

Strengthening Virginia's Workforce: A BLUEPRINT for Pre K-12 Education

A Report Submitted on Behalf of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce's Subcommittee on K-12 Education

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from The Subcommittee Chair	1
Subcommittee Work and Structure.....	2
Workgroup One: Business Involvement.....	3
Workgroup Two: Teacher Quality.....	6
Workgroup Three: School Improvement	8
Workgroup Four: Systemic Reform.....	12

LETTER FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I write today with great enthusiasm on behalf of our K-12 subcommittee to offer a series of recommendations aimed at strengthening Virginia's workforce pipeline. The business community is a consumer of the workforce produced by the education system. Virginia's business leaders must be involved in how the workforce is trained and prepared. Our committee was created to develop an action plan for how to implement the K-12 concepts of the Virginia Chamber's BLURPRINT initiative. Our charge was to provide specific action items and not to produce an academic policy paper. This initial report sets forth recommendations for actions that can be taken now to help the education system enhance its preparation of graduates that are workforce ready and globally competitive.

I wish to acknowledge the leadership and support of Barry DuVal, President and CEO, of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce and Keith Martin, Vice President of Public Policy and Counsel. The Virginia Chamber of Commerce is positioned to lead an unprecedented renewed investment and commitment to education and workforce preparation. I also wish to recognize the leadership of our committee. Through their tireless work, we are able to present commonsense, results-oriented recommendations that believe two things to be true: education is the great equalizer and workforce development is the game-changer for Virginia's business and economic future. I especially want to acknowledge the outstanding assistance of my colleague Generra Peck who helped guide the Committee's work.

Our report is the first step in the Virginia Chamber's efforts to implement the K-12 components of the BLUEPRINT. The Chamber will continue to advocate for these and other recommendations as well as serve as an active and involved resource for local chambers, businesses and regional alliances committed to making a difference in the education of graduates who are globally competitive.

Friends, please join me in an ongoing conversation about the opportunity to help the Commonwealth better prepare its future workforce in a manner that makes Virginia a national leader and a state that maximizes its economic development efforts. If we can all agree that every child is deserving of a great education and that every child can learn, we will accomplish great things for our businesses, our Commonwealth and our nation.

In short: To be globally competitive, Virginia businesses must make education reform and workforce preparation a participatory sport.

Sincerely,

James W. Dyke
Chairman

SUBCOMMITTEE WORK AND STRUCTURE

From August 2014 through December 2014 the subcommittee convened several times to consider items most pressing in Pre K-12 education at the state, local and leadership level. Chairman Dyke charged the group with presenting creative and results-oriented ideas that would produce the greatest improvements to Virginia's Pre K-12 education system.

The K-12 Education Subcommittee divided its work into four distinct topic areas: (1) Business Involvement; (2) Teacher Quality; (3) School Improvement; and (4) Systemic Reform. Under the leadership of a workgroup leader, each policy group convened and assembled a series of recommendations that will help guide Virginia's business and community leaders to support results-oriented action in Virginia's Public Schools.

This report encapsulates some of the best ideas in K-12 education. It is however, only one step forward and just the beginning of the conversation. We look forward to an ongoing dialogue about education and workforce preparation in the Commonwealth. The Virginia Chamber of Commerce welcomes and seeks to help lead a robust debate that brings K-12 education to the top of our Commonwealth's agenda.

Friends, K- 12 education is **THE** game-changer not only for our citizens but for our economic development success.

WORKGROUP ONE: BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

The business involvement workgroup is chaired by former president of Tidewater Community College and current president and CEO of the Hampton Roads Community Foundation Dr. Deborah DiCroce.

