



School Readiness for Northern Virginia Fairfax County 2014: Final Budget Invests in Early Learning Opportunities!

The county budget proposed in February 2014 called for a significant new investment in early learning through its unique and innovative Office for Children. The Board of Supervisors had to juggle many different priorities and make choices about revenue and spending. Our task was to make sure they heard that the school readiness investment was crucial and should be included in the final budget. **Great news: they heard us!**

The Fairfax County Investment:

The budget includes a \$714,000 increase in local contributions to early learning. This includes:

- Over \$450,000 to expand and support community-based programs and support children living in poverty to reach school benchmarks. The investment will go to professional development, coaching and strengthening curriculum to improve the quality of private and faith-based child care, preschool and family day homes.
- A \$150,000 increase in local matching funds for the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) to provide more preschool opportunities for low-income 4 year olds in community based settings. This would reach 50 more preschoolers; especially important because more than 1,000 VPI slots allocated to Fairfax by the state are not being used.

The final budget also acknowledges the need to expand School Age Child Care services, and calls for support for the Successful Children and Youth Policy Team in Fairfax County, which works to bridge services and partners from early learning through school years to support children and youth.

Voices for Virginia's Children looks forward to collaborating with county leaders on implementation of the investment in school readiness and on a multi-year plan to reach all children eligible for VPI in Fairfax County.

Local Officials, Local Decisions, Local Families

Early care and education policy and investment decisions are made each year at the federal, state *and* local levels. Local officials have responsibility for things like **child care licensing details**, professional development opportunities, Voluntary Preschool Initiative (VPI) match funds and enrollment, and administering the child care assistance (subsidy) program. While many of Virginia's initiatives for early care and education are targeted specifically to at-risk families and the early childhood educators and caregivers that support them, the decisions impact all of us across the community. Local leaders matter, and your voice counts!

Voices for Virginia's Children is excited for the opportunity to engage with advocates, early childhood educators, and families in Northern Virginia in 2014, helping to make sure that local leaders have the information they need as they make decisions about children and families.

For more information on getting involved locally in 2014, please contact Emily Griffey at Emily@vakids.org or Mary Beth Testa at Marybeth@mbstsolutions.com.