# READY REGION BLUE RIDGE

*2024 Impact Report*

## Table of Contents

# Overview & Introduction:

**Ready Region Blue Ridge (RRBR) connects communities and empowers individuals, families, and children to reach their full potential.** We unite leaders and drive collaborative solutions to address regional challenges.

Research shows that early childhood experiences shape lifelong outcomes, with 90% of brain development occurring before age five [1]. In addition, high-quality preschool and childcare experiences give young children opportunities to learn and practice important academic and social/emotional skills – like early math, early literacy, and increased independence [2]. As a result, our approach is highly interactive—we collaborate directly with teachers, centers, and families to address immediate needs while fostering long-term stability.

As the lead agency, United Way of Greater Charlottesville (UWGC) coordinates Virginia's Quality Birth to Five System (VQB5) and Mixed Delivery (MD) programs across 21 localities, ensuring equitable access to high-quality early education in diverse settings. VQB5 is designed to assess and enhance the quality of publicly funded early childhood education programs. Its primary goal is to ensure that every child in the state has access to high-quality learning experiences that prepare them for kindergarten.

This report reviews FY24 program results, highlighting RRBR's impact throughout the year.

## INTRODUCTION:

Established in Virginia Code (§ 22.1-289.05), Ready Regions coordinates early childhood systems across nine regions, preparing children for success.

Ready Region lead agencies are responsible for providing strategic leadership, assuring full implementation of core responsibilities, and convening public and private partners to collaborate on strengthening Virginia's early childhood systems. They are responsible for communication, coordination, integration of early childhood services and resources, and prioritizing families' access to high-quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) services.
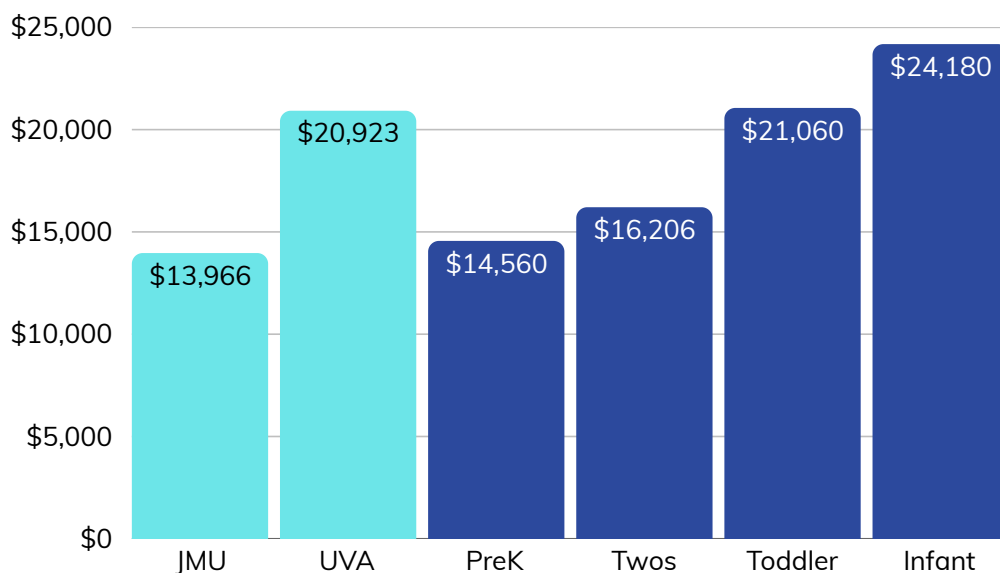
Ready Regions:

- **Strengthening quality** – Implementing VQB5 to assess and improve classroom standards.
- **Building relationships** – Engaging regional leaders for shared accountability.
- **Increasing access** – Expanding Mixed Delivery programming and streamlining enrollment.
- **Engaging families** – Supporting a Family Council to shape early childhood policies.

As the lead organization for Ready Region Blue Ridge, UWGC collaborates with the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) and the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) while overseeing early childhood care and education programming across the region.

RRBR includes 45,000 children under the age of five, many of whom lack access to high-quality care [3]. The primary challenges contributing to this issue are cost and limited capacity.

## Cost of ECCE vs. 4-year Public College Tuition & Fees



The annual cost of care for a family in Ready Region Blue Ridge is often higher than the annual cost of tuition and fees at the region's two public 4-year universities [4].

This significant expense highlights the critical need for sites to participate in public funding opportunities, ensuring that families have access to affordable, high-quality early childcare and education. By leveraging these resources, providers can offset costs and continue delivering essential services to the community.

Virginia's investment in increased family resources and access to high-quality early learning opportunities is expected to not only improve children and parents' wellbeing but also benefit the state economy through increased maternal employment and disposable income [5].

# Systems Building:

Ready Regions in Virginia strengthen early childhood education by establishing systems that uphold high-quality standards through the Virginia Quality Rating and Improvement System. This includes staff qualifications, curriculum, and classroom environment, with a focus on regional coordination and data-driven improvements. To be a "Ready Region," a system must effectively monitor and enhance early childhood programs with support from local stakeholders and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation.

**VQB5 Compliance:**

All participating childcare providers must be actively working towards and maintaining compliance with VQB5 quality standards, which include regular observations of classroom interactions, staff qualifications, and program practices.

**Data Collection & Analysis:**

Utilizing a robust data system like LinkB5 to collect comprehensive information on program quality, staff data, and child outcomes to identify areas for improvement and track progress.

**Regional Collaboration:**

Building partnerships with local organizations like school divisions, community groups, and other early childhood providers to coordinate efforts and address regional needs.

**Family Engagement:**

Implementing strategies to actively involve families in the process, including providing information on program quality, offering parent education, and ensuring family voices are heard in decision-making.

**Professional Development:**

Supporting ongoing training and professional development opportunities for early childhood educators to enhance their knowledge and skills.

**Quality Improvement Planning:**

Developing targeted improvement plans based on data analysis, identifying areas of focus, and setting measurable goals for improvement.

**Leadership & Governance:**

Establishing a strong leadership team within each Ready Region to oversee implementation, coordinate activities, and advocate for early childhood needs.

Since 2007, UWGC has collaborated with VDOE and VECF on advocacy and program development. These efforts have included:

- **Coalition-building** among regional school systems and a diverse network of childcare providers.
- **One-on-one support and investment** in both children and teachers.

## FY24 SYSTEMS BUILDING INITATIVES:

In FY24, Ready Region leadership launched an informational campaign to engage key stakeholders. Meetings were held with superintendents, chamber representatives, nonprofit leaders, and local organizations that champion early childhood care and education. These discussions not only helped clarify the purpose and structure of Ready Regions but also provided valuable insights into the experiences and challenges within each community.

To further strengthen governance at the subregional level, RRBR enhanced representation to ensure diverse voices were included in decision-making. Four robust subregional groups met quarterly to explore key priorities, including:

- **Systems building**
- **Family engagement**
- **Coordinated enrollment**
- **Mixed Delivery**

Additionally, UWGC houses a full-time Data Analyst to evaluate local and state-level data. This analysis helped identify gaps, opportunities for growth in CLASS, and strategies for the equitable distribution of Mixed Delivery slots. As the region's central repository for teacher and child-level data, RRBR plays a vital role in assessing childcare needs and ensuring data-driven decision-making.

