at least one partnership enrolled an apprentice in fall 2023, and at least three partnerships plan to begin enrolling apprentices in spring 2024.

As this new program is implemented, VDOE should report on program participation, size, and funding. Eventually, the role that apprenticeship programs play in Virginia's pipeline should be reported and assessed in the context of other pathways (recommendations 9 and 10). If registered apprenticeships begin to prepare a large number

of prospective teachers soon, there may be less need for the state to invest additional funding in teacher residencies (Policy Option 2).

RECOMMENDATION 1

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act directing the Virginia Department of Education to report (i) which higher education institutions and school divisions have been approved to have apprentice programs, (ii) when they expect to begin preparing prospective teachers, (iii) how many individuals are expected to be prepared through each program annually, and (iv) how each program will be funded. The report should be submitted to the Board of Education and House Education and Senate Education and Health committees by June 30, 2024.

State can reduce barriers to participation in higher education teacher preparation programs

The state could address barriers that prevent individuals from participating in the largest *direct* pathway—traditional higher education teacher preparation programs. Doing so will not immediately result in a substantial increase in graduates from these programs. Over time, though, reducing or eliminating some of these barriers may result in more people training to be a teacher through traditional higher education programs and allow the state to eventually return to having a higher percentage of its teacher workforce fully licensed.

Virginia-specific assessment required for traditional teacher preparation programs is outdated and may be an unnecessary barrier

Teaching assessments are used to help ensure teachers have a minimum level of competency, however there is an ongoing debate among practitioners and subject matter experts about whether assessments present unnecessary barriers to the teaching profession or disadvantage certain types of individuals. In recent years, several states, including Colorado, Iowa, Maine, Montana, New Mexico, and Wisconsin, have stopped requiring teaching assessments for all candidates, instead allowing submission of other evidence of proficiency (e.g., a certain GPA threshold, a portfolio demonstrating content knowledge and/or instructional quality).

Virginia currently requires individuals to pass two types of assessments to qualify for full teacher licensure. The Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA) is a Virginia-specific test with two subtests that measure reading comprehension and written communication skills (sidebar). Praxis subject assessments are used nationally and measure specific content knowledge. Individuals in some endorsement areas (e.g., elementary education, special education) are also required to take a Praxis teaching reading assessment that measures knowledge of reading instruction.

All individuals pursuing teaching in Virginia must take the VCLA unless they are out of state teachers licensed by reciprocity. Some test takers apply to traditional preparation programs at higher education institutions, while others use different pathways such as career switcher programs, teacher residency programs, or are working towards full licensure under a provisional license.

Virginia's higher education institutions require teacher licensure assessments at different points in the process. Ten public institutions require individuals to pass the VCLA *before* being admitted into their teacher preparation program and pass the Praxis subject assessments before being approved for student teaching. Four do not require passage of VCLA for admission and instead require passage of both VCLA and Praxis subject assessments before student teaching. Regardless of when the assessments are required, *all* individuals attending higher education preparation programs must pass both assessments to complete their program and qualify for full licensure.

VCLA is outdated and includes some irrelevant content for certain endorsement areas

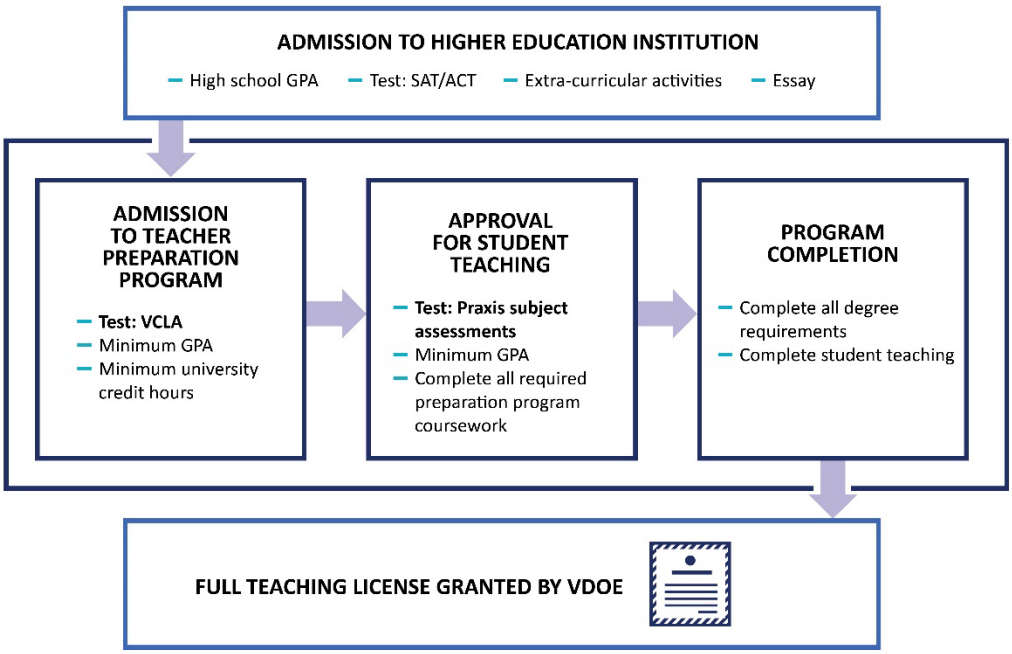
The content of the VCLA is outdated, according to teacher preparation program staff. Virginia developed the VCLA in 2007, and it has not been changed since it was developed (even though the vendor has offered to update it at no cost to the state). Virginia's teacher workforce has changed significantly since 2007. Moreover, the VCLA was developed when there was more interest in the teaching profession and the state was not experiencing a major teacher shortage (0.54 percent of positions were vacant). The concept of a test to "weed out" weaker applicants to teacher preparation programs prior to admission may have been reasonable in that environment, but it is less reasonable during a teacher shortage.

In addition, the VCLA currently tests individuals on skills like advanced copy editing that are not necessary for at least some types of teachers to be successful in the classroom. Preparation program staff pointed out that the ability to copy edit seemed irrelevant for endorsement areas in which editing is not essential (e.g., math, music, physical education). Some preparation staff also shared that the VCLA may disadvantage individuals with certain disabilities (e.g., deaf students, students with ADHD) because of its format.

VCLA may be an unnecessary barrier given numerous other requirements to become a fully licensed teacher in Virginia

The VCLA may present an unnecessary barrier to traditional teacher preparation programs when the state needs more people to enter the teacher pipeline. In addition to the VCLA, individuals must meet numerous requirements to complete a traditional teacher preparation program and obtain full licensure. These include preparation program coursework, student teaching, and Praxis subject assessments (Figure 3-4). While 86 percent of test takers eventually pass the VCLA, an average of about 630 test takers (14 percent) did not pass it each year over the last six years. According to staff at 11 of the 14 Virginia public teacher preparation programs, failure to pass required assessments such as the VCLA is a top reason individuals are unable to enroll in and/or complete preparation programs. One staff member noted: "I have a list of about 30 kids that can't pass the VCLA. If they can't pass, they are delayed a semester or have to drop out [of the education major]. They want to be teachers."

FIGURE 3-4
Teacher preparation program participants must fulfill numerous requirements to obtain full licensure



NOTES: Teacher preparation programs are required by accreditation standards to have requirements that ensure teacher candidates gain sufficient competencies as they progress through the program. This figure represents typical requirements in Virginia for an undergraduate teacher preparation program; however, the exact requirements to progress vary by institution.

Given the VCLA's content deficiencies, and the fact that it is reducing the number of individuals able to enroll in teacher preparation programs, Virginia should replace the VCLA with a more relevant test, or eliminate it entirely. If the VCLA is replaced, Virginia should consider using a nationally recognized test (sidebar) to ensure that it provides a meaningful assessment and is better aligned with other states. Nationally recognized tests, though, may include additional subject areas beyond reading comprehension and written communication (e.g., math) that are not essential for many teachers; therefore, the state should avoid adopting a test with unnecessary content.

Virginia previously required prospective teachers to pass the Praxis Core assessment to be admitted into teacher preparation programs. This assessment is nationally recognized and has subtests on reading, writing, and mathematics. Virginia now requires individuals to pass the VCLA instead.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the Appropriation Act directing the Virginia Board of Education to either (i) replace the Virginia Communications and Literacy Assessment with a nationally recognized teacher licensure test that is more relevant for assessing prospective teachers or (ii) eliminate the Virginia Communications and Literacy Assessment as a requirement for a full 10-year renewable Virginia teaching license.

Until the VCLA is replaced or eliminated, a waiver should be created that would allow Virginia higher education preparation programs to rely on other requirements and not

require certain individuals to pass the VCLA for admission to or completion of a program. The waiver could be similar to the one that has been available to school divisions for several years (sidebar). According to preparation program staff at higher education institutions, because this waiver is available for divisions but not traditional higher education preparation programs, some individuals who cannot pass the VCLA have dropped out of their higher education preparation programs to teach in divisions under a provisional license where the assessment requirements can be waived. This means they do not participate in student teaching, a key part of preparation for the teacher profession. Flexibilities granted for teacher licensure assessments should ideally be consistent across higher education preparation programs *and* local school divisions to ensure a consistent level of quality among new teachers and avoid creating a disincentive for individuals to pursue more rigorous pathways. Once Virginia is no longer experiencing critical teacher shortages, the state may want to assess whether flexibilities granted to divisions and potentially to higher education institutions for teacher licensure assessments are still warranted.

The 2019 General Assembly passed HB 2037, which gave school **division superintendents the ability to recommend a provisionally licensed teacher for full licensure without passing required assessments.** To be eligible, the individual must hold a provisional license that will expire within three months, be employed by a school division, have unsuccessfully attempted to pass the required assessments, have received an evaluation rating of proficient or above each year of the provisional license, and meet all other requirements for licensure.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Code of Virginia to create a waiver through which the Board of Education shall issue a full 10-year renewable Virginia teaching license to qualified individuals attending approved higher education teacher preparation programs who have not passed the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment but meet established criteria.

The Virginia Board of Education should revise the current regulatory requirement that many institutions said is the reason they require the VCLA as an admissions test. Many institutions currently use the VCLA as an admission requirement because the state requires each Virginia teacher preparation program to achieve a minimum assessment pass rate of 80 percent for all required teacher licensure tests, including the VCLA (8-VAC-20-543-50). Institutions that do not meet the 80 percent pass rate may have their preparation program approval revoked; therefore, many teacher preparation programs require passing the VCLA *before* admission so individuals who cannot pass the VCLA are not enrolled in their programs, thereby jeopardizing their ability to meet the minimum pass rate and receive program approval.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The Virginia Board of Education should revise section 8-VAC-20-543-50 of the Virginia Administrative Code to remove the incentive traditional higher education teacher preparation programs currently have to establish admission policies that unnecessarily restrict the number of individuals enrolling in such programs.

Tuition, assessments costs, and unpaid student teaching present a financial barrier to some participants in teacher preparation programs

Several costs are cited by new teachers and teacher preparation program staff as a barrier to attending traditional teacher preparation programs. Seventy-three percent of new teachers surveyed by JLARC who attended traditional preparation programs reported at least one cost associated with preparation (tuition and fees, cost of licensing tests, unpaid student teaching) to be a moderate or significant barrier to completing their preparation program. In addition, staff from 10 of the 14 traditional preparation programs at Virginia's public higher education institutions cited financial concerns as a top reason why teacher candidates did not enter or complete their program (sidebar).