The workgroup is pleased to submit the following recommendations:

- I. **Increasing Leadership Capacity at the Local Level:** Virginia's local school board officials provide critical public service to our communities. In many cases, local officials are charged with running what equates to a multi-million dollar enterprise with very high stakes – the high quality education of children. Virginia businesses and organizations, including local chambers of commerce, should:
 - a. Establish a K-12 Education Liaison to local school divisions;
Partnership Opportunity: The K-12 Education Liaison could work to host annually an award celebration for Teacher of the Year, New Teacher of the Year and Staff Person of the Year.
 - b. Host annually a board strategic planning session facilitated alongside business and community leaders;
 - c. Work with school leaders to provide management and leadership training for school board members, principals and superintendents. Consistent with the Virginia School Boards Association report, we support their call for additional training for school divisions that have challenged schools in their district;
 - d. Leverage management expertise held across Virginia's business community. Virginia's executives and managers are skilled at managing personnel and performance without using standardized tests. We should identify lessons that can be translated to the education sector;
 - e. Partner with school leaders so that education at every level is preparing students with skills that industry needs;
Best Practice Opportunity: The New College Institute in Martinsville, Virginia blends workforce training, degree programs and higher education partnerships to support the region's economic development strategy ([link](#)).
 - f. Develop a strategy to encourage qualified individuals to run for or be appointed to local school boards; and
 - g. Host regular school board candidate forums with parents, teachers, fellow business leaders and others to bring attention to the election and appointment process. In addition, host regular forums with local school boards to discuss current education issues and progress toward enhanced workforce preparation.
Best Practice Opportunity: The Petersburg Chamber of Commerce hosted a candidate forum in the Fall of 2014.
- II. **Create a System for Investing in Schools:** Virginia's business community should be investing financially in local school divisions. Virginia's business leaders should enter into a coordinated priorities conversation with local school officials. Virginia's business community should:
 - a. Host annually with their local school system a philanthropic priorities conversation in which top school needs are identified and business leaders commit to helping school leaders achieve financial and non-financial resource needs.
Best Practice Opportunity: The ROTEC Foundation in Roanoke provides financial support for local CTE program needs such as workforce

certification costs, uniforms and other matters that support CTE students.

- b. Partner with school divisions to form school division foundations that can serve to support local schools through a highly accountable and community-based organization; and

Best Practice Opportunity: The Fairfax County Education Foundation is a partnership with the local Fairfax Chamber.

- c. Support mentorship programs by encouraging employers and actions to help mentor individual students;

Best Practice Opportunity: Roanoke's Gear Up Program.

- d. Partner with school divisions to ensure school volunteer needs are fully met and executed.

Best Practice Opportunity: Partners In Education is a joint venture between Lynchburg City Schools and the Lynchburg Regional Chamber of Commerce. Officially started on September 3, 1990, this program has been designed to create links between the school division and area businesses. In the 20-year history of the program, Lynchburg City Schools has partnered with over 250 area businesses, organizations, and institutions ([link](#)).

III. **Support STEM-H and Career and Technical Education:** Virginia's STEM-H and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs offer students a pathway to be career-ready at graduation. Opportunities include dual enrollment, job shadowing apprenticeship and first-rate technical experience in our public school divisions. Virginia's business community should:

- a. Proactively discuss jobs skills needs with school divisions and CTE instructors and form an advisory committee of business leaders, community college officials and local school leaders to assure that local school curriculum can be aligned to the skills needed to be career-ready;

Best Practice Opportunity: Roanoke Technical Education Center ([link](#)).

- b. Adopt apprenticeship models that result in credential attainment;

- c. Recognize and reward business partnerships that promote and enhance CTE education;

Partnership Opportunity: The Virginia Career Education Foundation's (VCEF) Governor's CTE Exemplary Standards Ward Program ([link](#)).

- d. Convene and participate in ongoing strategy conversations with local community colleges, higher education and public school divisions to better enable schools to produce credentialed, work-ready graduates; and

- e. Provide access to trained workers for job shadow and mentorship programs;

Best Practice Opportunity: The Bedford Area and Lynchburg Regional Chambers' "Work Ready" program fosters partnerships with local school divisions. The partnership allows businesses to host a high school senior for an internship after six weeks of classroom-based instruction on the soft skills needed for the 21st Century workforce.

- f. Support creation of online access to information about apprenticeships and other workforce preparation activities similar to the online use of the VA Education Wizard used by the Virginia Community College Systems; and

- g. Support efforts to increase the number of students enrolled in programs that produce graduates proficient in STEM-H and other skills needed to fill the jobs already forecasted, whether they require degrees or credentials. Support should be provided to efforts that have a strategic focus on getting more girls and minorities involved in STEM-H early in the education process.