## Virginia Quality Birth to Five (VQB5):

In FY24, RRBR experienced an overall increase in participation in VQB5, with a notable surge in classrooms due to mandatory participation for all publicly funded sites. Below are the number of sites, classrooms and teachers registered in LinkB5, the data system for VQB5.

| READY REGION BLUE RIDGE | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **FY25** | **FY24** | **FY23** | **% change 23-24** |
| Count of Sites | 219 | 215 | 192 | 12% |
| Count of Classrooms | 843 | 822 | 487 | 69% |
| Count of Teachers | 2,049 | 2,026 | 1,451 | 40% |

As of FY24, all publicly funded birth-to-five early childhood programs in Virginia are required to participate in VQB5 annually. Programs that do not receive public funding have the option to participate voluntarily.

Virginia's quality rating and improvement system is designed to assess and enhance the quality of publicly funded early childhood education programs. Its primary goal is to ensure that every child in the state has access to high-quality learning experiences that prepare them for kindergarten.

To support this continuous improvement, VQB5 provides educators with frequent, actionable feedback through regular assessments. This process helps identify areas for growth and ensures that targeted interventions and state resources are allocated to the programs and classrooms where they are most needed.

The system evaluates programs through:

- CLASS Observations to assess teacher-child interactions.
- Quality Ratings calculated at the end of the year.
- Ongoing support to promote continuous improvement and help families make informed decisions when selecting programs for their children.

Ready Regions play a critical role in helping early childhood programs meet VQB5 standards by collaborating with public schools, private childcare centers, and family day homes. Key support efforts include:

- Assisting Primary Site Administrators with VQB5 compliance, providing guidance for smooth implementation and alignment with quality measures.
- Facilitating local CLASS observations in the Fall and Spring, conducted by both in-house and contracted observers.
- Offering foundational and dimension-specific CLASS training to help educators understand observation criteria and expectations.
- Supporting local observers' professional development through continuous training, ensuring observation protocols maintain integrity.

## Key Quality Indicators:

VQB5 measures the quality of infant, toddler, and preschool teaching and learning based on two nationally recognized quality indicators:

1. Interactions – The effectiveness of teacher-child interactions.
2. Curriculum – The implementation of developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR VQB5:

In addition to conducting CLASS observations across the region, RRBR staff provide year-round CLASS Foundational Trainings for both teachers and directors. These trainings serve multiple purposes:

- **Introductory Training:** Designed for new staff to familiarize them with CLASS.
- **Dimension-Specific Training:** Targeted sessions for seasoned teachers to deepen their understanding of specific CLASS dimensions.

RRBR also offers CLASS Observer Trainings for individuals interested in becoming certified observers at various age levels.

In FY24, RRBR hosted:

- 50+ CLASS trainings
- 5 CLASS Observer trainings resulting in approximately 40 additional observers

## INDIVIDUAL CLASS OBSERVATIONS:

Teacher-child interactions are assessed using the CLASS tool, which ensures a developmentally appropriate evaluation. The CLASS tool offers a rigorous, standardized approach to evaluating teacher-child interactions during key developmental periods while remaining context-specific and developmentally sensitive for each age group. CLASS reporting helps ensure high-quality early learning environments in alignment with the Ready Regions initiative. Observations focus on interactions between teachers and students, as well as peer-to-peer interactions, rather than overall classroom performance.

VQB5 sites all receive two types of CLASS observations: local and external. Local observations are carried out by RRBR staff, contracted observers, and certified CLASS observers within programs. External observations, conducted by the Teachstone External Observation team on behalf of the state, verify the accuracy and consistency of local observations while providing additional feedback.



Following observations, teachers receive individualized feedback highlighting strengths and areas for growth. This feedback supports professional growth by acknowledging progress and giving program leaders a comprehensive understanding of children's experiences throughout the year. Classroom scores are assigned on a scale of 1-7 where a low score is within 1-2.99, a mid score from 3-5.99, and a high score from 6-7.

In FY24 RRBR staff ensured 973 observations (486 in the Fall and 487 in the Spring) were completed across 215 sites.

In the Fall, three classrooms scored below 3.00, while seven did so in the Spring. Teachers in these classrooms were offered additional training by RRBR staff and regional coaching partners. This reflects an improvement from FY23, where 3% of classrooms scored below expectations, compared to just 0.9% in FY24. The increase in classrooms scoring below 3.00 in the Spring may be attributed to the changes in classroom teachers within those classrooms. For example, every Toddler classroom that scored below 3.00 in the Spring had a different primary teacher than in the Fall.

| Classrooms Below 3.00 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Site Type | Fall | Spring |
| Infant | 2 (1.8%) | 1 (0.9%) |
| Toddler | 1 (0.4%) | 5 (2.2%) |
| PreK | 0 | 1 (0.2%) |

Classrooms that score below 4.00, the state benchmark, are offered optional training and professional development from RRBR staff and regional coaching partners. In the Fall, 86 classrooms scored below 4.00 which was reduced to 70 classrooms by that Spring. For the year, 9% of all classrooms fell below this benchmark compared to 10% in FY23.

| Classrooms Below 4.00 | | |
|---|---|---|
| Site Type | Fall | Spring |
| Infant | 13 (11.9%) | 11 (10.1%) |
| Toddler | 31 (13.9%) | 30 (13.5%) |
| PreK | 42 (8.8%) | 29 (6.1%) |

Progress was evident across all domains from Fall to Spring. By the Spring, 71% of domain scores initially in the "low" range had improved. Additionally, 48% of domain scores that started in the "low" range in Fall advanced to the "mid" range by Spring. Furthermore, 69% of classrooms with a "low" or "mid" range Fall CLASS average score showed improvement in at least one dimension.

## SITE LEVEL CLASS DATA:

After Fall and Spring observations are completed, individual classroom scores are aggregated and averaged. This average score is then multiplied by 100 to determine the total interaction points for the site.

Additionally, every site has the option to implement a state-vetted curriculum. Sites that use an approved curriculum in at least one classroom receive an extra 100 points.