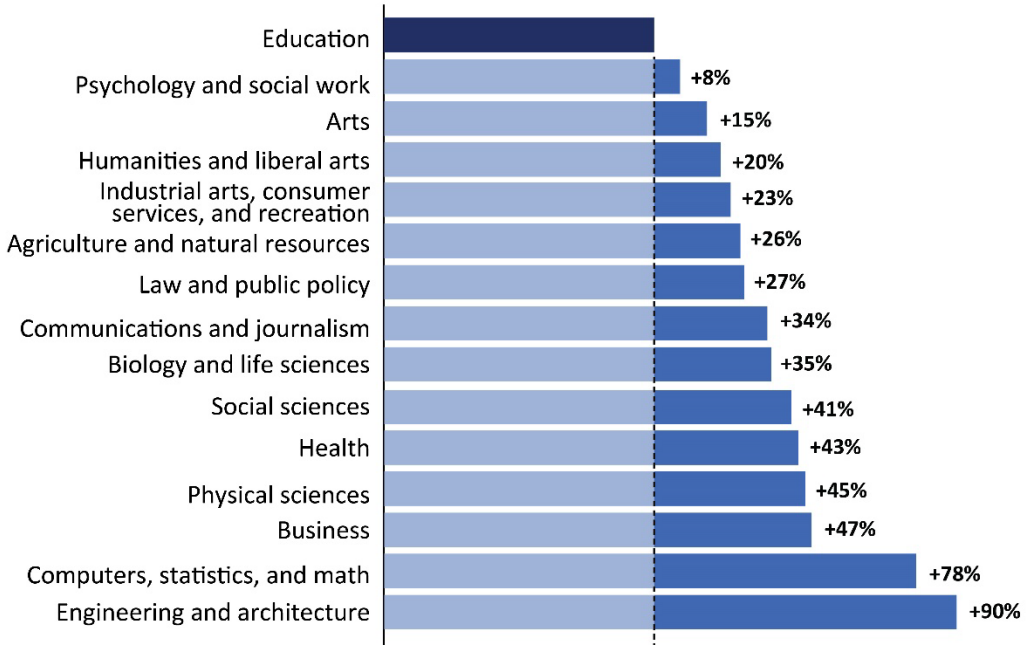
> *"In order to make an impact on the critical teacher shortage, there must be a significant financial investment in teacher education, as cost continues to be a major barrier for students. Today's students work multiple jobs to pay tuition and fees as well as costs associated with their daily living expenses."*
>
> **– Teacher preparation program administrator**

Tuition and fees could be offset by expanding existing program to reduce the cost of attending a traditional teacher preparation program

Tuition and fees are by far the largest cost associated with traditional higher education teacher preparation and require a substantial investment, especially when considering a teacher's expected future earnings relative to other professions. The average cost of tuition and fees for in-state students to complete a traditional teacher preparation program at a Virginia public higher education institution (excluding financial aid) is $57,388 for undergraduate programs and $23,776 for graduate programs (SY2022–23). Some higher education students can expect high earnings over their lifetime to justify these costs. However, teachers have lower lifetime earnings than many other professionals with similar levels of education and can expect to make less on average annually over the duration of a typical career (Figure 3-5). These lower lifetime earnings make it difficult for some students to justify incurring the costs of a traditional teacher preparation program.

Virginia has a relatively small ongoing program to reduce the cost of tuition for traditional teacher preparation for some students. The Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program (VTSLP) awards up to $10,000 for tuition and fees to teacher candidates at public or private institutions pursuing teaching in a critical shortage discipline (e.g., special education) or who are minority teacher candidates. The program requires recipients to teach for at least two years in the critical shortage discipline or in a school with more than half of the students eligible for free or reduced lunch. According to VDOE staff, the vast majority of recipients successfully complete their teaching obligation, and recipients who do not complete their program and required teaching service must reimburse the state. VTSLP's requirement for award recipients to work in a certain area of need also targets program funding to divisions with teacher shortages.

FIGURE 3-5
Individuals with education degrees tend to earn less over their career than professionals with similar levels of education in other fields



SOURCE: JLARC analysis of data from Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce
NOTES: Analysis of data on the national median earnings for individuals whose highest degree is a bachelor's degree. Differences shown are in earnings from ages 25 to 59.

North Carolina and Maryland have comparable teacher service scholarship programs. North Carolina appropriated $6 million in FY23 and has proposed appropriating $11 million in FY24 in state funding for teacher scholarship loans. Maryland appropriated $8 million in FY23 and $12 million in FY24 for teacher scholarship loans.

To reduce financial barriers to traditional teacher preparation programs while attracting more minority teacher candidates and candidates willing to teach in critical shortage areas, the General Assembly should appropriate more funding to the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program. Recently, $708,000 in annual program funding has facilitated scholarship loans to around 75 recipients per year, which is less funding than appropriated in neighboring states (sidebar). Virginia's current scholarship loan recipients represent an estimated 10 percent of all those who complete Virginia traditional teacher preparation programs who have financial need (based on Pell grant eligibility). Preparation programs typically can nominate three students a year to be considered by a panel for the award, but several institutions report they have substantially more eligible students than they can nominate. For example, one large public institution reported being unable to nominate at least 50 eligible students for scholarship loans every year. Another large institution estimated that as many as 100 additional students in their program would qualify each year.

The state has options to expand this program to meet unmet demand. The maximum award amount of $10,000 could be maintained and provided to more recipients. Alternatively, the award amount could be increased and provided to the same number of recipients, or both the award amount and number of recipients could be increased (Table 3-4). Teacher preparation program staff indicated that increasing

the number of recipients would help more individuals pursue teaching. Consideration could be given to using the state's recently increased higher education financial aid grant funding (sidebar) to cover any increases in VTSLP funding, which would represent a small proportion of state financial aid grant funding.

Virginia increased state funding for need-based financial aid grants from $219M in FY23 to $306M in FY24. This additional state funding may help support individuals pursuing teaching through public higher education-based programs, but public institutions determine which individuals receive state grant awards, and state grants are awarded to individuals pursuing degrees other than teaching.

TABLE 3-4
Potential new funding and award levels for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program

	Current	Potential new		
Program funding	$708,000	$1,000,000	$2,000,000	
Max award	$10,000 [a]	$10,000	$10,000	$15,000
Recipients (avg. / est.)	71	100	200	133

SOURCE: JLARC analysis of Appropriation Act and VDOE data.
NOTES: Figures under "new" column illustrate different potential approaches to increasing program funding. Two state funding amounts ($1M and $2M) show how recipients change as state funding increases. Two max award amounts ($10K and $15K) show how recipients change if awards increase and state funding is $2M. State funding and award amounts are hypothetical and could be higher or lower.
[a] $10K max award is less than one year of tuition and mandatory fees for an education degree in an initial licensure program at most Virginia public institutions.

RECOMMENDATION 5
The General Assembly may wish to consider including language and funding in the Appropriation Act to increase the annual funding for the Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.

Barriers related to testing fees and unpaid student teaching could be better addressed by extending two ARPA-funded programs that will expire

Before graduating and becoming a teacher, individuals also incur additional costs and forgo potential wages. Individuals interested in becoming a teacher typically must pay to take multiple licensure tests prior to completing their teacher preparation. Traditional teacher preparation programs also have mandatory student teaching, a key element of high quality preparation that is usually unpaid.

Individuals typically pay $250 to $542 to take required licensure assessments (assuming they pass them on the first attempt). While the cost of assessments is relatively small in the context of the total cost to become a teacher, teacher preparation staff and new teachers report the cost can still be a barrier. (Financial aid typically cannot be used to pay for these assessments.)

A Bank Street College survey of 12 institutions in seven states, including Virginia, found that **between 30 and 40 percent of teacher candidates' total student loan amounts were taken out during the student teaching** portion of their preparation program.

As noted earlier in this chapter, teacher residency programs and the anticipated apprenticeship programs compensate individuals while they are in the program. However, individuals attending traditional teacher preparation programs also have to complete between 10 and 16 weeks of full-time student teaching for which they are typically not paid but are still paying tuition and unable to work other jobs during the day. Many individuals rely on loans to cover their expenses during student teaching (sidebar). For example, a Virginia teacher responding to a JLARC survey reported

they quit their job and borrowed $7,000 to cover housing and food expenses during student teaching.

The state has two small, temporary programs that use federal pandemic funding to cover costs for individuals to take required assessments or to help pay for living expenses during student teaching. Both programs have recently been funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The temporary ARPA funding has already been used for one program and is scheduled to be used for another in 2024. VDOE does not have data on the outcomes of these programs because they are new, but preparation program administrators reported that awards from these programs were beneficial to recipients.

The Competitive Grant for Praxis and Virginia Licensure and Certification Assessment (Competitive Grant) was awarded to teacher preparation programs and school divisions. Recipients were selected by a VDOE-led committee based on factors such as their planned use of the funds and geographic area. The program or division could use the funds to offset or completely cover the cost of required assessments and provide test preparation. For example, an $8,400 award covered the cost of the VCLA for 44 students ($5,720) and VCLA and Praxis tutoring for 91 students ($2,607). The Competitive Grant was appropriated $80,000 in 2021 for a single round of grants and has not received any funding since.

At least six other states have programs that pay stipends to student teachers. For example, Maryland will pay student teachers up to $20,000 as part of a new Teacher Development and Retention Program pilot.

Several states have programs to help individuals afford required teacher assessments. North Carolina, Colorado, Connecticut, and Indiana have programs to subsidize assessment fees, pay for retests, or pay for tutoring or other assessment preparation materials.

The Paid Internship Scholarship for Aspiring Virginia Educators (Paid Internship) awards stipends of up to $15,000 during a student's final semester in which they student teach. Candidates for the grant are nominated by their preparation program, and VDOE partners with representatives from three universities (GMU, ODU, and VCU) to evaluate applicants based on financial need, as well as whether the candidate is preparing to teach in a critical shortage area, is performing well academically, and is from an underrepresented group. Since fall 2021, 158 student teachers received stipends of, on average, about $7,150 each. The paid internship was appropriated $2 million, and its funding will expire after fall 2024.

The General Assembly could appropriate more funding to the Competitive Grant Program and the Paid Internship Program to reduce the financial barriers of assessment costs and unpaid student teaching. Staff at VDOE report that demand for these programs continues to exceed the funds that were initially allocated. Additional appropriated funds could replace the programs' expiring ARPA funds and possibly provide additional funds to expand assistance (Table 3-5). Several others states fund similar programs (sidebar).

TABLE 3-5
Potential funding levels for the Competitive Grant program and the Paid Internship program

Competitive Grant for Praxis and Virginia Licensure and Certification Assessment			
Program funding	$80,000	$100,000	$150,000
Recipients (avg)	320	400	600
Paid Internship Scholarship for Aspiring Virginia Educators			
Program funding	$650,000	$1,000,000	$2,000,000
Recipients (avg)	91	140	280

SOURCE: JLARC analysis of Appropriation Act and VDOE data.
NOTES Competitive Grant assumes average test cost of $250 for VCLA and Praxis, although the grant may also be used for tutoring. Paid Internship program assumes average award of $7,154.

POLICY OPTION 3
The General Assembly could include language and funding in the Appropriation Act to provide state general funds for the Competitive Grant for Praxis and Virginia Licensure and Certification Assessment program.