Best Practice Opportunity: Northern Virginia's sySTEMic Solutions

program links higher education, businesses and local chambers of commerce to grow the STEM-H workforce pipeline ([link](#)).
Best Practice Opportunity: Governor's Health Sciences Academies are programs designed to expand options for students' health science literacy and other critical knowledge, skills, and credentials that will prepare them for high-demand, high-wage, and high-skills careers in Virginia. Each academy is a partnership among school divisions, postsecondary institutions and business and industry ([link](#)).

- IV. **Grow Entrepreneurship:** Virginia's future entrepreneurs are in schools across our Commonwealth today. Virginia's business leaders should:
- a. Advocate for and support the creation of a Governor's School for Entrepreneurship;
 - b. Support local chamber of commerce efforts to bring the Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) to their regions;
Partnership Opportunity: Young Entrepreneurs Academy ([link](#)).
 - c. Engage organizations such as GEN Z that seek to create unique experiences that expose today's college bound high school students to the career options of tomorrow;
Partnership Opportunity: GEN Z ([link](#)).
 - d. Support financial and economic literacy efforts aimed at helping students prepare to make sound and informed financial decisions and understand the complexity of the global economy;
Partnership Opportunity: Virginia Council on Economic Education ([link](#)).
 - e. Partner with school divisions to examine ways to feature entrepreneurship on career days and other career-focused programming; and
 - f. Coordinate job shadow days that feature entrepreneurs in action.
- V. **Get Involved:** The Virginia Chamber of Commerce should lead efforts to create a Virginia Business Pre K-12 Council. Similar to the great success seen by the Virginia Business Higher Education Council, business must actively advocate for a Pre K-12 education system that produces quality graduates who are prepared for the workforce and life in a globally competitive world. One component of the Council's mission should be to advocate for funding reinvestment in Pre K – 12 education. The Virginia Chamber of Commerce should serve as the primary convener and leadership agent.

WORKGROUP TWO: TEACHER QUALITY

The teacher quality workgroup is chaired by associate professor at James Madison University, Dr. Kristina Doubet.

Teacher quality is the most important factor in ensuring student success. Any discussion about improving the performance of our education system must start with teachers in the classrooms. They are on the front line and they are the most important factor for success. Virginia's business community should support local and state action to enhance teacher preparation, improve teacher induction, increase teacher professional development and improve the teacher evaluation process.

We must also recognize that teaching is one of the noblest professions. Teachers are heroes and deserve the professionalism, standards, rewards and recognition that accompany our greatest professions. The workgroup is pleased to submit the following recommendations

- I. **Enhanced Teacher Preparation:** Teacher Preparation Programs should focus on providing teaching candidates with relevant, research-based, inquiry-driven pedagogy. This should include Assessment FOR Learning, adjusting instruction in response to information on student learning (i.e., Differentiation), and improving methods for meeting the needs of diverse learners. Virginia's business community should support teacher preparation programs that:
 - a. Require candidates to focus on student growth in all field placements;
 - b. Encourage innovation/risk taking (student teacher evaluation instruments should reflect this);
 - c. Require graduate level preparation complete with master's thesis focused on exploring the effects of candidate teaching methods on student learning; and
 - d. Increase – as much as possible – candidates' time in schools.
Best Practice Opportunity: The Professional Development School model offers much promise for increasing candidates' time in schools ([link](#)).

- II. **Improve Teacher Induction:** Many professions value induction into the profession equal to the education itself. Teachers should be treated with the same high degree of professionalism. Virginia's business leaders should support a system that:
 - a. Assigns Mentor Teachers ("mentors" in a true sense – same grade and/or content area; time built in for meeting to share instructional issues and to problem solve);
 - b. Provides frequent observation of and feedback to new teachers (by administrator and mentor and/or other master teachers);
 - c. Provides opportunities for new teachers to observe/debrief with mentor and/or other master teachers;
 - d. Reduces load/preps/extra-curricular responsibilities during first year; and
 - e. Strategically place new teachers in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with master/mentor teachers and teachers with whom they can collaborate and innovate.