The combined interaction and curriculum points determine a site's VQB5 Quality Rating score. Sites that fall into the Needs Support category are required to participate in state coaching to enhance quality and drive improvement.

| VQB5 Site Scores | |
|---|---|
| Exceeds Expectations | 700-800 points |
| Meets Expectations | 400-699 points |
| Needs Support | 100-399 points |

The following illustrates scores for all RRBR sites and breaks them down by site type:
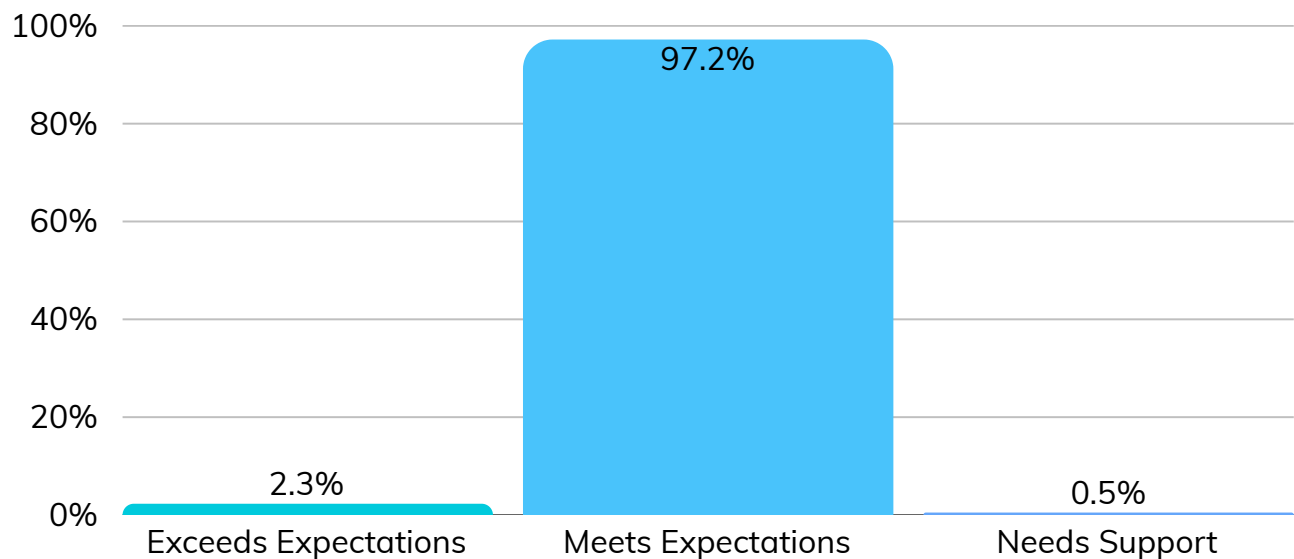


The preponderance of sites in Ready Region Blue ridge scored in the "Meets Expectations" category, however, the average VQB5 site scores by site type vary within that range.

## Site Ratings by Site Type

| Site Type | Exceeds Expectations | Meets Expectations | Needs Support |
|---|---|---|---|
| Child Care Center | 1.0% (1) | 98.1% (102) | 1.0% (1) |
| Family Day Home | 0.0% (0) | 100.0% (26) | 0.0% (0) |
| Public School | 4.8% (4) | 95.2% (79) | 0.0% (0) |

In FY24, nearly all sites across the region met expectations. However, RRBR observed significant differences in site types, average scores, and score ranges, even though the majority of sites were categorized as "meets expectations."

## Site Scores by Site Type

| Site Type | Count | Average | Min | Max |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Public School | 83 | 627.7 | 533 | 704 |
| Family Day Home | 26 | 574.0 | 428 | 680 |
| Child Care Center | 104 | 572.9 | 392 | 702 |

The table above and the visualization on the following page show the scores and variances across programs. Childcare centers show the greatest variability between their minimum and maximum scores, however they are also the largest sample size of site type. This indicates that children's experiences can differ significantly from one classroom to another and within centers.

Public schools had the highest average site score, while centers and Family Day Homes had similar average scores.
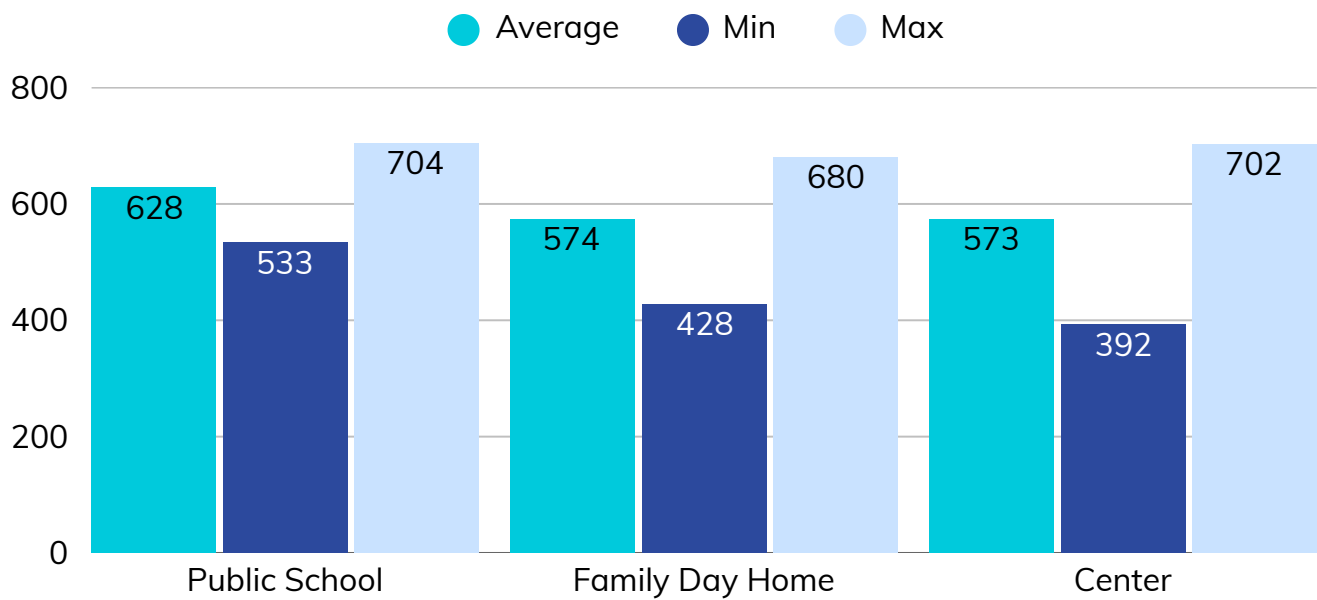
The CLASS observations across Ready Region Blue Ridge have offered valuable insights into teacher-student interactions, helping guide future efforts to ensure that centers and family day homes achieve the same level of interaction quality as public schools.
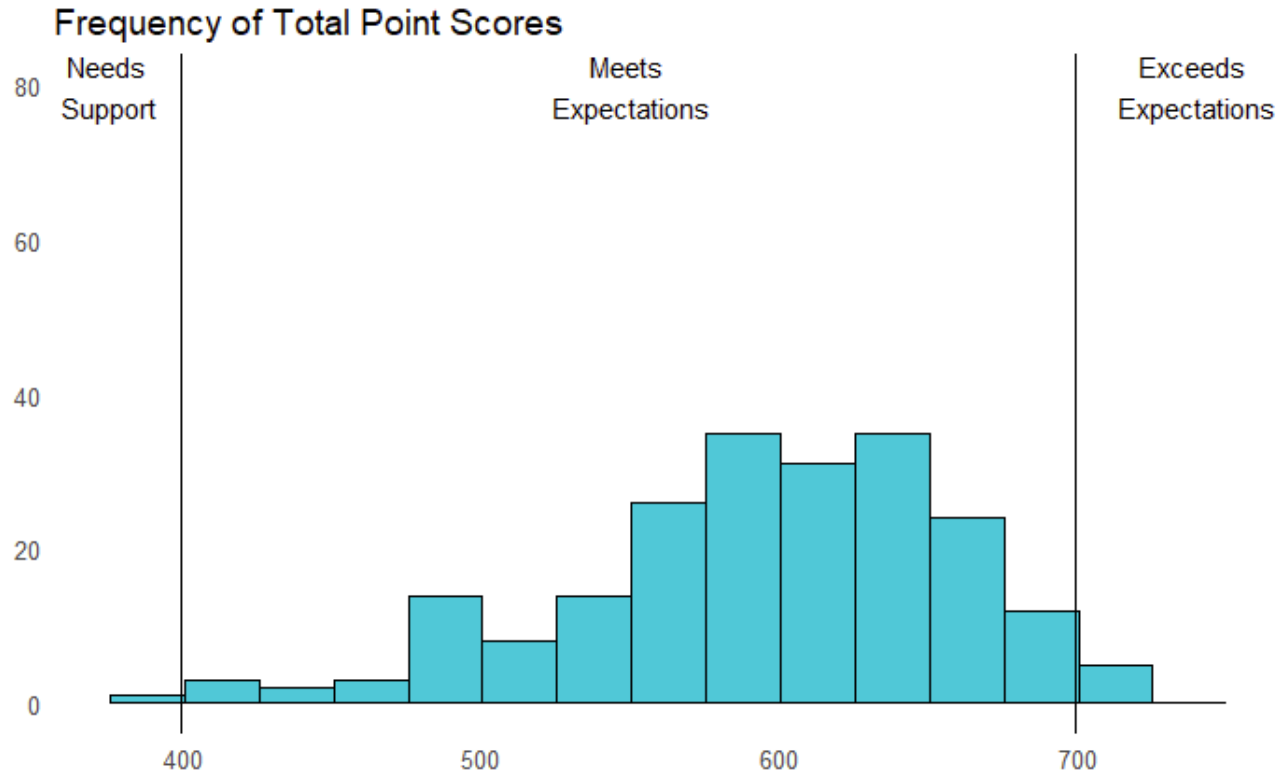
## CURRICULUM USAGE:

As mentioned earlier, quality is also assessed through the optional use of a state-vetted, comprehensive curriculum aligned with Virginia's Early Learning and Development Standards.

In RRBR, 86% of sites participating in VQB5 implemented an approved curriculum in at least one classroom, while 14% did not. The breakdown of these rates by site type is provided below.

| Curriculum Usage | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Site Type** | **Approved Curriculum** | **No Approved Curriculum** |
| Child Care Center | 83 (80%) | 21 (20%) |
| Family Day Home | 17 (65%) | 9 (35%) |
| Public School | 83 (100%) | 0 |

The visualization below illustrates how site scores are distributed with the addition of curriculum points. In FY24, one site fell into the "Needs Support" category, while five sites achieved an "Exceeds Expectations" rating.



Frequency of Total Point Scores

While curriculum contributes to a site's overall quality scores factor, RRBR believes it's important to assess sites without the 100-point boost for curriculum use. The following graphs focus solely on Frequency of Interaction Points( site CLASS averages).



Frequency of Interaction Point Scores
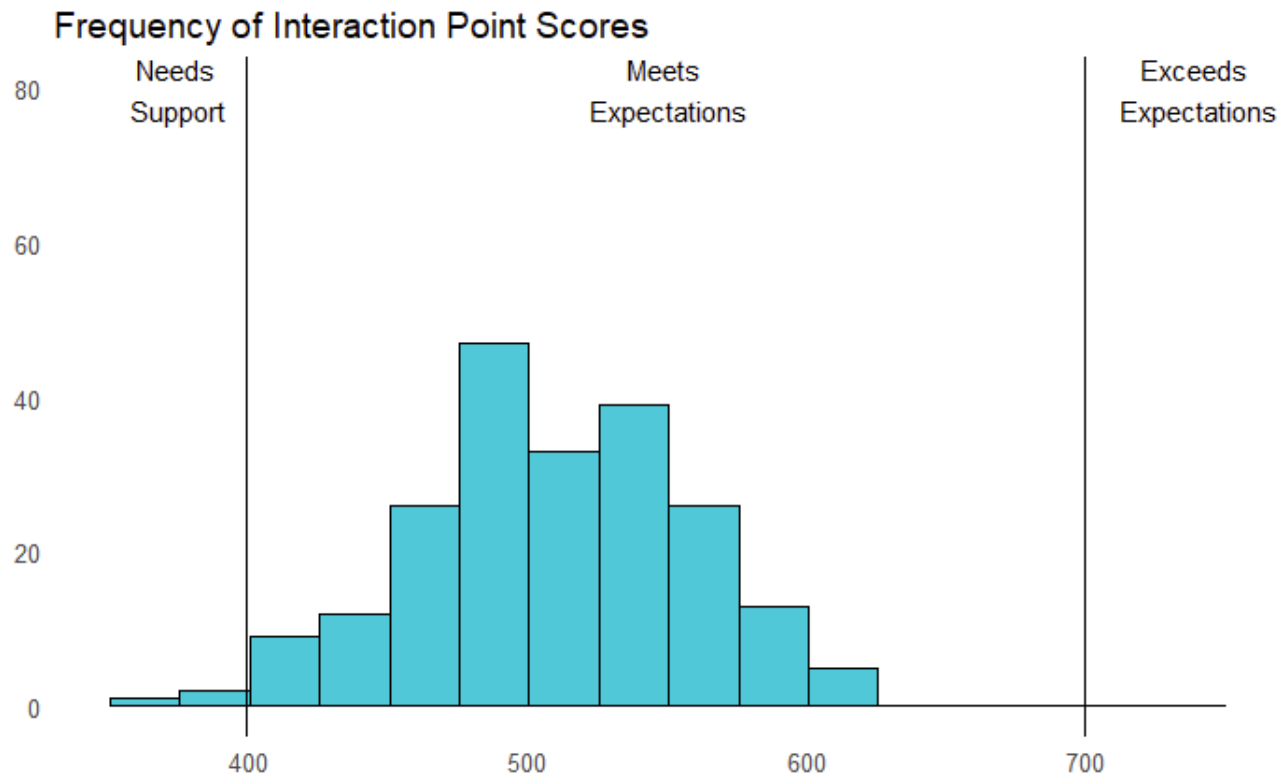
The distribution of scores based solely on interaction points shows that most sites fall within the low to mid range of the "Meets Expectations" category. Without the curriculum boost, three sites fell into the "Needs Support" category.



Frequency of Interaction Point Scores by Site Type FY24

The distribution of interaction points by site type continues to indicate that child care centers exhibit the greatest variability and have the lowest overall average score.