POLICY OPTION 4
The General Assembly could include language and funding in the Appropriation Act to provide state general funds for the Paid Internship Scholarship for Aspiring Virginia Educators program.

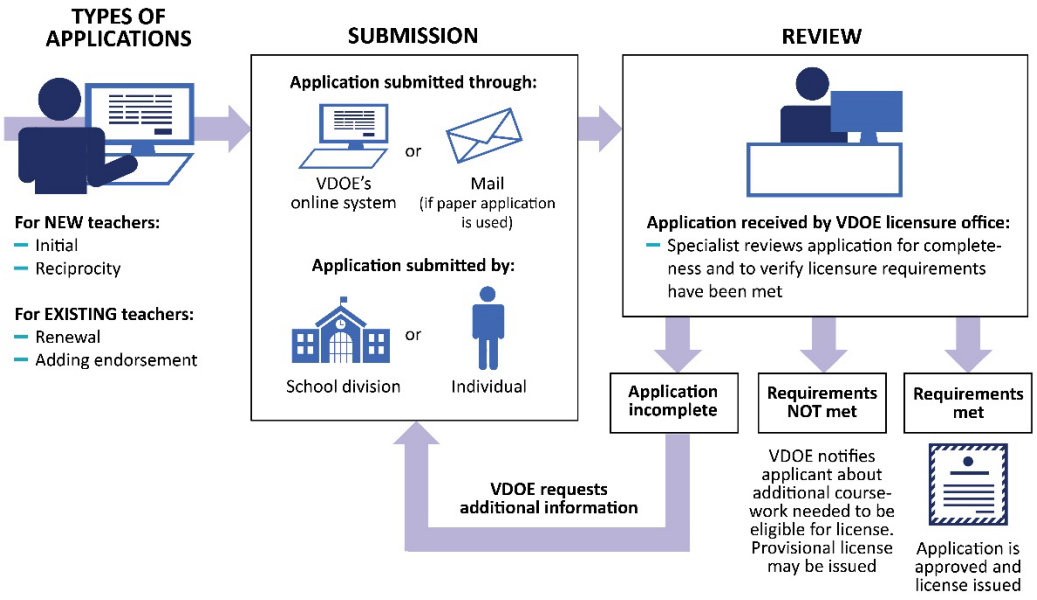
4 Virginia's Teacher Licensing Process

Public K–12 teachers are required to complete the state's licensure process and obtain a full or provisional license before they can be responsible for a classroom full time (sidebar). The licensing approval process should be expedient so that applicants who are granted a license can apply for open teaching positions. Applicants should be able to understand the process and requirements to obtain a license, whether they are in Virginia or seeking to transfer from another state.

To complete Virginia's teacher licensure process, teachers first submit their licensure applications to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). VDOE processes several types of teacher licensure applications, including those for first-time licensees, teachers from other states applying for a Virginia license through reciprocity, renewal applications, and applications for adding endorsement areas (Figure 4-1). Licensure applications can be submitted online or by mail and may be submitted by the applicant or by a school division on the applicant's behalf. VDOE licensure specialists review applications and verify requirements have been met before approving individuals' teacher licensure. Individuals who do not meet requirements receive a letter from VDOE describing the additional items needed to receive a teaching license.

Virginia teachers must be licensed to serve as the teacher of record, which is the teacher responsible for the delivery of instruction. "No teacher shall be regularly employed by a school board or paid from public funds unless such teacher holds a license or provisional license issued by the Board" (§ 22.1-299).

FIGURE 4-1
VDOE reviews and approves several types of public K–12 teacher licenses



SOURCE: JLARC interviews with Virginia Department of Education staff.

Several licensure requirements are not sufficiently clear

An "endorsement" is a content area in which a teacher specializes. All licensed teachers must have at least one endorsement. Examples include elementary education, special education, and secondary math. Individuals receive an endorsement if they have taken the appropriate courses and/or passed the appropriate licensing test for the endorsed content area.

Virginia's teacher licensure requirements are complex, so they must be conveyed to prospective teachers clearly and transparently. Virginia currently has 10 different types of teacher licenses and over 40 different endorsement areas (sidebar). Each license type and endorsement area has different requirements that individuals must meet. For example:

- An individual applying for a full 10-year license with a biology endorsement must have a bachelor's degree in biology or have completed 32 semester hours in eight subject areas specified by VDOE (e.g., genetics, botany, and ecology). The applicant must also have taken the required professional studies courses (e.g., curriculum & instruction and classroom & behavior management).
- An individual applying for a three-year provisional license with a biology endorsement must have a bachelor's degree in biology or a bachelor's degree in another subject area and a passing score on the biology PRAXIS exam.

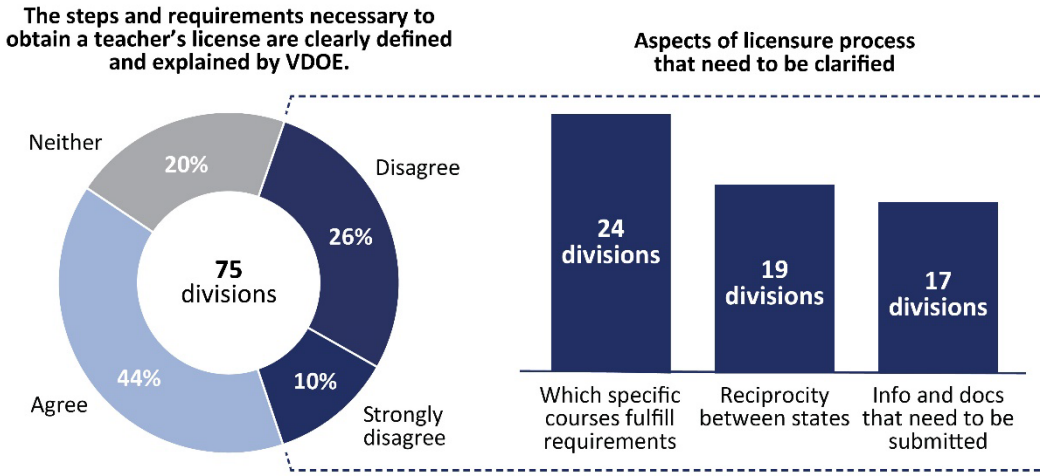
Some school divisions and teachers believe licensure requirements are not sufficiently clear

JLARC surveyed human resources staff from Virginia school divisions in July 2023 to ask about the state's teacher licensure process, new teacher support programs, and divisions' supply of public K–12 teachers. JLARC received responses from 75 divisions for an overall response rate of 56 percent.

School division HR staff surveyed by JLARC (sidebar) expressed mixed opinions on how clearly defined the requirements are to obtain a teaching license. Thirty-six percent of division staff "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed" that teacher licensure requirements are sufficiently clear. Of division staff who indicated the requirements could be clearer, the most frequently cited items needing clarification were which courses fulfill the requirements, reciprocity between Virginia and other states, and the information and documentation that should be submitted when applying (Figure 4-2).

Teachers also had mixed views on the clarity of the licensure process and requirements. Most new teachers who recently completed the licensure process did not express concerns about the clarity of the process, but some indicated it could be more clearly defined. One teacher said: "The process to apply for a license is so complicated and draining." Another said: "The complexity of applying for a teaching licensure is staggering. It needs to be simplified drastically."

FIGURE 4-2
Divisions identified several aspects of licensure process that could be clarified



Source: JLARC survey of school division HR staff, summer 2023.

No information is publically available for provisionally licensed teachers about specific courses that fulfill licensure requirements

It can be unclear to provisionally licensed teachers whether the courses they have taken (or plan to take) meet requirements for full licensure. All provisionally licensed teachers must complete professional studies courses and subject-matter courses to qualify for full licensure. Subject-matter courses must be completed in the subject area in which teachers are pursuing endorsement (e.g., biology). Because many provisionally licensed teachers are not participating in a teacher preparation program with established coursework, they must navigate Virginia's teacher licensure requirements on their own, which can be difficult. For example, Virginia licensure regulations require individuals applying for an endorsement in biology to have at least one course in ecology. Many higher education institutions offer multiple ecology courses, but VDOE does not publish information specifying *which* of these ecology courses meet licensure requirements. As a result, provisionally licensed teachers may take courses that do not fulfill Virginia's licensure requirement, which can be costly for them and delay their ability to teach. One new teacher said: "I thought I'd fulfilled all requirements, only to discover that there was more that the state required. Make requirements more clear, especially when it comes to …what courses will count [and] which will not."

VDOE should work with Virginia higher education institutions that have teacher preparation programs, as well as frequently used online teacher preparation providers, to identify courses that fulfill VDOE's requirements for provisionally licensed teachers pursuing full licensure. VDOE should publish on its website and update, as needed, a list of the specific courses that fulfill the professional studies requirements and subject-matter requirements for each endorsement area. Higher education institutions' ability to help VDOE develop this list may vary, so a course list that includes all institutions

may not be immediately feasible to develop. VDOE could focus its near-term attention on the most needed or popular courses at the largest institutions. VDOE should publish course information for each institution as it becomes available. This resource would allow provisionally licensed teachers to understand which courses VDOE will accept for full licensure. Developing a course list may also reduce VDOE licensure staff's workload, because it could reduce the amount of research that licensure staff conduct to determine whether specific courses meet licensure requirements.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The Virginia Department of Education should work with Virginia higher education institutions that offer teacher preparation courses to develop, publish on its website, and periodically update a list of specific professional studies and subject-matter courses that fulfill licensure requirements in each endorsement area for provisionally licensed teachers pursuing full licensure.

No information is publically available for teachers licensed in other states about whether their license will transfer to Virginia

Teachers who have a license in another state are a key part of Virginia's public K–12 teacher pipeline. Hiring licensed teachers from other states increases the pool of potential teacher applicants available to fill vacancies and enables Virginia to hire individuals with more teaching experience than first-time teachers.

Virginia teaching licenses can be awarded through reciprocity to licensed teachers from any state with "comparable endorsement areas if the individual… holds a valid out-of-state teaching license (full credential without deficiencies)…" (8VAC20-23-100.A). Teachers must also meet Virginia's statutory training requirements (e.g., complete required CPR, dyslexia awareness, and child abuse and neglect courses).

Licensed teachers from other states can receive a Virginia teaching license through reciprocity if VDOE determines their license is "comparable" to a full license in Virginia, and they meet other basic eligibility requirements (sidebar). Some out-of-state licenses are not considered "comparable" and are therefore not accepted in Virginia. For example, Virginia physical education teachers must have an endorsement in both physical education and health. Licenses in states where physical education teachers are endorsed only in physical education (but not health) are not considered comparable and would not be accepted. Similarly, licenses from states with endorsement areas that Virginia does not have, such as psychology, have no comparable Virginia license and would not be accepted. Virginia also does not accept licenses from other states that are not full licenses, such as emergency licenses and provisional licenses, because they are not considered comparable to Virginia's full license.

VDOE does not publish information on the specific license types and endorsement areas that are comparable between Virginia and other states. Therefore, out-of-state teachers interested in coming to Virginia must go through the full application process to learn whether their license and/or endorsement is accepted. This includes waiting between eight and 20 weeks for VDOE to process the license applications during SY2022–23. (Case processing time had improved to three weeks on average as of August 2023, according to VDOE.) If an out-of-state teacher's license is not accepted, VDOE may grant a provisional license and require the teacher to complete additional coursework to be eligible for full licensure.

