

# Early learning supports the economy and foundational learning

The Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK) is the state's largest school choice program, with approximately 170,000 children served annually and an annual taxpayer investment of \$400 million. This investment is complemented by the School Readiness program, which provides subsidized, educational child care for working families starting at birth.

## THE NEED

Parents are missing the tools necessary to make informed choices about how to best meet their child's needs.

- ➔ There is no comprehensive source of performance outcomes for the state's diverse array of early learning providers—private child care, public schools, and/or non-public schools.
- ➔ VPK provider readiness rates are currently released about eight (8) months into the school year, alerting families too late if they chose a “low performing provider.”

Early learning providers are getting mixed messages.

- ➔ 71% of VPK providers offer School Readiness. Currently these programs have different requirements making it tedious to implement and difficult for parents to navigate.

VPK program components are not aligned with Florida's K-12 system.

- ➔ Current progress monitoring data for grades K-3 is collected at the district level and cannot be aggregated statewide over time to evaluate student performance and inform education policy and practice.

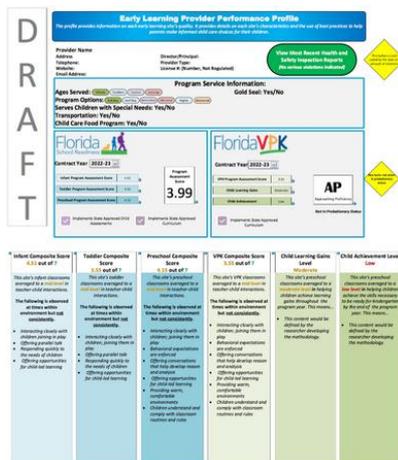
43% of children "not ready" for kindergarten

Between VPK and School Readiness, we invest almost \$1 billion dollars a year on early learning. We need to align the program requirements and performance metrics to best prepare Florida children for kindergarten.



## THE SOLUTION

HB 419 and SB 1282 create alignment between the state's early learning programs and our K-12 education system and will result in more efficient use of taxpayer funds, informed parent choice, and children who are better prepared for school.



These bills support parity in the operational requirements of the School Readiness and VPK programs to ease implementation, inform parent choice, and support long-term data collection--leading to better prevention and intervention strategies supporting students to read at or above grade level by 3rd grade.

The bills revise the VPK accountability system, measuring program effectiveness through a research-based, teacher-child interaction tool that includes emotional support, instructional support, and classroom organization. Combined with measures of child learning gains and child achievement, this tool will support a robust VPK performance metric that will appear on a detailed child care program profile families can use to guide their school choice.

The legislation also supports a new, comprehensive VPK through 3rd grade progress monitoring program, chosen and supported by a Council for Early Grade Success. The Council, comprised of stakeholders and experts, would be responsible for recommendations to the Department of Education to support our literacy goals for 3rd grade students.