- III. **Increase Teacher Professional Development:** Professional development is a tool used in many professions to enable professionals to improve their trade and remain familiar with best practices. Virginia's business community should support and increase access to quality professional development by supporting programs that:
 - a. Utilize Professional Learning Community (PLC) or Coaching models. PLCs should revolve around collecting and responding to evidence of student learning from authentic assessment measures;

- b. Build devoted common planning time into teachers' schedules (weekly and PD days)
 - i. Time to meet with Professional Learning Communities,
 - ii. Time to observe and be observed by colleagues,
 - iii. Time for collaboration between general and special educators
- c. Provide opportunity for teachers to propose alternate teaching methods and veer from pacing guides if they can show evidence they address required standards;
- d. Adopt Professional Development School model – especially in localities where universities adjoin struggling school systems, e.g., Petersburg and Virginia State University; and
- e. Encourage the creation of Inter-school Collaborations to support schools to share, learn and safely discuss with one another issues facing the profession and strategies for success. The “exceeding schools and school leaders” could be paired with the bottom 25-30% of schools in the state.

IV. **Improve the Teacher Evaluation and Reward System**: Teachers should participate as leaders investing in and developing the evaluation and reward system. Virginia business leaders should support school divisions that:

- a. Focus on evidence of student growth as demonstrated through a multitude of authentic methods (NOT simply Value Added standardized test scores);
- b. Focus on Assessment FOR Learning and include teacher reflection as key component of teacher evaluation;
- c. Encourage and support innovation in methods of instruction and assessment (teacher evaluation instruments should reflect this);
- d. Support the proposed evaluation plan with focused Professional Development and PLC focus;
- e. Build a system of career ladders for teachers;
- f. Ensure that proper pay incentives and differentiated pay models are available for teachers; and
- g. Train evaluators (e.g., administrators) in evaluation tools/implementation
Best Practice Opportunity: Study Salem District and National Board Certification processes as models.

WORKGROUP THREE: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Former Virginia Board of Education member Andy Rotherham chairs the school improvement workgroup.¹

Virginia is fortunate to be recognized as a top state for public education. Unfortunately, we have not been able to ensure a high quality education for every child in Virginia. The data is clear: a significant achievement gap exists in the Commonwealth. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a national measure of student achievement. The 2013 NAEP scores demonstrated that forty-seven percent of white Virginia eighth graders achieved proficient or advanced mathematics scores on the 2013 NAEP, as did fifteen percent of black eighth graders, twenty-five percent of Hispanic eighth graders, and sixty-four percent of Asians. These results are clear that more can and should be done to eliminate the achievement gap and improve achievement across the Commonwealth. It is important to note the achievement gap is not limited to Virginia, it is a national crisis.

What can be done in tandem to immediately help parents and students?

Virginia can no longer tolerate failing schools, we must move aggressively to turn them around so that every Virginia student receives a high quality education as required by the Virginia Constitution. These students only get one chance at getting a great education and their time cannot be spent in a failing school.

Virginia should fill the leadership gap created by federal policy and develop a state policy framework, culture and system to (1) accelerate, scale or share excellence, (2) reward performance, (3) prevent slippage in achievement, and (4) truly support and partner with struggling school divisions.

Consider this: As in most states, Virginia schools can be divided into four quartiles related to student academic performance (exceeding, meeting, below, or failing). At present, no rewards, bonuses, incentives exist for a school exceeding state academic benchmarks. Likewise, if a school meets academic benchmarks, nothing is provided, offered, or extended from the Commonwealth. Even more alarming, if a school is slipping, faltering or struggling, no support, technical assistance, professional development, or any support or assistance is provided until the school fails. It is only once a school or school divisions fail – multiple years in a row – is any support is offered or available by the federal government or state.

Why wait for multi-year failure? Failure isn't an option for children. No school or school division should be "allowed" to fail before support, assistance, or partnerships can be offered. Moreover, it's time to shift our focus from "managing failure" to "supporting success and provide rewards" for all schools.

Unfortunately, the evidence is clear, in Virginia and elsewhere, that not all low-performing schools make full turnaround, so we must take steps to provide parents more options.

The workgroup is pleased to submit the following recommendations:

- I. **School Turnaround:** The research on school turnarounds (defined as schools that undergo a turnaround intervention but continue to serve the same student population) is not encouraging.