This opaque reciprocity process may hinder Virginia's ability to attract licensed teachers from other states. Teachers in other states who are interested in teaching in Virginia may be discouraged from applying if they are unsure if their endorsement is comparable. Virginia may also lose the ability to attract some out-of-state teachers because of the burden and long waiting period associated with completing a licensure application in Virginia. Finally, out-of-state teachers who are granted a provisional license and are required to complete additional coursework may be discouraged from teaching in Virginia because they may not have the time or resources to complete it.

To make it easier for licensed teachers from other states to determine whether their license is accepted in Virginia, VDOE should develop a list of the specific license types and endorsement areas that are accepted from other states and post the information on its website. VDOE licensure specialists already know some of the license types and endorsements that are and are not accepted in Virginia, but a comprehensive list may be time consuming to develop. Therefore, VDOE could focus on states from which Virginia receives the most reciprocity applications, and/or endorsement areas in which Virginia is experiencing critical shortages (e.g., elementary education and special education). VDOE staff should review and update the list every two years to ensure it reflects changes to licensure types and endorsements in other states.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The Virginia Department of Education should list and periodically update on its website the specific teacher license types and endorsement areas in other states that qualify for a Virginia teaching license through reciprocity, prioritizing states from which Virginia receives the most reciprocity applications.

Virginia has recently made it easier for out-of-state teachers to obtain their Virginia license, and could consider further refinements to the process. For example, in 2018, Virginia implemented a fairly major change that eliminated the requirement that licensed teachers in other states have three years of experience before receiving a Virginia license. Other process changes may also be possible to facilitate reciprocity, including relatively minor changes. For example, Virginia currently requires reciprocity applicants to submit the same application and amount of information—including sealed college transcripts from the colleges they attended—as first-time license applicants. For individuals who have been licensed and teaching for years, this requirement may be unnecessarily burdensome. Any changes to requirements, however, would need to ensure that adequate standards of quality are maintained for out-of-state teachers being licensed in Virginia.

Licensure process can be lengthy and frustrating for applicants

As found in prior JLARC reports, the teacher licensure process has historically been paper-based, inefficient, and confusing. VDOE has attempted to streamline the process and has recently been working with a private IT vendor to develop and implement a new licensure system. Problems developing a new system and staffing challenges have hindered some of VDOE's recent improvement efforts. For example:

- An IT solution developed and launched over the last 18 months had major limitations, and a new IT vendor was selected in early 2023.
- Within the last year, there has been substantial turnover and vacancies in leadership positions overseeing the licensure office.

Amid these IT and staffing problems, licensure processing was delayed during the 2023 school year, according to school divisions. The information VDOE maintains about its licensure process was too unreliable for JLARC to quantify recent licensure delays, but VDOE staff, licensure applicants, and division HR staff all agree the process has been taking longer than it should.

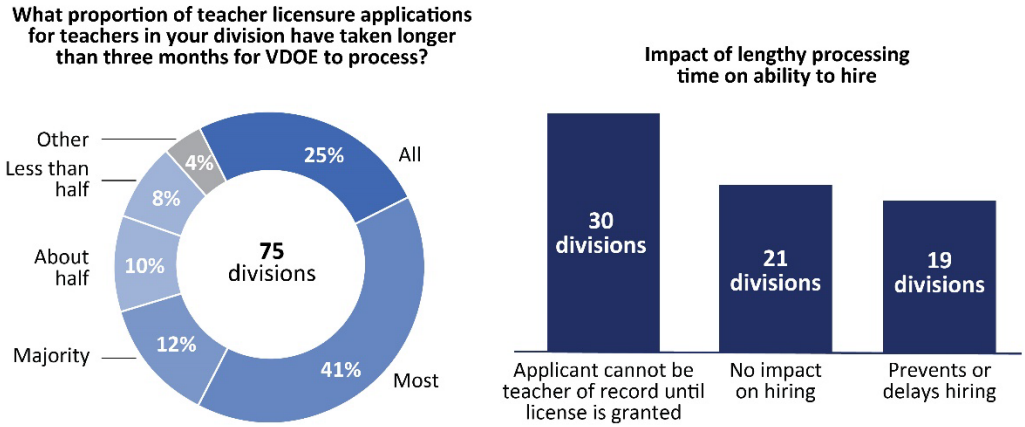
JLARC staff surveyed new K-12 public school teachers in Virginia about their teacher preparation, experiences with the state licensure process, and first year of teaching. New teachers were defined to include individuals who began teaching in a Virginia public school after January 1, 2022. JLARC received responses from 917 teachers (25 percent response rate). See Appendix B for more information.

Despite these issues, most new teachers surveyed by JLARC (sidebar) reported delays in processing their application did not affect their ability to obtain a teaching job. Only about 15 percent of JLARC survey respondents who were new teachers and indicated the licensure process took too long said that delays did affect their ability to get a teaching job and begin teaching (e.g., losing out on a teaching job or having to start their job later and forgo pay).

Division HR staff, who deal with the licensure process much more frequently, did cite some negative impacts from licensure processing delays. About two-thirds of division HR staff surveyed by JLARC estimated that either all or most of the licensure applications from staff in their division had taken more than three months for VDOE to process during the last year. Staff cited several problems that these long processing timeframes have caused for their division (Figure 4-3), though some division HR staff reported it did not ultimately hinder their ability to hire teachers.

VDOE's superintendent has made addressing these delays a top priority. The current superintendent has taken steps to reduce recent delays, such as hiring and dedicating support staff to answer licensure questions and handle administrative tasks so licensure specialists can prioritize processing applications. The superintendent has also accelerated the timeframe for implementing the new IT system by several months. In addition, despite licensure delays, the VDOE staff who process licensure applications were largely viewed by division HR staff as helpful, knowledgeable, and friendly.

FIGURE 4-3
Some divisions cited negative impacts from lengthy teacher licensure processing



Source: JLARC survey of school division HR staff, summer 2023.
NOTE: Respondents were asked to consider applications in their division during the prior 12 months.

Even after VDOE's new IT system is fully operational, there will still be opportunities to make the licensure process more efficient, especially from the applicant's perspective. The new system and process could address several issues, including:

- Lack of prioritization of applications for teachers in specific shortage areas (such as special education). The one exception is military spouse licensure applications, which are prioritized and must be processed within 15 days, according state law.
- Inefficient and unfair process for addressing applications for which additional information is requested. When additional information is required, the application is closed and typically goes to the end of the queue, which can substantially increase the processing time for that applicant.
- Lack of flexibility in assigning VDOE licensure specialists to divisions based on workload to minimize overall application processing times. Specialists are assigned certain divisions without adjustment based on workload, which results in uneven workloads and less efficiency.

RECOMMENDATION 8
The Virginia Department of Education should report on the status of its teacher licensure process, staffing, and information technology improvements to the Board of Education and House Education and Senate Education and Health committees by December 15, 2023, and again by June 30, 2024.

5 Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Teacher recruitment and retention are the final stages of Virginia's teacher pipeline, but they have a substantial impact on the state's supply of well-prepared public K–12 teachers. Recruiting new teachers in Virginia helps school divisions fill teacher vacancies and can prevent Virginia from losing teachers prepared to educate in Virginia to other states. Retaining new teachers enables the state to develop an experienced teacher workforce, which helps improve student outcomes and is needed to mentor additional new teachers. Retention also reduces the pressure to overly rely on recruitment to ensure an adequate supply of teachers (sidebar).

> *"We are not going to recruit our way out of this problem. There is not enough capacity or interest [in teaching]."*
>
> **– Teacher preparation subject matter expert**

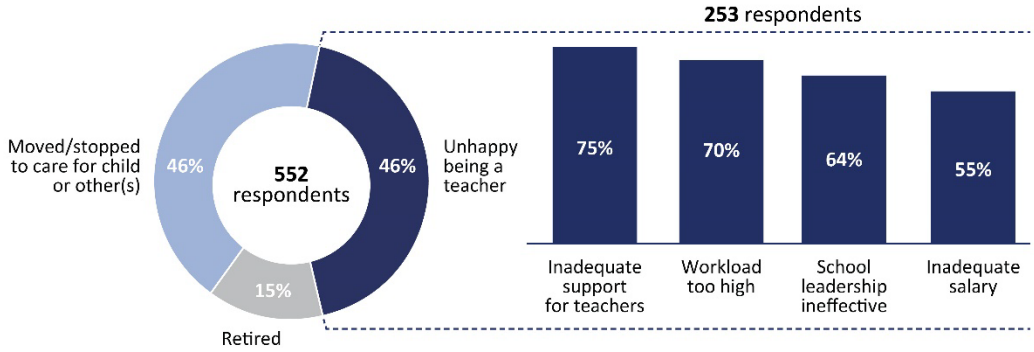
Recruitment and retention challenges are highly localized. Some areas are able to recruit and retain teachers without difficulty, while others operate with a substantial number of vacant teaching positions. Teacher staffing levels vary by region and by the school divisions within each region. Virginia school divisions with large populations of Black students and limited resources have an especially difficult time maintaining an adequate supply of well-prepared teachers. (See Chapter 2 and Appendix C for more information on teacher vacancies.)

Higher pay and better classroom support systems could encourage more people to teach

Licensed teachers who have left the profession cite personal reasons and unhappiness with being a teacher as the primary reasons they left. Nearly half of people responding to a May 2023 JLARC survey (sidebar) reported leaving the profession because their family moved, or to care for another member of their family, usually a child. The remainder either retired or left because they were unhappy being a teacher. Those who reported leaving because they were unhappy cited inadequate support (in the classroom but also from the broader community in which they taught), high workload, ineffective school leadership, and inadequate salary (Figure 5-1).

JLARC surveyed individuals with Virginia teaching licenses who were not working in Virginia public schools in July 2023. The survey asked why they were not teaching and what, if anything, would make them consider working in a Virginia public school in the future. The survey was sent to individuals for whom VDOE had email addresses. (More individuals likely have valid teaching licenses, but VDOE does not have electronic contact information for them.) JLARC received 1,164 responses for an overall response rate of 34 percent.

FIGURE 5-1
Teachers left the profession for personal reasons or because they were unhappy being a teacher



SOURCE: JLARC survey of licensed teachers who are not currently teaching in a Virginia public school.
NOTE: Respondents could select more than one response. Some respondents provided other reasons for leaving their jobs in Virginia public schools, including deciding to pursue another career and deciding they no longer wanted to work for pay.

Most Virginia licensees who are not currently Virginia public school teachers indicated they might consider teaching in the future if changes were made. This includes individuals who are working in non-teaching careers and individuals who are not currently working for pay. Specifically

- 43 percent said better pay might encourage them to teach in a Virginia public school;
- 32 percent said better systems for managing student behavior; and
- 30 percent said better support for teachers (in school and in the community) could encourage them to teach in a Virginia public school.

Only 14 percent of individuals with Virginia teaching licenses indicated they would *not* be interested in teaching in a Virginia public school at some point.

JLARC reports released in November 2022 and July 2023 made numerous recommendations that could help address these issues, particularly compensation and challenging classroom environments.