## VQB5 QUALITY PROFILES:

In the Fall of 2024, the Virginia Department of Education launched the VQB5 Quality Profiles on its website. These profiles share information on early childhood program performance, including quality measures and other key topics relevant to families, policymakers, and the public. Profiles are available at: https://earlychildhoodquality.doe.virginia.gov

# Mixed Delivery:

Virginia's Mixed Delivery program offers full-day, year-round preschool and childcare at little to no cost for eligible infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. This initiative expands access to high-quality early learning, helping prepare children for kindergarten success while allowing parents to enter or remain in the workforce.

The program operates on a slot reimbursement system based on VDOE's "true cost for care" model. Funding is allocated annually by slot type, with slots remaining at the child care center for the full year as long as they stay filled. These updated costs provide a stable and predictable revenue stream, supporting private ECCE sites in delivering high-quality services.

| Mixed Delivery Tuition Reimbursement in RRBR | |
|---|---|
| Infant | $24,180 |
| Toddler | $21,060 |
| Two | $16,206 |
| PreK | $14,560 |

## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:

Mixed Delivery sites are required to have at least 10 MD slots within the center. Additionally, each classroom serving MD students must include a "substantive proportion" of MD students. For instance, in a PreK classroom of 20 students, at least 10 must be MD.

In addition, MD Programs must:

- Maintain a regular or conditional license from the VDOE
- Offer at least 2,400 hours of full day, year-round services
- Be open a minimum of 10 hours a day
- Participate in all VQB5 activities
- Use a state-approved curriculum in all classrooms serving children enrolled in MD
- Assess all 3 and 4-year-old students with the Virginia Kindergarten Readiness Program (VKRP) and Virginia Language and Literacy Screener assessments in Fall and Spring

## ELIGIBILITY:

Children must be found eligible for MD slots by meeting one of the following criteria:

1. Childs family has an income at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (FPL)
2. Childs family is experiencing homelessness
3. Childs parent(s) or guardian(s) did not complete high school
4. Child has an identified disability or needs special education
5. Child meets one of the Family Council approved Regional Criteria (only 15% of RRBR's 514 MD slots may be filled with children eligible through Regional Criteria)

In addition, all adults in the home must be participating in one of the following activities:

- Working
- Job search
- Education/training
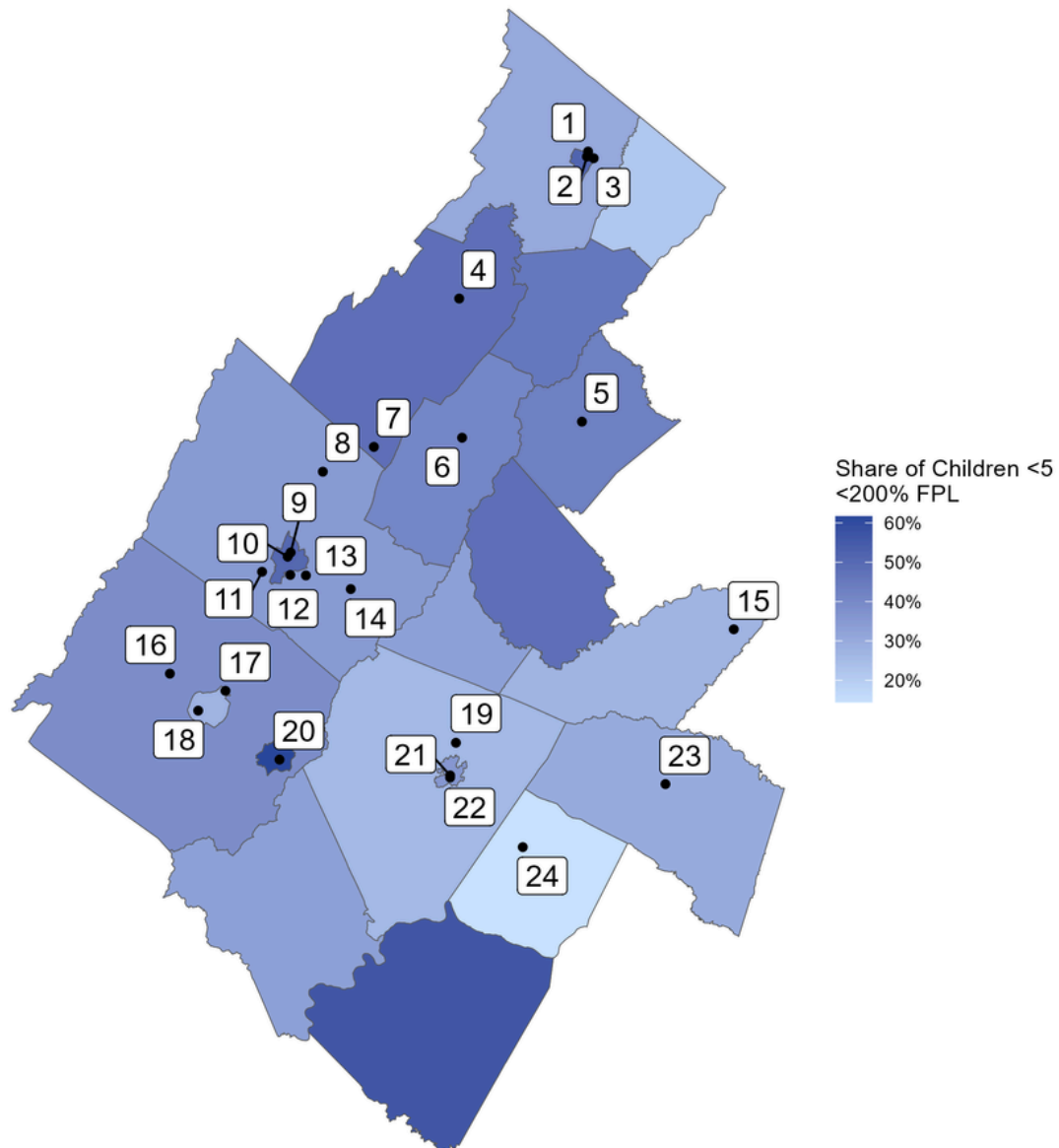- Or they are unable to provide care themselves.

## MD FY24 AWARD:

In FY24, RRBR was awarded 514 slots, making it the second-largest recipient in the state. In addition, RRBR was awarded 14 additional slots as part of an MD Expansion Grant aimed at establishing new classrooms within MD sites.

Despite regional data showing the greatest need for infant and toddler care, RRBR was only allocated 72 slots for children ages 0-2. The majority of awarded slots—456 in total (442 MD and 14 Expansion)—were designated for preschool-aged children (3-4-year-olds). This imbalance stems from limited funding and the higher costs associated with slots for infants, toddlers, and twos.