¹ The subcommittee chairman and workgroup chairman have worked to promote public charter schools for several years.

The \$3.5 billion federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) program has produced highly uneven results and only the most robust turnaround strategies seem to have much effect. State turnaround efforts are equally mixed, especially in the most acutely struggling schools.

- a. Provide funds for schools that are accredited with warning year 2 to provide extended learning time (ELT) – can be spring break, summer session, winter session, or Saturday session – this process will require a written plan for use of time;
- b. Support the creation of a “Best Practices” division at the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) to house innovative local best practices, offer yearly awards for exceptional school performance and recognition by the Governor, and showcase local leadership so that others may learn and benefit from that knowledge. VDOE should host free statewide virtual learning opportunities to highlight and share these local exemplars;
- c. Create a reading teacher bonus for reading specialists that accept hard to staff school assignments;
- d. Support increased Virginia Board of Education enforcement power for local school Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for low-performing schools;
- e. Strengthen Virginia Board of Education partnership with challenged schools. The Virginia School Board Association (VSBA) can and should play an active role in this strategy;
- f. Support discretionary funding for the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to provide incentives for innovative programs at challenged schools;
- g. Provide the state superintendent with more authority in supporting our schools denied accreditation specifically in the areas of personnel and instructional program choice;
- h. Develop Human Capital Strategy”
 - i. Virginia should develop a cadre of leaders that can be deployed in challenged environment.
Best Practice Opportunity: The University of Virginia’s Darden-Curry partnership ([link](#)).
 - ii. Virginia should build out leadership capacity – from classroom, school, to division.
Partnership Opportunity: New Leaders ([link](#)).
- i. Compel school divisions to implement turnaround partners’ model with fidelity. Too often the relationship is never fully realized which impacts the outcomes on students;
- j. Publicly recognize schools that exceed minimum state academic standards with special recognition and provide a yearly financial reward for this outstanding hard work; and
- k. Revisit the state takeover model after reviewing the state’s accountability system. We need to reward growth but also be prepared to react when growth does not occur.

II. **Providing Immediate Options to Parents:** The evidence from Virginia and around the country makes clear that a turnaround strategy, while essential, is insufficient to ensure that all children are in high-quality schools. In tandem with its turnaround efforts Virginia should become aggressive about creating high-quality new schools within the Commonwealth’s public education system. The most promising path to do this is through public charter schooling. Nationally public charter school performance remains mixed but better authorizing practices and non-renewals for low-performing schools is improving aggregate performance. CREDO summarizes current performance this way: *“In the aggregate, both reading and math results in charter schools show improvement compared to the results reported in [earlier national CREDO studies]. The analysis of the pooled 27 states shows that charter schools now advance the learning gains of their students more than traditional public schools in reading. Improvement is seen in the academic growth of charter students in math since 2009, to the extent that learning gains are now similar to those of students in traditional public schools.”*

These averages, however, obscure the more important evidence about the potential of this strategy. Localized charter performance varies with public charter schools in some states and cities – for instance New Jersey, Massachusetts, Boston, New York City, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles – substantially outperform comparable schools. In Los Angeles the effect sizes are equivalent to *50 days* of additional reading instruction and *79 days* of additional math instruction. The effects are less elsewhere but also substantial. CREDO tells us that in Boston, *“on average, charter students in Massachusetts gain an additional one and a half months of learning in reading over their TPS counterparts. In math, the advantage for charter students is about two and a half months of additional learning in one school year. Charter students in Boston gain an additional 12 months in reading and 13 months in math per school year compared to their TPS counterparts.”* In other words, public charter schools are providing a cost-effective extended learning time strategy while also creating better quality options for students. Overall the research is quite clear that a new school – in a high-quality authorizing environment – is a higher odds play for success than any turnaround strategy. Policy leaders must be clear eyed about the evidence: Public charter schools will not eliminate the need to help improve struggling schools but can add options on a faster timeline while also empowering parents. In that way public charter schools also help expand customization within public education and broaden political support for public schools. Virginia already has some choice schools (Thomas Jefferson, H.B. Woodlawn, Governor’s Schools) but they are few and far between and they are oversubscribed. Virginia’s education establishment does not yet have a culture that supports genuinely empowering *parents* with real and dynamic choices. Virginia’s business leaders should support:

- a. An Amendment to Virginia’s Constitution that would allow for state authorization of public charter schools;
- b. Encourage and support local school board officials to become more familiar with the benefits public charter schools can bring to Virginia’s public school portfolio and urge that they actively consider approval of public charter schools especially for systems that have low performing schools; and
- c. Lead a discussion on how to provide students and parents with more options and choices for obtaining a high quality education.