- Compensation – JLARC has recommended recruiting and retention bonuses targeted to school divisions facing particularly high vacancy rates and changing the SOQ formula so that state funding for salaries is more reflective of actual practice and regional labor costs.
- Classroom environment – JLARC has recommended the state fund more instructional assistants to help manage the classroom and expand an existing state program to help school staff better manage student behavior issues.

Effective mentorship can help retain new teachers, but divisions struggle to find enough mentors

The majority (57 percent) of Virginia school divisions that responded to a JLARC survey in July 2023 (sidebar) reported struggling to *retain* their new teachers. Divisions reported that new, fully licensed teachers with between one and three years of experience are the most difficult to retain. The exit rate for first-year teachers has been increasing. Between SY2012–13 and SY2019–20, about 17 percent of first year teachers left. Since SY2021–22, nearly one-quarter of first year teachers have left.

Although research on the effectiveness of new teacher mentorship programs is somewhat mixed, well-designed mentorship programs can be an effective way to help retain new teachers, according to recent research. Mentorship programs use experienced teachers to regularly support new teachers and help them refine various teaching skills (e.g., lesson planning, classroom management). Mentorship programs have been shown to help retain new teachers if the mentor (1) is assigned early in a teacher's first year, (2) teaches the same subject, (3) provides frequent support with curriculum, classroom discipline, and technology, and (4) supports improved classroom management and quality instruction.

Virginia already requires divisions to have mentor programs for new teachers that many teachers and divisions say can be effective, but divisions are having trouble finding mentors because of staffing problems. Most new teachers (75 percent) surveyed by JLARC (sidebar) rated their mentor as excellent or good at helping them adjust to their job. Similarly, most school divisions (79 percent) surveyed by JLARC reported their current mentorship programs can help retain new teachers. However, many divisions that responded to JLARC's survey said their current teachers do not have the time, willingness, or experience to mentor new teachers.

Research indicates that intensive mentoring from university-trained mentors can improve the effectiveness of mentoring and improve new teacher retention. Some states partner with higher education institutions to provide new teacher mentoring in public K–12 schools. For example:

- North Carolina has a New Teacher Support Program that is administered through the state's public universities and provides instructional coaches to mentor new teachers in low-performing schools.
- Alaska has a statewide mentor project run by the University of Alaska Fairbanks School of Education that provides new teachers in all school districts with highly trained mentors, most of whom are retired teachers.

To address the challenges some school divisions are facing finding enough mentors for new teachers, VDOE could work with Virginia higher education institutions to develop and pilot a new state or regional teacher mentor program. The program could be staffed by university-trained mentors and provide mentorship assistance to divisions with the most teacher vacancies. Institutions that wish to participate in the pilot

JLARC surveyed human resources staff from Virginia school divisions in July 2023 to ask about the state's teacher licensure process, new teacher support programs, and divisions' supply of public K–12 teachers. JLARC received responses from 75 divisions for an overall response rate of 56 percent.

JLARC staff surveyed new K–12 public school teachers in Virginia about their teacher preparation, experiences with the state licensure process, and first year of teaching. New teachers were defined to include individuals who began teaching in a Virginia public school after January 1, 2022. JLARC received responses from 917 teachers (25 percent response rate). See Appendix B for more information.

could be awarded state funding to hire and train mentors. Retired (or experienced teachers who recently left) Virginia public K–12 teachers could be considered for these new mentor positions, given their experience with Virginia public schools. VDOE could collect data from participating institutions and divisions each year and report on the program's effect on new teacher retention.

"The mentor programs are becoming difficult to maintain because there are more new teachers than seasoned teachers to mentor them.

POLICY OPTION 5

The General Assembly could include language and funding in the Appropriation Act directing the Virginia Department of Education to administer a three-year pilot program that provides targeted mentorship assistance to divisions with high teacher vacancies using mentors trained and coordinated by Virginia higher education institutions.

I would love for DOE to hire successful, retired school teachers to be 1-on-1 mentors to ANYONE who is provisionally licensed for their first few weeks of employment. Just assigning a mentor isn't enough."

– HR staff, Virginia school division

State does not collect or analyze data on teacher preparation programs' outcomes

Virginia does not consistently track or analyze data on the outcomes of the various teacher preparation pathways, which makes it difficult to identify which pathways are most effective at producing well-prepared teachers who stay in their jobs. VDOE requires Virginia higher education institutions with teacher preparation programs and school divisions to regularly report on various types of teacher-related data, such as the number of teachers who complete teacher preparation programs and the schools where teachers are working. However, data on whether individuals prepared in Virginia ultimately receive a Virginia teaching license, provide quality instruction, and remain teaching is not currently shared with entities in Virginia's teacher pipeline.

Virginia needs better teacher outcomes data to assess how well the pipeline is working and to identify possible improvements, according to researchers and Virginia practitioners. In a 2015 review of state teacher preparation program accountability, the National Council on Teacher Quality recommended that Virginia collect more information on teacher preparation outcomes (e.g., teacher evaluation results and five-year retention) and publish program report cards for all preparation programs. Virginia's higher education institutions also expressed the need for better teacher outcomes data. One institution told JLARC: "It would be beneficial if [we] received data from the VDOE that shows fully licensed educators in Virginia and the institutions where the teacher preparation was completed [so] each institution would have data relating to retention in P-12 education after graduation…"

Several other states regularly publish teacher outcomes data, which helps state officials and accreditors assess the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs. For example, Tennessee posts an educator preparation report card online each year that includes metrics for each of its preparation programs, such as teacher employment in Tennessee public schools, teacher effectiveness in the classroom, and self-reported teacher

preparedness. Delaware, Florida, and Colorado also regularly publish teacher preparation program reports with various teacher outcome metrics.

VDOE should begin to collect and periodically share with preparation programs information to help determine whether and how to improve individual programs and the teacher pipeline collectively. Information about teachers prepared in Virginia should be the primary focus and should include individuals who were prepared through direct and indirect pathways. For each teacher, the information collected should include their (1) preparation pathway, including the program(s) they completed; (2) licensure status; (3) place of employment; (4) indicators of instructional quality in their classroom (e.g., student achievement, classroom observation results, self-reported teacher preparedness); and (5) tenure as a public K–12 teacher. This information should be compiled by program. Each preparation program should receive this information about graduates of their program to help them assess the effectiveness of their programs. Information on individual teachers should not be published or used to evaluate teachers (collectively or individually). VDOE should hire a third party to assist with establishing a database capable of storing and maintaining this information because of its complexity and likely IT support needed.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language and funding in the Appropriation Act directing the Virginia Department of Education to (i) hire a contractor to develop a database that can store and maintain teacher information; (ii) regularly collect information on the teacher preparation pathway, licensure status, place of employment, indicators of instructional quality, and public K–12 teaching tenure for each teacher who is prepared in Virginia; and (iii) share such information about these teachers with the Virginia preparation programs from which they graduated.

After this information is initially collected, VDOE should regularly analyze and publicly report on the effectiveness of the state's teacher pipeline, including the different pathways individuals take to pursue teaching. There are several metrics VDOE could use to assess effectiveness of Virginia's teacher preparation pathways. At a minimum, VDOE should report biennially on the perceptions of preparedness and tenure of teachers who come through each of Virginia's preparation pathways and develop recommendations to improve specific pathways, as needed, based on the results of its analysis. This information should be reported and published in aggregate for each preparation pathway and program. State policymakers could use VDOE's report to identify which teacher preparation pathways and programs are most effective and warrant continued or enhanced state support, and those that are less effective and need changes, improvements, or should be discontinued.

RECOMMENDATION 10

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Code of Virginia to direct the Virginia Department of Education to biennially report on the preparedness and tenure of teachers prepared through each of Virginia's teacher preparation pathways and programs and recommend improvements to specific preparation pathways and programs as needed. The report should be submitted to the Board of Education and House Education and Senate Education and Health committees by November 1 every other year.

Appendix A: Study resolution

Adequacy of the supply of qualified individuals to fill needed K-12 teaching positions

Authorized by the Commission on November 7, 2023

WHEREAS, an adequate supply of qualified teachers to educate Virginia's 1.2 million public K-12 students is essential for an effective public education system; and

WHEREAS, school divisions report difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, and the number of vacant teacher positions is increasing; and

WHEREAS, more teachers are leaving the profession or retiring while fewer individuals are (a) entering teacher preparation programs and (b) being licensed as first year teachers; and

WHEREAS, teachers cite frustration with licensing requirement complexity and recently the proportion of teachers who are provisionally licensed rather than fully licensed has increased; and

WHEREAS, teachers cite concern about their ability to manage their classrooms due to student behavior issues, mental health concerns, and increasingly complex student needs, now therefore be it

RESOLVED by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission that staff be directed to review the adequacy of the supply of qualified individuals to fill needed K-12 teaching positions. In conducting its study staff shall (i) identify historical and current numbers of K-12 teachers needed and available and project the adequacy of the future supply of available teachers to accommodate future need, (ii) evaluate factors contributing to the decline in the number of individuals entering teacher preparation programs, (iii) evaluate the state process to determine qualifications and credentials needed to be a fully licensed teacher, and (iv) identify effective or innovative practices used in other states to maintain or increase the number of individuals entering and graduating from teacher preparation programs and becoming fully licensed teachers.

JLARC shall make recommendations as necessary and review other issues as warranted.

All agencies of the Commonwealth, including the Board of Education, Virginia Department of Education, public institutions of higher education, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and local school divisions shall provide assistance, information, and data to JLARC for this study, upon request. JLARC staff shall have access to all information in the possession of agencies pursuant to § 30-59 and § 30-69 of the Code of Virginia. No provision of the Code of Virginia shall be interpreted as limiting or restricting the access of JLARC staff to information pursuant to its statutory authority.

Appendix B: Research activities and methods

Key research activities performed by JLARC staff for this study included:

- interviews with VDOE staff, staff from higher education institutions' teacher preparation programs and SCHEV, school division staff, subject-matter experts, and other states;
- surveys of new teachers, licensed teachers who are not currently teaching in a Virginia public school, and school division human resources staff;
- administration of a data collection instrument to teacher preparation programs;
- analysis of VDOE staffing and licensure data, and data on teacher preparation programs;
- a case file review of a sample of teacher licensure applications; and
- a review of relevant documents and research literature.

Structured interviews

Structured interviews were a key research method for this report. JLARC staff conducted over 45 interviews with individuals from a variety of agencies and organizations. Key interviewees included:

- VDOE staff;
- teacher preparation program staff;
- school division staff;
- subject-matter experts and Virginia stakeholders; and
- staff from other states.

VDOE staff

JLARC staff conducted several interviews with staff from VDOE's Department of Teacher Education & Licensure office and VDOE's Educator Engagement Specialist. Staff conducted multiple interviews with staff from the Department of Teacher Education & Licensure to understand the department's programs and processes, including the teacher licensure process and the approval process for the state's teacher preparation programs. Interviews also covered recent and planned improvements to the department's operations. The Educator Engagement Specialist was interviewed to learn about VDOE's marketing strategy for teachers and VDOE-administered support programs for prospective teachers.

Teacher preparation program staff

JLARC staff conducted interviews with teacher preparation program staff at the following Virginia public and private higher education institutions:

- George Mason University
- James Madison University
- Liberty University
- Longwood University
- Old Dominion University

- Shenandoah University
- The University of Virginia's College at Wise
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Virginia Tech

These interviews were conducted to learn about the institutions' traditional teacher preparation programs and any other preparation programs they operate (e.g., teacher residency or career switcher programs), coordination with school divisions, barriers to the state's teacher pipeline, and potential ways to improve the pipeline.