## OUR REACH:

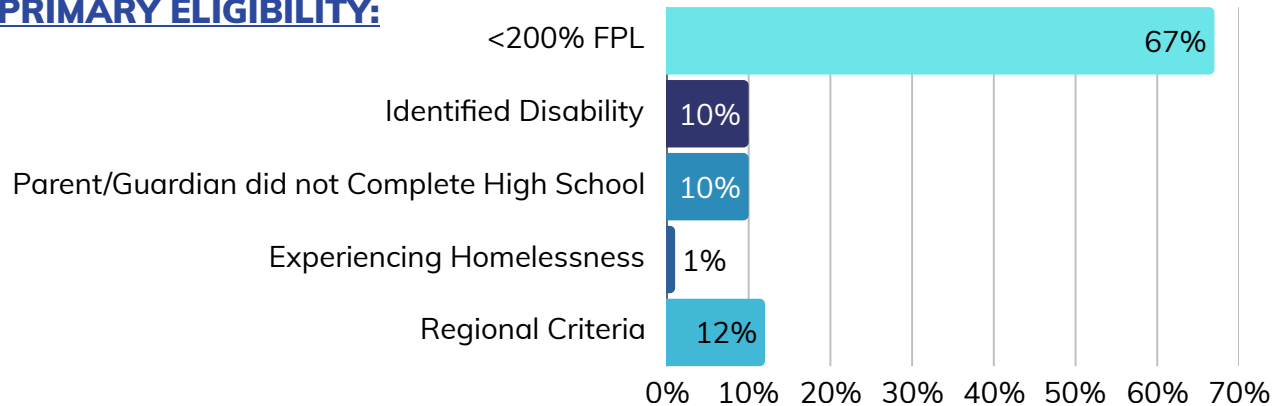| | |
|---|---|
|  | **528 Slots** |
|  | **74 Classrooms** |
|  | **175 Teachers** |
|  | **715 Children Served** |

Below is a map of RRBR Mixed Delivery sites, with shading representing the percentage of children under age five living in households below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level [6]. RRBR uses this data to ensure Mixed Delivery slots are allocated to the areas with the greatest need.



Share of Children <5
<200% FPL
- 60%
- 50%
- 40%
- 30%
- 20%

1. Childhaven
2. Fremont St Nursery
3. Tee Spot
4. Gwen's Day Home
5. The Child Care and Learning Ctr
6. Charlie's Guiding Light
7. Community Care and Learning
8. Plains Area Daycare
9. H/R Child Day Care
10. JMU Young Children's Program
11. Shen Valley CDC
12. Tots N Toyland
13. Agape Center for Care
14. Lil Bloomers Daycare
15. Jupiter - Locust Grove
16. Bison Beginnings - Churchville
17. Bison Beginnings - Verona
18. Community Child Care
19. Foundations
20. Waynesboro YMCA
21. Piedmont YMCA
22. Barrett Early Learning Center
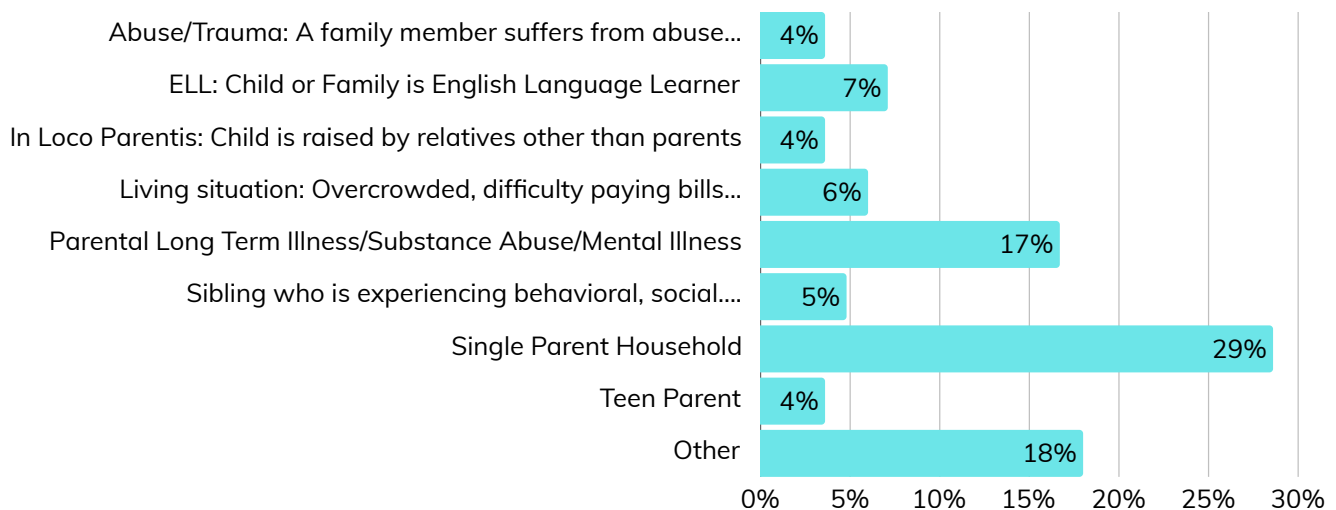23. Jupiter - Louisa
24. Natural Steps

The primary eligibility breakdown below represents a sample of the 715 children served through the Mixed Delivery program in FY24. The majority, 67%, qualified based on having a household income below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level, while 12% were served under regional criteria. This data is provided to RRBR through the Mixed Delivery Portal, managed by VECF.

## PRIMARY ELIGIBILITY:



| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| <200% FPL | 67% |
| Identified Disability | 10% |
| Parent/Guardian did not Complete High School | 10% |
| Experiencing Homelessness | 1% |
| Regional Criteria | 12% |

The visualization below breaks down the criteria for the 12% of children who qualified under regional criteria, as mentioned above.

## REGIONAL CRITERIA:



| Category | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Abuse/Trauma: A family member suffers from abuse… | 4% |
| ELL: Child or Family is English Language Learner | 7% |
| In Loco Parentis: Child is raised by relatives other than parents | 4% |
| Living situation: Overcrowded, difficulty paying bills… | 6% |
| Parental Long Term Illness/Substance Abuse/Mental Illness | 17% |
| Sibling who is experiencing behavioral, social,… | 5% |
| Single Parent Household | 29% |
| Teen Parent | 4% |
| Other | 18% |

In FY24, the median household income of families applying for Mixed Delivery through RRBR's Coordinated Enrollment process was $31,772. Additionally, 79 applicants reported that their children had an IEP or IFSP (taken from sample of all applications).

## VIRGINIA KINDERGARTEN READINESS PROGRAM (VKRP):

VKRP is Virginia's child-level assessment designed to evaluate skill levels in preschool (ages 3 & 4) and track progress through grades K-3, providing a more comprehensive view of school readiness. This assessment system expands upon Virginia's statewide Pre-K literacy assessment, VALLSS, by incorporating measures of mathematics, self-regulation, and social skills in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten.

Mixed Delivery programs are required to administer VKRP assessments to all MD students. With the expansion of Mixed Delivery across Ready Region Blue Ridge, the number of students for whom RRBR ensures VKRP assessments are completed has increased significantly—from 72 in the 2021-22 school year to 518 in 2023-24.