III. **Increase Transparency:** Virginia’s leaders often cite the fact that we have few failing schools as a reason why reforms common elsewhere are not needed in Virginia. Yet, if you dig deeper it becomes clear that while we have few schools designated as failing, many Virginia students are not getting the education they deserve and one that prepares them for opportunities after high school. One way to address this disconnect is to increase transparency about educational outputs as well as inputs. We should seek to engage parents in as straightforward a manner as possible. Presently, it is too difficult for parents to get data about school performance in Virginia in aggregate and disaggregate form by racial and ethnic subgroups. These data are reported in school report cards but in a format more accessible for policy analysts than parents. School divisions also vary in their efforts to inform parents about this data and make it easily accessible to them. As importantly, it is nearly impossible for parents to get relevant contextual data (for instance what it actually means for a student to pass or be advanced on an SOL, what sort of outcomes performance is aligned with, and in some cases specific issues around school accreditation). Research explicitly linking transparency with education improvement is scant but two pieces of contextual evidence matter. First, in general it’s widely accepted that more information and greater transparency improves decision-making, accountability and innovation. Second, studies, most recently a series of surveys by the journal *Education Next* show that the public is frequently misinformed on key educational issues including performance, spending, and major aspects of policy. Virginia school divisions vary in their commitment to transparency but in general few best practices are in evidence. One school division, for example, sent

multiple communications to parents about school accreditation progress this fall without informing parents specifically which two schools had missed accreditation. Parents were literally left to comb through school report cards school by school to discover this vital piece of information. Virginia's business leaders should support:

- a. The State Board of Education to examine and improve school and school division report cards to improve reporting including requiring that NAEP data and other national benchmarks including college-going, SAT and ACT performance, and similar measures be included as well as a comparison point and that parents receive information about the SOL their child is taking, specific passing requirements, and how that factors into school accreditation decisions. Report cards could also include information about teacher evaluation (in aggregate not by individual teacher), per-pupil spending, and other basic measures of school operations and performance to better inform parents about their child's education and their public schools more generally. The State Board of Education should also take steps to ensure timely, accurate, and clear communication to parents about school performance and to ensure this information is provided to all parents regardless of their access to technology;
- b. Virginia should do more to link student and teacher data records to enable better evaluation of performance trends and more research into teacher quality in the Commonwealth. In addition to linking student and teacher data the Virginia Department of Education should conduct roster verifications to ensure these data are accurate, conduct webinars or other trainings for researchers seeking to use this data, and ensure consistent reporting about data requirements – for instance assessment exclusion policies for students;
- c. The state should create a website that specifically reports performance data in a way that is more accessible for parents and explains the policy requirements undergirding the results, similar to the website that now exists for graduation rates but with even greater breakdowns to ensure that the information is usable for non-specialists; and
- d. Virginia should specifically increase transparency requirements for schools that are not meeting accreditation or federal benchmarks to improve reporting about the reasons for the shortfalls and transparency about the steps being taken to remediate. This information should be provided to all parents in a format that does not rely solely on technology.

WORKGROUP FOUR: SYSTEMIC REFORM

The systemic reform workgroup is chaired by former Virginia Secretary of Education Javaid Siddiqi.