JLARC staff also held two group interviews with private institutions that have traditional teacher preparation programs to learn about key barriers to the state's teacher pipeline, and potential ways the state could improve the pipeline. Representatives from seven private institutions participated.

JLARC staff also interviewed staff at SCHEV and EducateVA, which is the organization that administers the Career Switcher program at Virginia's community colleges.

Virginia school divisions

JLARC staff interviewed staff at six Virginia public school divisions: Danville City Public Schools, Fauquier County Public Schools, Goochland County Public Schools, Hanover County Public Schools, Henrico County Public Schools, and Newport News Public Schools. The focus of interviews at two divisions—Danville and Fauquier—was the state's teachers licensure process. Staff discussed division concerns about the licensure process (e.g., timeliness, transparency) and the impact of licensure issues on their ability to hire new teachers. The purpose of interviews at four divisions—Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, and Newport News—was to learn about these divisions' teacher preparation initiatives. Interview topics included the administration of the initiatives (including costs), VDOE's approval process (if applicable), challenges experienced with the initiatives, and impacts on teachers.

Subject-matter experts and Virginia stakeholders

JLARC staff conducted interviews with subject-matter experts from 10 educational organizations, including individuals from the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education, Association of Teacher Educators, Bank Street College, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, Education Commission of the States, Learning Policy Institute, National Conference of State Legislatures, National Center for Teacher Quality, and National Center for Teacher Residencies. These interviews covered various aspects of the teacher pipeline based on the expertise of the organization, but most interviews addressed teacher preparation programs and alternative paths to becoming a teacher, the teacher licensure process and barriers to obtaining a license, effective practices for improving the teacher supply, and recruiting and retaining teachers.

JLARC staff also interviewed staff from the Virginia Education Association and the Virginia Association of School Superintendents to better understand the key barriers to becoming a teacher in Virginia and potential changes that could improve the state's supply of teachers.

Other states

JLARC staff conducted interviews with staff from three states (New Mexico, North Carolina, and Tennessee) to discuss practices for increasing the teacher supply, innovative teacher preparation programs in other states (e.g., residencies and apprenticeships), and statewide teacher marketing efforts. Staff also interviewed licensure staff from the state of Mississippi to discuss their licensure process for teachers who are applying through reciprocity from other states.

Surveys and data collection instrument

Three surveys were conducted for this study: (1) a survey of new teachers, (2) a survey of licensed teachers who are not currently teaching in a Virginia public school, and (3) a survey of school division human resources staff.

JLARC staff also developed and administered a data collection instrument to Virginia's 14 public higher education institutions with teacher preparation programs.

Survey of new teachers

JLARC administered an electronic survey to a sample of new teachers at public K–12 schools in Virginia. New teachers were defined as individuals who began teaching in a Virginia public school after January 1, 2022.

The survey covered the following topics:

- new teachers' experiences in their teacher preparation program and challenges they faced during preparation;
- the extent to which their teacher preparation program was effective at preparing them to teach;
- their experience applying for and obtaining a teacher's license in Virginia, including the timeliness of the process; and
- their experiences during their first year of teaching, including their experience with their division's mentorship program, if applicable.

The survey was distributed electronically to approximately 3,943 teachers. JLARC received 917 responses, for an overall response rate of 25 percent. The response rate was estimated following the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) response rate (RR4) calculation. RR4 estimates a response rate that adjusts for the unknown survey eligibility of non-respondents, and it includes both complete and usable partial responses in the numerator of the calculation.

Survey of licensed teachers who are not currently teaching in a Virginia public school

JLARC staff administered an electronic survey to all licensed teachers who are not currently teaching in a Virginia public school. Survey topics included: current employment situation (i.e., either teaching somewhere else or not working as a teacher), reasons they are not working in a Virginia public school, and potential factors that would encourage them to teach in a Virginia public school in the future.

The survey was distributed electronically to approximately 4,300 licensed teachers who are not currently working in a Virginia public school, according to VDOE's data. (VDOE provided JLARC staff

with a list of currently licensed teachers who are not assigned to a public school, and a survey was sent to all individuals for whom VDOE had an email address.) JLARC received 1,164 responses, for an overall response rate of 34 percent. The response rate was estimated following the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) response rate (RR4) calculation.

Survey of school division human resources directors

An electronic survey was administered to the human resources directors in all of Virginia's public school divisions. Survey topics included: divisions' experience with, and opinions of, VDOE's licensure process, including the impact of the process on their ability to hire teachers; perspectives on their ability to hire an adequate number of qualified teachers; perspectives on the preparation levels of new teachers from various preparation paths; mentor programs for new teachers; and potential strategies the state could implement to increase the number of teachers in the future. Seventy-five divisions responded to the survey, for a response rate of 56 percent.

Teacher preparation program data collection instruments

JLARC staff developed three data collection instruments to collect preparation program data from traditional teacher preparation programs, teacher residency programs, and career switcher programs at public higher education institutions. The data collection instruments requested data from the 2022–23 academic year on: (1) program design and cost, (2) program capacity and enrollment, (3) student characteristics and outcomes, (4) state funding, and (5) suggestions for state policy changes.

Fourteen traditional teacher preparation programs, four teacher residency programs, and three career switcher programs received the data collection instrument, and all programs submitted responses for a response rate of 100 percent.

Data collection and analysis

JLARC staff collected and analyzed several types of data from VDOE for this study. JLARC received teacher- and division-level data on teacher vacancies, licensure, and employment tenure. JLARC staff also received data on assessment pass rates, and accessed and analyzed publicly available federal Title II data from the U.S. Department of Education on teacher preparation programs.

Teacher vacancies (Chapter 2)

Vacancy data for SY2021–22, SY2022–23, and SY2023–24 were obtained from VDOE's Positions and Exits Collection, and vacancy data for earlier years came from VDOE teacher supply and demand reports. Data was available by school division and subject area.

JLARC staff conducted a multivariate regression analysis using division-level data to estimate the factors most strongly related to the variation in teacher vacancy rates at the division level for SY2022-2023. The dependent variable was the teacher vacancy rate, defined as the percentage of teaching positions in each division that were reported as unfilled as of October 2022. The independent variables were:

- the percentage of students in a division who are Black,
- the percentage of students in a division who are Hispanic;

- the percentage of students in a division who are not white, Black, or Hispanic;
- a measure of the degree to which a division maintained in-person instruction during the pandemic (1 = most remote, 5= most in-person);
- the local composite index, which measures a school division's ability to provide school funding;
- the percentage of students in a division that are economically disadvantaged;
- the percentage of students in a division that are disabled; and
- indicator variables for each VDOE region.

The estimated effects for two variables above were statistically significant and meaningful in size.

- First, divisions with the highest proportion of Black students had estimated teacher vacancy rates of 8.4 percent in SY2022–23, compared with vacancy rates of 2.2 percent for divisions with the lowest proportion of Black students, a difference of about 6 percentage points, holding constant the other factors above.
- Divisions that had the most remote instruction during the pandemic had estimated teacher vacancy rates in SY2022–23 of 6.2 percent, compared with vacancy rates of 1.2 percent for divisions that had the most in-person instruction, a difference of 5 percentage points.

Number of newly licensed teachers (Chapter 2)

JLARC staff analyzed data provided by VDOE on the number of newly licensed teachers statewide by license type for SY2014–15 through SY2022–23 to determine the how the number of new teachers has changed over time.

Proportion of teachers who are not fully licensed (Chapter 2)

The percentage of teachers who were fully licensed, provisionally licensed, unlicensed, teaching out of field, or long-term substitutes was calculated using two data sources: VDOE Master Schedule Collection data for SY2012–13, SY2021–22, and SY2022–23; and a teacher-level extract from VDOE's licensure data system.

Because teachers could be in more than one of these statuses in a given year, a hierarchy was used to determine the status for each teacher. Teachers with an active full license were counted as fully licensed (84 percent of all teachers in the VDOE Master Schedule Collection for SY2022–23), even if they also had a provisional license in the same school year. Teachers who had an active provisional license but not a full license were counted as provisionally licensed (8.5 percent of teachers). However, if a teacher was teaching out of field, they were counted as such (5.8 percent), even if they had an active full or provisional license. Teachers with no active license were counted as unlicensed (1.7 percent). A small proportion of these teachers had a pending license, but most were not yet in the licensure system. Finally, if a teacher was a long-term substitute (0.2 percent) but had an active license (full or provisional), they were counted as licensed and not as a long-term substitute.

Proportion of provisionally licensed teachers who become fully licensed, and tenure for provisionally licensed teachers (Chapter 3)

Data from VDOE's licensure system was used to calculate the proportion of provisionally licensed teachers who became fully licensed within three years of receiving their provisional license. Provisional licenses in Virginia are valid for three years, with two possible one-year extensions.

Teacher tenure was estimated using teacher-level licensure history combined with teacher-level turnover data for SY2011–12 through SY2022–23. The combined file includes all teachers who initially received a provisional or full license in SY2011–12 or more recent years and who worked in a Virginia public school since SY2011–12, about 119,000 teachers. Teachers who were teaching in SY2011–12, the first year of turnover data, were dropped from the tenure analysis, because they include both teachers who began teaching in SY2011–12 and teachers who began earlier and were still teaching in SY2011–12.

Survival analysis—a statistical method to analyze the time until an event occurs—was also used to measure teacher tenure, including median tenure. The key outcome was the number of school years taught from a teacher's first year (SY2012–13 or later) to SY2022–23, the most recent year observable. For teachers who were still teaching in SY2022–23, the most recent year of data, their total years teaching is unknown because the year they will stop teaching is unobservable. Survival analysis accounts for this, treating those individuals as censored, meaning they have not exited by the last year of observation. Ignoring this fact would result in underestimating teacher tenure.

The analysis found the median number of years of teaching for Virginia public school teachers is nine years for individuals who began teaching in SY2012–13 or later. Twenty-five percent of individuals taught for about three years or less. There is some evidence of a decline in teacher tenure over time, but the observation period (maximum of 11 years) is not long enough to show trends over many years. Teachers whose initial license is provisional have slightly shorter tenure than teachers whose initial license is a full license. One-fourth of provisional licensees teach for three or fewer years, compared with four years for full licensees. Similarly, median teacher tenure is eight years for provisional licensees and nine years for full licensees.

Federal Title II data analysis (Chapter 3)

JLARC staff analyzed federal data from the Higher Education Act Title II State Reports (U.S. Department of Education) to analyze trends in enrollments and completions in teacher preparation programs in Virginia. Staff reviewed Virginia State Reports for academic years SY2011–12 through SY2020–21, the most recent year available, comparing the number of students who enrolled in and completed traditional and alternative preparation programs in Virginia during this time period.

Licensure assessment data (Chapter 3)

JLARC staff reviewed summary-level data on assessment pass rates for the Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA), provided by the assessment contractor (Pearson). Staff reviewed data on statewide first attempt and best attempt pass rates, as well as pass rates by demographic groups, for SY2017–18 through SY2022–23 to date as of July 2023.