Detailed reports on student skills at the individual, classroom, school, and division/program levels offer valuable insights for teachers, families, principals, and program leaders. To support educators, VKRP provides online, remote, and in-person training, along with guides and activities designed to enhance understanding and support student skill development. As a statewide assessment program, VKRP emphasizes both academic and social-emotional skills, recognizing their importance for long-term success in school and beyond.

While VKRP assessments are primarily intended for teachers to measure individual growth from Fall to Spring, we can also examine the aggregate average Mathematics scores from Fall to Spring across all Mixed Delivery students as an example of how teachers might assess overall growth.

## VKRP MATH AVERAGES FALL TO SPRING:
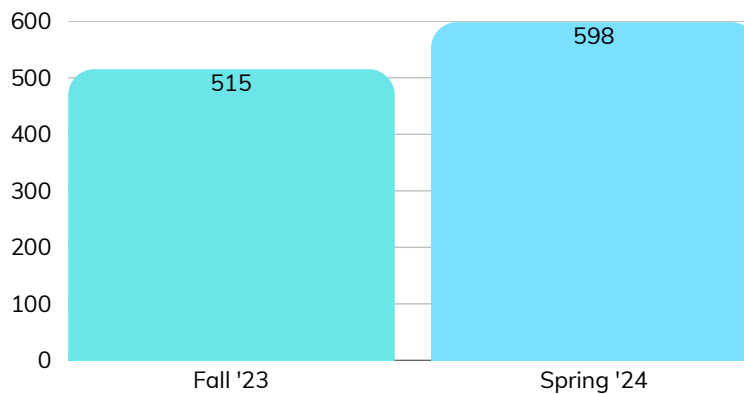


## FY25 MD AWARD:

In FY25, RRBR was re-awarded 514 slots, 455 of these for preschool and 59 for children ages 0-2. The request to adjust slot distribution by increasing infant and toddler slots was not approved due to the requirement to maintain the total of 514 slots within the allocated budget.

Looking ahead, it is expected that RRBR will receive the same amount of funding for FY26. However, if additional support from the General Assembly becomes available or if UWGC secures private funding partnerships for MD slots, RRBR could expand its reach and offer more slots to lower-income families across the 21 cities and counties it serves.

# Coordinated Enrollment:

Coordinated enrollment is part of Virginia's effort to create a unified early childhood care and education system, ensuring all families have access to high-quality programs. ECCE is offered in various settings, including private child care centers, family day homes, public schools, Head Start programs, local municipalities, and mixed delivery models. Many families struggle to navigate these options, often visiting multiple websites, making several calls, and applying to various programs without securing the services they need.

## SINGLE POINT OF ENTRY:

UWGC initially provided grant funding to support the Greater Charlottesville Area (GCA) including Charlottesville Public Schools, Albemarle Public Schools, and Monticello Area Community Action Agency (MACAA) Head Start in developing a common paper application for public preschool programs. Similarly, in the Staunton, Augusta, and Waynesboro (SAW) area, public schools and Head Start programs collaborated to create a shared application process.

In 2023, Charlottesville, Albemarle, and SAW merged their existing applications to pilot a single point-of-entry (SPE) software, BridgeCare. Additionally, MD providers across the entire region adopted the online application system. Now, all applications are processed through www.go2grow.org, which serves as a centralized hub offering resources for families and a unified online application for participating Head Start programs and school systems.

In FY24, 3,696 applications were processed—a 35% increase from FY23—including 1,819 for Charlottesville/Albemarle and 1,610 for Staunton/Augusta/Waynesboro.

| Online Applications: BridgeCare | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **FY24** | **FY23** | **% change** |
| GCA Applications | 1,819 | 1,530 | 19% |
| SAW Applications | 1,610 | 1,198 | 34% |
| Total Applications | 3,696 | 2,728 | 35% |

The BridgeCare pilot with VECF will conclude in December 2025, as the foundation has opted to transition away from the BridgeCare Single Point of Entry to the BridgeCare Marketplace. As a result, in FY25, the application process will shift to new software, SchoolMint, ensuring a smooth and seamless experience for parents.

For jurisdictions without a common application or SPE, the website will continue to serve as a valuable referral resource. For localities not initially included in the shared application, efforts began in FY23 to build relationships among agencies. Over the past two years, Coordinated Enrollment has steadily expanded in a way that integrates with existing initiatives.

The process started with discussions about adding a statement on applications to allow information sharing between organizations. This evolved into the creation of one-pagers to inform families about all free and reduced-cost early childhood options in their locality. To simplify access, this information was centralized on go2grow.org.

Once the website was established as a hub for local resources, the focus shifted to regional outreach, with investments in rack cards, yard signs, and banners to increase awareness. Currently, RRBR is working to engage non-ECCE partners, including organizations serving families with young children and major regional employers, to further expand visibility and explore collaboration opportunities.

## JOINT ENROLLMENT EVENTS:

Another key aspect of Coordinated Enrollment is the concept of joint enrollment events, which are community events where families can learn about multiple programs in one location. In FY24, several counties piloted new events, including application days at local food pantries, Preschool Expos at a preschool center housing Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) and Head Start classrooms, and an EGGstravaganza at a local library that involved private providers, Virginia Department of Social Services (VADSS), Head Start, and VPI. These efforts are continuing and expanding in FY25 across our subregions.

## GO2GROW WEBSITE:

As noted above, Go2Grow was originally developed to serve five localities—Charlottesville, Albemarle, Staunton, Augusta, and Waynesboro—as a single point-of-entry website, allowing users to submit applications to multiple agencies in one place.

To better serve the region, in FY24, the Coordinated Enrollment team began expanding the website to include all 21 localities served by Ready Region Blue Ridge. Building on that foundation, Go2Grow was redesigned in FY25 to improve the user experience with enhanced resources and a program overview page.



**Go2Grow**

Go2Grow works with local Head Start/Early Head Start programs, public school systems, and private providers to ensure all families in the Ready Region Blue Ridge area have equal access to early education and...

Go2Grow

As a result of this expansion, RBR saw a significant increase in website views from FY23 to FY24 and continues to experience growing engagement from newer counties. The data below illustrates this continued upward trend.

| Go2Grow Page Visits | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Page | FY23 | FY24 | FY25 (July 1-Feb. 25th) |
| Home | 4,900 | 14,000 | 7,200 |
| GCA | 4,600 | 9,800 | 4,200 |
| Outer Ring GCA | 0 | 300 | 650 |
| SAW | 3,800 | 8,300 | 4,200 |
| Harrisonburg & Rockingham (HR) | 0 | 320 | 209 |
| Northern Shenandoah Valley (NSV) | 0 | 500 | 400 |
| Resources | 372 | 1,050 | 1,400 |
| Early Ed. Programs Overview | 0 | 0 | 1,900 |

## CE MOVING FORWARD:

In FY25, Coordinated Enrollment work in the region will focus on three main goals:
- Onboarding all new and existing VPI and HS partners onto the SchoolMint platform
- Establishing collaborations with non-ECCE sectors, such as local businesses, healthcare providers, and community service organizations,
- Establishing partnerships with at least ten community organizations across the region to expand outreach efforts and increase awareness of CE.