Virginia, although ranked highly in the United States, is not competing against the World's developed nations in terms of educational outcomes. As we compete against the world for job-creating businesses, we need to double-down on improving educational outcomes and increasing achievement. The workgroup is pleased to submit the following recommendations:

- I. **Invest in Technology:** Virginia will only be able to prepare our students for the future if we are invested and connected to technology, both as a mechanism of increasing access to knowledge via digital learning, but also in terms of connectivity to the world. Virginia's business leaders should support work to:
 - a. Ensure all schools have access to high-speed internet by 2020;
 - b. Reevaluate state technology grants used to build online testing capacity toward infrastructure needs. Now that Virginia has built out the infrastructure to assess all students online, we should redirect those dollars to increase 1:1 initiatives;
Best Practice Opportunity: Chesterfield County Public Schools 1:1 Learning Framework ([link](#)).
Best Practice Opportunity: Horry County Schools Personalized Digital Learning Initiative ([link](#)).
 - c. Incentivize regional collaboration to increase online instruction;
 - d. Support efforts to increase education technology and entrepreneurial disruption in education;
Partnership Opportunity: The University of Virginia's Curry School of Education recently formed the Jefferson Education Accelerator. The Education Accelerator has been established in direct response to the urgent need for education innovation to drive reform. This limited liability company located in Charlottesville, will provide a market-oriented portal for linking solutions with capital, partnerships, and organizational capacity to move to scale ([link](#)).
 - e. Encourage school leadership to explore partnership opportunities with higher education officials who have reported significant online curriculum that could be deployed in our Pre K-12 system;
 - f. Support virtual and blended learning models. Such an effort will require the business community to commence a dialogue among players in the virtual learning arena to resolve outstanding issues that have slowed down full use of available learning technologies in our education programs; and
 - g. Encourage thinking about access beyond the confines of a school.
Partnership Opportunity: DreamWakers ([link](#)).
- II. **Increase Transitional Support from the Classroom to the Classroom:** Teacher preparation programs should increase their support of teachers upon leaving the classroom. Virginia's business leaders can look to best practices including:
 - a. Support further investment in College Lab programs;
Best Practice Opportunity: Buford Middle School is the first public school in the Commonwealth Engineering Design Academies, a laboratory school partnership with the University of Virginia's School of Engineering and Applied Science and Curry School of Education. The project – the

first of its kind – pairs University of Virginia professors with local public school teachers and students ([link](#)).

- b. Cultivate and expand the Old Dominion University’s Monarch Teach program;
Best Practice Opportunity: ODU’s MonarchTeach program ([link](#)).
- c. Support Virginia Commonwealth University’s Teacher Residency program and the launch of Teach For American in Virginia;
Best Practice Opportunity: VCU’s Teacher Residency ([link](#)).
Partnership Opportunity: Teach For America ([link](#)).
- d. Ensure university participation in the standards and assessment development work; and
- e. Support efforts to better align pre-K to K-12 to community colleges to four year institutions of higher education to lifelong learning courses that focus on collaboration that provides all students with access to learning environments that provide skills needed to be productive members of the workforce.

III. **Invest in Early Childhood Education**: Research is clear that early childhood education increases a child’s chance of success dramatically. The best long-term investment we can make is in early childhood education. The business community can be most helpful by convening and leading a coordinated effort to bring together all the key players to develop a game plan for making quality early childhood education services available to every child. Collectively, we must take action to produce better data on what works and how we can spend limited tax dollars better. Virginia must do a better job of investing in early childhood education.

Virginia’s business leaders should support and lead:

- a. Efforts to convene the myriad of stakeholders who care for and advocate for early childhood education;
- b. Authorize unused VPI funds to increase seats in other divisions;
- c. Incentivize school divisions to leverage VPI funds to increase participation;
- d. Increase state leadership in order to improve cohesion with individual and organizations;
- e. Examine the viability of social impact bonds (Pay for Success) to scale best practices and successful models of deploying early childhood education;
Best Practice Opportunity: ReadyNation’s Pay for Success (PFS) model ([link](#)).
- f. Implement a statewide comprehensive kindergarten assessment led by the University of Virginia in collaboration with the VDOE that defines the readiness gap (Virginia’s entering kindergartners’ readiness skills), tracks readiness across domain areas, longitudinally tracks the progress of students through third grade, reports annually and determines strategic data-driven investments to address the gap; and
- g. Conduct a one-year JLARC study to analyze all state and federal funding expenditures and outcomes on progress supporting children prenatal to age five to help facilitate decision-making on supporting local early childhood education.