Exit rate for first-year teachers (Chapter 5)

Teacher-level turnover data for SY2011–12 through SY2022–23 from VDOE was used to measure the percentage of first-year teachers who left teaching after their first year, and to measure exit rates in subsequent years. Cohorts of first-year teachers were identified for each year of data and followed to determine whether they stopped teaching at any Virginia public school after the first year, second year, etc. A first-year exit rate could not be calculated for individuals who began teaching in SY2022–23, because data was not yet available to determine which teachers returned for their second year in SY2023–24.

Case file reviews

JLARC staff reviewed 36 teacher licensure applications that were currently under review by VDOE to determine:

- the types of applicants going through the process (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, school division employer (if applicable), endorsement areas), and
- the time between the application submission, assignment to a VDOE licensure specialist, application being "closed" for missing information (if applicable), and the current date.

VDOE selected the files based on criteria provided by JLARC staff, including applications that (1) represent a mixture of divisions and preparation pathways (e.g., traditional EPPs and alternative routes) and (2) a mixture of applications VDOE has recently received for processing and applications that have been waiting in the queue for a longer amount of time.

Document reviews

JLARC staff reviewed a variety of documents to inform its research, including:

- VDOE statutes and regulations;
- documents related to grants and programs that VDOE oversees or administers, including
    - Guidelines for Mentor Teacher Programs for Beginning and Experienced Teachers
    - Mentor Teacher Program Evaluation & Program Reports
    - Report on Teacher Residency Partnership Grants (SY2021–22)
    - Biennial Report: Approved Teacher Education Programs Compliance (2019–2021)
- contract documents related to VDOE's new licensure IT system, including the Statement of Work;
- annual professional education program profiles data;
- previous reviews of VDOE and the teacher pipeline, including a 2020 JLARC review of VDOE; Report of the Virginia Department of Education on Virginia Teacher Licensure Policy: Biases and Barriers to Diversifying the Workforce (2022); and Report from the Task Force on Diversifying Virginia's Educator Pipeline, August 2017.

JLARC staff also conducted reviews of relevant research literature on causes of teacher shortages; design elements needed for effective teacher preparation programs, teacher licensure processes, and new teacher mentoring programs; alternative preparation pathways, and the effectiveness of new teacher mentoring programs.

Appendix C: Teacher vacancies by school division

This appendix includes public K-12 teacher vacancy data, by school division, collected by the Virginia Department of Education for the past two school years (SY2022-23 and SY2023-24).

Data show that teacher vacancies vary widely by division in both years, with some divisions experiencing zero vacancies, while others experience high vacancies. Several of the divisions with the most and least teacher vacancies changed between SY2022-23 and SY2023-24.

TABLE C-1
Public K-12 teacher vacancies, SY2022-23 and SY2023-24

SY2022-23				SY2023-24			
School division	Total FTE teacher positions	Total unfilled FTE teacher positions	Vacancy rate (%)	School division	Total FTE teacher positions	Total unfilled FTE teacher positions	Vacancy rate (%)
Southampton County	194	40	20.8	Charles City County	65	14	21.5
Charles City County	65	11	16.9	Suffolk City	1,002	177	17.7
Portsmouth City	959	158	16.5	Lancaster County	77	13	17.0
Norfolk City	2,102	319	15.2	Norfolk City	2,102	353	16.8
Nottoway County	155	22	14.1	Essex County	99	15	15.1
Franklin City	85	11	13.0	Cumberland County	102	15	14.7
Bland County	57	6	10.6	Poquoson City	154	22	14.3
Lynchburg City	609	64	10.5	Caroline County	278	38	13.7
Prince Edward County	143	15	10.5	Surry County	84	10	11.9
King and Queen County	67	7	10.4	Nottoway County	155	18	11.6
Newport News City	1,736	162	9.3	Northampton County	113	13	11.5
King George County	307	28	9.1	Hampton City	1,473	155	10.5
Martinsville City	144	13	9.0	Lunenburg County	117	12	10.3
Westmoreland County	123	11	9.0	Buckingham County	111	11	9.9
Suffolk City	1,002	87	8.7	Prince Edward County	143	13	9.1
Sussex County	85	7	8.3	Bland County	57	5	8.8
Alleghany Highlands	229	19	8.1	Manassas Park City	231	19	8.2
Fredericksburg City	252	20	8.0	Richmond City	1,932	152	7.9
Spotsylvania County	1,592	121	7.6	Highland County	25	2	7.9

Manassas Park City	231	17	7.4	Newport News City	1,736	135	7.8
Brunswick County	100	7	6.9	Prince George County	440	34	7.7
Petersburg City	320	22	6.9	Charlottesville City	389	30	7.7
Danville City	433	29	6.7	Martinsville City	144	11	7.6
Northampton County	113	8	6.7	King William County	147	10	6.8
Prince William County	5,967	389	6.5	Alexandria City	1,162	77	6.6
Madison County	125	8	6.4	Petersburg City	320	21	6.6
Lunenburg County	117	7	6.0	Appomattox County	170	11	6.5
Poquoson City	154	9	5.9	Buena Vista City	62	4	6.4
Manassas City	432	25	5.8	Chesterfield County	4,519	286	6.3
Caroline County	278	16	5.8	Mathews County	80	5	6.3
Hampton City	1,473	84	5.7	King George County	307	19	6.2
Cumberland County	102	6	5.7	Page County	255	15	5.9
Culpeper County	561	31	5.5	Halifax County	380	22	5.8
Lancaster County	77	4	5.2	Spotsylvania County	1,591	92	5.8
Prince George County	440	22	5.0	Southampton County	194	11	5.7
Orange County	334	16	4.9	Madison County	125	7	5.6
Chesterfield County	4,519	220	4.9	Hopewell City	310	17	5.5
Henrico County	3,450	165	4.8	Prince William County	5,967	322	5.4
Surry County	84	4	4.8	Accomack County	379	20	5.3
Winchester City	359	17	4.7	Northumberland County	114	6	5.3
Shenandoah County	443	21	4.6	Colonial Heights City	231	12	5.2
Bath County	55	3	4.6	Giles County	193	10	5.2
Buckingham County	111	5	4.5	Henrico County	3,450	176	5.1
Craig County	45	2	4.4	Fairfax County	12,681	605	4.8
Mecklenburg County	243	11	4.3	Lynchburg City	609	27	4.4
Colonial Beach	48	2	4.2	Richmond County	93	4	4.3
Richmond City	1,914	80	4.2	Arlington County	2,383	101	4.2
Lee County	241	9	3.7	Tazewell County	392	16	4.1
Dickenson County	173	6	3.6	Westmoreland County	123	5	4.1
Northumberland County	114	4	3.5	Shenandoah County	443	18	4.1
Halifax County	380	13	3.4	Fredericksburg City	252	10	4.0
Warren County	382	13	3.4	Middlesex County	102	4	3.9
Tazewell County	392	13	3.3	Stafford County	2,338	87	3.7

Fairfax County	12,681	419	3.3	Manassas City	432	16	3.7
Hopewell City	310	10	3.2	Albemarle County	1,083	40	3.7
Richmond County	93	3	3.2	Smyth County	353	13	3.7
Roanoke City	1,066	34	3.2	Loudoun County	6,511	239	3.7
Accomack County	379	12	3.1	Pittsylvania County	635	21	3.3
Rappahannock County	68	2	2.9	Frederick County	1,001	33	3.3
Giles County	193	6	2.9	Franklin County	524	16	3.1
Alexandria City	1,162	33	2.8	Fauquier County	832	25	3.0
Chesapeake City	2,945	82	2.8	Orange County	333	10	3.0
Stafford County	2,338	65	2.8	York County	935	28	3.0
King William County	147	4	2.7	Gloucester County	369	10	2.7
Frederick County	1,001	26	2.6	Harrisonburg City	524	14	2.7
Gloucester County	369	9	2.3	Isle of Wight County	393	10	2.5
Virginia Beach City	4,661	106	2.3	Lee County	241	6	2.5
York County	935	20	2.1	Greensville County	168	4	2.4
Waynesboro City	238	5	2.1	Warren County	382	9	2.4
Charlottesville City	389	8	2.1	Dickenson County	173	4	2.3
Harrisonburg City	524	11	2.0	Augusta County	713	16	2.2
Franklin County	524	11	2.0	Craig County	45	1	2.2
Pittsylvania County	635	13	2.0	Greene County	227	5	2.2
Middlesex County	102	2	2.0	Culpeper County	561	12	2.1
Dinwiddie County	331	6	1.8	Waynesboro City	238	5	2.1
Rockbridge County	224	4	1.8	Danville City	491	10	2.0
Amelia County	112	2	1.8	Buchanan County	198	4	2.0
Isle of Wight County	393	7	1.8	Chesapeake City	2,945	59	2.0
Greene County	227	4	1.8	Winchester City	359	7	1.9
Fauquier County	832	15	1.7	Montgomery County	762	14	1.8
Colonial Heights City	231	4	1.7	Amherst County	327	6	1.8
Grayson County	148	3	1.7	Pulaski County	338	6	1.8
Smyth County	353	6	1.6	Amelia County	112	2	1.8
Nelson County	126	2	1.6	Radford City	118	2	1.7
Page County	255	4	1.6	Wythe County	311	5	1.6
Staunton City	195	3	1.5	Rockingham County	818	13	1.6
Buchanan County	198	3	1.5	West Point	65	1	1.5

Albemarle County	1,083	16	1.5	Norton City	66	1	1.5
Arlington County	2,383	33	1.4	King and Queen County	67	1	1.5
Henry County	520	7	1.3	Rappahannock County	68	1	1.5
Powhatan County	308	4	1.3	Washington County	577	8	1.4
Pulaski County	311	4	1.3	Virginia Beach City	4,661	64	1.4
Mathews County	80	1	1.3	Williamsburg-James City County	828	11	1.3
Wise County	478	6	1.3	Bedford County	678	9	1.3
Amherst County	327	4	1.2	Dinwiddie County	331	4	1.2
Campbell County	592	7	1.2	Sussex County	85	1	1.2
Bedford County	678	8	1.2	Roanoke City	1,066	12	1.1
Appomattox County	170	2	1.2	Galax City	97	1	1.0
Galax City	97	1	1.2	Hanover County	1,265	13	1.0
Williamsburg-James City County	828	10	1.1	Henry County	520	5	1.0
Loudoun County	6,511	75	1.1	Rockbridge County	224	2	0.9
Carroll County	279	3	1.1	Campbell County	592	5	0.8
Washington County	577	6	1.0	Nelson County	126	1	0.8
Rockingham County	818	8	1.0	Floyd County	135	1	0.7
Essex County	99	1	1.0	Charlotte County	136	1	0.7
Augusta County	713	6	0.8	Salem City	286	2	0.7
New Kent County	238	2	0.8	Patrick County	178	1	0.6
Fluvanna County	249	2	0.8	Goochland County	199	1	0.5
Clarke County	134	1	0.7	Bristol City	207	1	0.5
Floyd County	135	1	0.7	Scott County	309	1	0.3
Wythe County	311	2	0.7	Louisa County	442	1	0.2
Hanover County	1,265	8	0.6	Wise County	478	1	0.2
Greensville County	168	1	0.6	Roanoke County	999	2	0.2
Patrick County	179	1	0.6	Botetourt County	340	-	0.0
Bristol City	207	1	0.5	Carroll County	279	-	0.0
Russell County	288	1	0.3	Clarke County	133	-	0.0
Botetourt County	340	1	0.3	Colonial Beach	48	-	0.0
Montgomery County	762	2	0.3	Falls Church City	207	-	0.0
Louisa County	442	1	0.2	Fluvanna County	249	-	0.0
Roanoke County	999	1	0.1	Grayson County	148	-	0.0
Buena Vista City	62	-	-	Lexington City	40	-	0.0
Charlotte County	136	-	-	Russell County	288	-	0.0
Falls Church City	207	-	-	Staunton City	195	-	0.0
Goochland County	199	-	-				

Highland County	25	-	-			
Lexington City	40	-	-			
Norton City	66	-	-			
Radford City	118	-	-			
Salem City	286	-	-			
Scott County	309	-	-			
West Point	65	-	-			
Total	**92,579**	**3,573**		**Total**	**90,466**	**4,104**

SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis of Virginia Department of Education data, school years 2022-23 and 2023–24.
NOTE: SY2022-23 data represents vacant public K-12 full-time equivalent positions reported by divisions as of October 1, 2022. SY2023-24 vacancy data reflects actual or assumed to be vacant public K-12 full-time equivalent positions on the first day of school for 123 divisions.