# Family Engagement:

RRBR is responsible for developing and enhancing strategies to promote meaningful family engagement. This involves creating accessible communication channels, offering resources to help families navigate early childhood education options, and building strong partnerships between parents, educators, and community organizations.

A key initiative is the establishment of a robust family council, providing families across the region with opportunities to participate in system-building and decision-making. The council will serve as a platform for parents and caregivers to share their experiences, provide feedback, and help shape policies and programs that impact early childhood education.
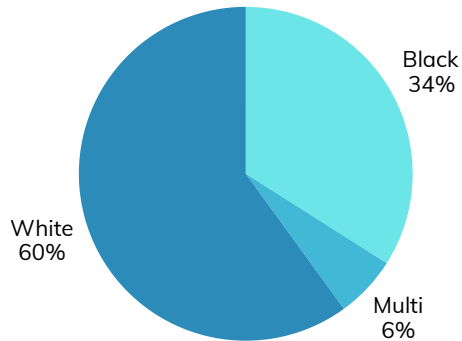
## FAMILY COUNCIL:

Every Ready Region supports a Family Council, representative of their region, to engage family voice and ensure that state and regional ECCE systems are designed to meet family needs and preferences. Ready Region Family Council members participate in or collaborate with Ready Region Shared Governance bodies, represent their regions on the statewide Virginia Promise Partnership Parent Advisory, and provide family perspectives and guidance to regional and state early childhood initiatives and Ready Region's early childhood priorities. The Ready Region Blue Ridge Family Council currently consists of 35 members with representation from 19 out of the 21 regional cities and counties.

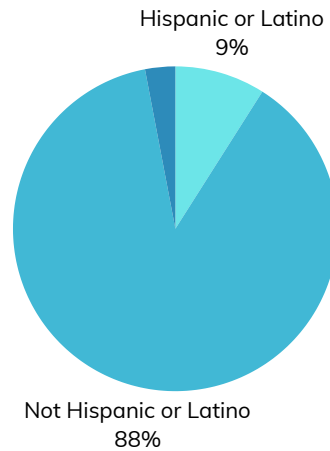| Family Council Members | |
|---|---|
| **Subregion** | **Count** |
| GCA | 18 |
| SAW | 5 |
| HR | 6 |
| NSV | 7 |
| Total | 35 |

In addition to ensuring representation from each subregion, it is important the family council is representative of various backgrounds. Below is a breakdown of our current council's demographics.
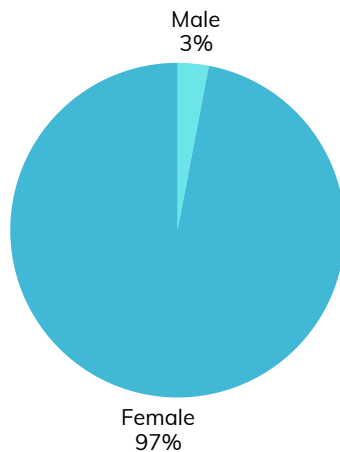
## Family Council Demographics:

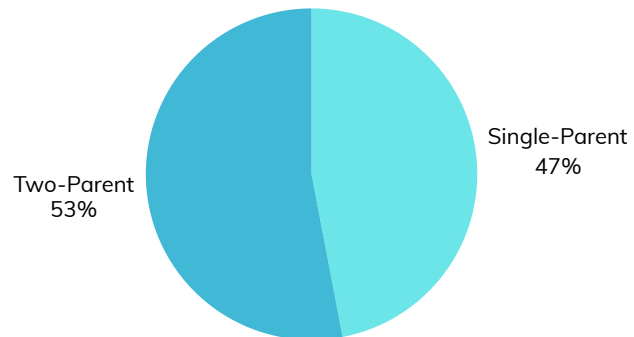### Race

Black
34%

White
60%

Multi
6%

### Ethnicity

Hispanic or Latino
9%

Not Hispanic or Latino
88%

### Gender

Male
3%

Female
97%

### Household Type

Single-Parent
47%

Two-Parent
53%

It is critical that RRBR staff are responsive to the varied needs of families and that reciprocal and respectful relationships that acknowledge families' role in children's progress are developed.

# Regional Shortfalls:

Despite these successes, our communities continue to face a child care space crisis. In the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County alone, 1,825 eligible children are unable to attend preschool or receive childcare due to a lack of available slots [6]. To address this issue, UWGC is supporting an Early Education Workforce Task Force focused on building capacity within both the early education workforce and the provider system. Additionally, UWGC has provided business consultation and seed funding to promote the success of entrepreneurs working to open new centers in our community. RRBR aims to replicate this data for all localities in the region, encouraging all communities to build local partnerships to address the capacity challenge, which affects the entire state. Through these public-private partnerships, RRBR believes a clear path forward will be established to benefit the families working and living in the region.

Below is a table of estimated shortfalls in publicly funded slots by subregions of Ready Region Blue Ridge [6].

| Regional Slot Shortfalls | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Subregion** | **0-2 Shortfall** | **PreK 3-4 Shortfall** | **Total Shortfall** |
| GCA | 2,682 | 618 | 3,300 |
| HR/SAW | 3,170 | 719 | 3,889 |
| NSV | 3,006 | 1,058 | 4,064 |
| RRBR Total | 8,858 | 2,395 | 11,253 |

In every subregion, the greatest unmet need lies in slots for infants, toddlers, and two-year-olds. These are also the most expensive types of care/education on average in Virginia for both families and educators due to ratios and requirements within classrooms.

The shortfalls are a key driver behind the ongoing systems-building efforts aimed at increasing access to and improving the quality of early childhood care and education.

# Citations:

[1] Center on the Developing Child (2010). *The Foundations of Lifelong Health Are Built in Early Childhood*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu

[2] Agnamba, Lindsey Allard, Laura E. Hawkinson, BreAnna Davis Tribble, and Nicole Sharpe. 2019. Mixed Delivery Evaluation Final Report: Evaluation of Virginia's Mixed Delivery Preschool Pilot Program. School Readiness Consulting. https://vecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/SRC-Mixed-Delivery-Final-Report-8.19.2019-1.pdf

[3] US Census Bureau Population Estimates. Decennial Census 2020.

[4] State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. Retrieved from https://www.virginia529.com/invest/tuition-track-details/

[5] Early Investment, a Lifetime of Returns: Articulating the Value of Early Childhood Investments in Virginia. prenatal-to-3 policy Impact Center, Peabody College of Education and Human Development/ Vanderbilt University.

[6] US Census Bureau Population Estimates. Estimates of demand are derived by applying rates at which children <6 live in households with <200% FPL from American Community Survey table B17024 to the number of children <5 living in the region from the 2020 Decennial Census. Supply are numbers of publicly funded slots provided by VECF.

## Contact Us

| | |
|---|---|
| ✉ | Meredith Locascio; mlocascio@unitedwaycville.org |
| ✉ | Patrick Hayes; phayes@unitedwaycville.org |
| 🔗 | www.readyregionblueridge.org |