Appendix D: Agency Response

As part of an extensive validation process, the state agencies and other entities that are subject to a JLARC assessment are given the opportunity to comment on an exposure draft of the report. JLARC staff sent an exposure draft of the full report to the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and the Secretary of Education.

Appropriate corrections resulting from technical and substantive comments are incorporated in this version of the report. This appendix includes a response letter from the secretary of education and VDOE.

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Aimee Rogstad Guidera
Secretary of Education

September 12, 2023

Hal E. Greer, Director
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission
919 East Main Street Suite 2101
Richmond, VA 23219

Director Greer,

We appreciate the hard work that went into your report on *Virginia's K-12 Teacher Pipeline.* Thank you for your collaborative approach with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) on the final review of this report. We look forward to continued collaboration as we work with the General Assembly to create multiple pathways for people to enter the teaching profession and to ensure every child in Virginia has access to a high-quality licensed teacher that impacts their learning.

While we agree with the general direction of most of the recommendations, we have specific feedback on core omissions in this analysis. JLARC's report underscores the critical need to increase the transparency around teacher licensure and professional development and to expand innovative teacher pipeline models, such as *Grow Your Own* apprenticeships. However, we are concerned that the analysis defines quality programs through input measures instead of measurable impact on student learning. In addition, the report fails to capture the investments and changes that VDOE has made and is in the midst of implementing that will improve the efficacy and expansion of both licensure processes and pathways programs.

Virginia is not alone when it comes to staffing concerns across industries and specifically the teaching profession. According to the latest national data, 4% of all U.S. public school teaching positions were vacant[1] and across all industries 50 million workers left their jobs. In-person jobs were particularly impacted[2]. In Virginia, modest but alarming increases were experienced, increasing from 3.1% in October of SY2021-22 to 3.9% in October of SY2022-23. However, the 3.9% average vacancy rate masks huge variation across school divisions, and, as you note in the report, anecdotal survey data says the top three reason teachers leave the profession are because of inadequate support, high workloads, and ineffective school leadership. We continue to hear from teachers who are frustrated with the impacts of our children being kept out of school longer than 43 other states; this includes chronic absenteeism, discipline issues, and increased emotional and mental health issues which are falling on the shoulders of our already stretched teachers.

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[1] (2022) *Press release*. Available at: https://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/press_releases/12_6_2022.asp

[2] Ferguson, S. (2023) *Understanding America's labor shortage: The most impacted industries, U.S. Chamber of Commerce*. Available at: https://www.uschamber.com/workforce/understanding-americas-labor-shortage-the-most-impacted-industries

Building a world class workforce across all sectors is a top priority for this Administration. Governor Youngkin's *Executive Directive 3* specifically addresses teacher shortages and attracting, growing and retaining great teachers through streamlining traditional preparation programs and investing in alternative routes into the profession. In January 2023, Virginia became one of the first states in the nation to establish a U.S. Department of Labor registered apprenticeship for teaching, and under the current Administration, the VDOE has launched over $29 million dollars in pipeline development grants and plans to invest another $10 million dollars into the *Grow Your Own* apprenticeship program. The full list of grant programs is included in the appendix.

VDOE's newly launched campaign, *ElevateEducatorsVA,* calls on Virginians to recognize the hard work our educators do every day, celebrate their dedication, and support their efforts.

Areas of Concern

There are three main areas of concern with JLARC's research and analysis still left unaddressed in the final report. First, because the scope of the problem is national and not isolated to teaching, the local variance of vacancy rates needs much more attention as there are lessons to be gleaned from successful practices in Virginia. Second, the report does not ground the approach to quality in teacher preparation and development in the ultimate goal of education— student learning. Every recommendation in this report should be guided by research about teacher development approaches that impact student outcomes. This requires a robust data system; the report does call out the need for improving our teacher data systems. Third, the successful and measurable improvement of the licensure system at the VDOE is not captured in the report.

1) *Deeper Analysis of Regional Vacancy Data Needed to Inform Pathway Efforts*

The report's utility suffers from the lack of a deeper dive into the localized nature of vacancy issues. According to VDOE field visits, Louisa County and Goochland County report being fully staffed, but Spotsylvania County, right next door, has one of the highest vacancy rates in the state. Despite the growth in the overall vacancy rate, according to a recent data collected from VDOE, almost twice as many school division human resource officers reported that the situation has become "much better" as those that report "much worse" with nearly 40% saying the situation is the same. Your survey of teachers highlights the localization of this issue – most teachers cite leaving the profession because of school climate challenges. We need to know more about what some superintendents are doing right so that can be replicated.

2) *Define Teacher Quality as Having Positive Impact on Student Learning & Invest in a Robust Data System to Fuel Feedback and Improvement Efforts in Teacher Development*

Among school related factors, a high-quality teacher—defined as having a positive impact on student performance on math and reading tests— is the most important determinate of student achievement[3]. This administration is committed to ensuring every classroom has a quality licensed teacher who impacts student learning. The JLARC report does a disservice by defining a prepared teacher and quality program as solely one that provides a high-quality mentor, a student teacher component, and the candidate finishing coursework ahead of being the teacher of record. Research suggests that new teachers from *some* high-quality alternative pathways can be more effective at increasing student learning than

[3] Opper, I.M. (2019) *Teachers matter: Understanding teachers' impact on student achievement, RAND Corporation*. Available at: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR4312.html

traditional pathways.[4] It is imperative we are reviewing the effectiveness of pathways based on the impact on student outcomes and not inputs in preparation programs. For that reason, we concur with the recommendation to eliminate the outdated VCLA. There is a balance of ensuring teacher preparation pathways quickly and cost-effectively get teachers into classrooms and developing teachers who are highly qualified and prepared to meet the needs of their students. But it is antiquated to correlate more time and coursework with more effectiveness.

This administration is committed to using data and measuring true indicators of success – student learning. Virginia must reestablish the Teacher Student Data Link system so we can understand teacher impact on student performance and likewise which pathways programs lead to student outcomes. The VDOE is working to reinstitute that capacity as quickly as possible. Having this link and a more robust state data system in general allows not only for data-based feedback to our teachers, but also to provide this valuable information to our teacher development programs so they can continuously improve their practices and produce stronger future teachers.

3) VDOE Improvements in Teacher Licensing System are Removing Barriers in the Pipeline

Chapter Four cites frustration with the teacher licensure processing, acknowledges VDOE's prioritization to address the backlog, but fails to accurately capture the success of these efforts to date.

On May 11, 2023, 16,767 licensure requests were in the queue. VDOE extended the renewal period for over 12,000 requests for renewable licenses through action approved by the State Board of Education till June 2024. In addition, the licensure office had a backlog of 4,767 open initial Virginia licensure requests. All licensure backlog (requests made prior to May 11, 2023) were cleared and processed by June 30, 2023. JLARC did not include the backlog elimination data or the daily processing rate of 200 licenses a day provided by VDOE. Part of the current processing problem is 40-50% of submissions are incomplete. VDOE is working to produce how-to videos to help applicants submit strong first-time applications.

We share the same goal: to put a high-quality teacher in front of every student in Virginia and to make it easier for Virginians to become that high-quality teacher. We look forward to working with you and with the General Assembly to make this goal a reality so every Virginian is prepared for success in life.

Aimee Rogstad Guidera
Secretary of Education

Dr. Lisa Coons
Superintendent of Public Instruction

[4] Gary T. Henry, Kevin C. Bastian, C. Kevin Fortner, David C. Kershaw, Kelly M. Purtell, Charles L. Thompson, Rebecca A. Zulli; Teacher Preparation Policies and Their Effects on Student Achievement. *Education Finance and Policy* 2014; 9 (3): 264–303.
doi: https://doi.org/10.1162/EDFP_a_00134

Appendix: Planned VDOE Grants to Grow the Teacher Pipeline

Grants	Budget	Key Features of Program	Release Date
Prioritized Aspiring Educator Grants	$100,000	Subsidize test fees and cost of tutoring	October 1, 2023 (Anticipated)
Grow Your Own Teacher Pilot Program (VDOE partners with SCHEV)	$240,000	Recruitment and Retention	January 2024 (Anticipated)
Teacher Residency	$2,250,000	Tuition Support, Mentoring	August 24, 2023
Traineeships for Education of Special Education Personnel	$437,186	Tuition Support and Mentoring for Provisionally Licensed Special Education: General Curriculum K-12 Teachers	July 10, 2023
Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program	$708,000	Tuition Support for Teachers Candidates in the Critical Shortage Teaching Areas	June 30, 2023
Recruitment Incentive for Public Education (RIPE)	$10,000,000	Recruitment and Retention	August, 24, 2023
Continuing Education Support Grant	$1,487,460	Tuition Support	December 14, 2021
Recruitment and Retention Support Grant (two iterations)	$2,902,700	Tuition Support, Recruitment and Retention Bonuses	June 3, 2022
Residency Grant Program Expansion	$484,000	Tuition Support, Mentoring	March 2022
Paid Internship Scholarships for Aspiring Educators	$2,000,000	Tuition Support	October 2023 (Anticipated next round)
Apprenticeship Implementation Grant	$5,000,000	Tuition Support, Mentoring	October 2023 (Anticipated)
Troops to Teachers	$215,334	Operational support and management	September 20, 2022

	$760,000	Financial Supports including helping with the cost of tuition, testing fees, licensure fees	December 19, 2022
Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Special Education: Adapted Curriculum: Supporting Students with Severe Disabilities and Autism	$522,615	Tuition Support	October 2023 (Anticipated)
Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Visual Impairment	$338,404	Tuition Support	October 2023 (Anticipated)
Radford Teaching Preparation Project: Hearing Impairments PK-12	$180,000	Tuition Support	October 2023 (Anticipated)
The Commonwealth Special Education Endorsement Program (CSEEP) Endorsement Program	$83,992	Operational Support	October 2023 (Anticipated)
A Distance Model for Endorsement in Special Education: General Curriculum (DCOP)	$23,604	Operational Support	October 2023 (Anticipated)
Competitive Clinical Faculty	$318,750	Mentoring of pre-service and beginning teachers	August 3, 2023
New Teacher/Mentor Teacher Program	$1,000,000	Mentoring for teachers with zero years of experience	October 2023 (Anticipated)
Career Switcher Mentoring	$279,983	Mentoring for Career Switchers	October 2023 (Anticipated)



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