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2020 VIRGINIA EDUCATION SUMMIT

Joint Meeting of the Senate Education & Health and House Education Committees

ISSUE BRIEF

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Joint Meeting of the Senate Education & Health and House Education Committees

What Does the K-12 Landscape Look Like in Virginia?

K-12 EDUCATION AT A GLANCE – VIRGINIA

Virginia has

Source

1,860 *Public Schools*

155 *Local Centers*

91 *Regional Centers*

34 Preschools	**66** Local Alternative Centers	**42** Regional Alternative Centers
1,156 Elementary Schools	**44** Local CTE Centers	**10** Regional CTE Centers
312 Middle Schools	**21** Local governor STEM Academies	**18** Regional Special Education Centers
308 High Schools	**10** Local governor STEM Health Academies	**18** Regional Governors Schools
50 Combined Schools	**14** Local Special Education Centers	**3** Regional Governor STEM Academies

Number of Public School Districts   **133**

K-12 EDUCATION AT A GLANCE – VIRGINIA & UNITED STATES

Category	Virginia	United States
Per-Pupil Expenditures (FY 18)	**$12,216**	**$12,612**
Student-Teacher Ratio	**14.0**	**16.0**
Public High School On-Time Graduation Rate*	**92.3%**	**-**

*"On-Time" refers to students who graduate high school four years after entering ninth-grade for the first time.

How are Students Performing in Virginia?

Virginia administers the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) to students in grades three through eight in core subjects, with reading and math tested each year. Virginia students were tested on new math standards in 2012 and new reading standards in 2013, making assessment results from prior years incomparable. Between 2017 and 2019, proficiency rates on Virginia's Standards of Learning had small variations, with math rates generally increasing and reading rates slightly declining. Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Virginia Department of Education cancelled assessments for the 2019-2020 academic year.

Virginia Standards of Learning Results – 2017-2019 (Pass Rates)

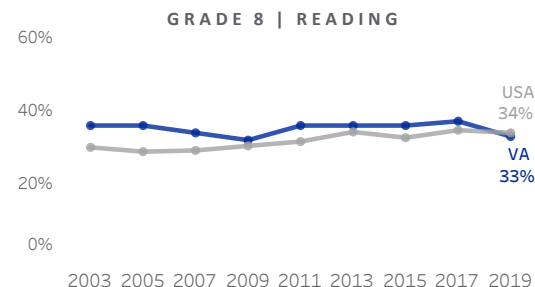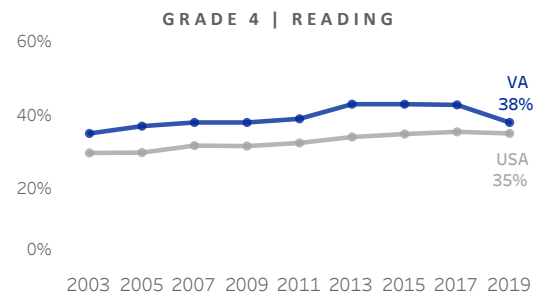|	2017		2018		2019	
	MATH	READING	MATH	READING	MATH	READING
GRADE 3	75%	74%	73%	72%	82%	70%
GRADE 4	81%	79%	79%	76%	83%	75%
GRADE 5	79%	82%	76%	80%	81%	78%
GRADE 6	82%	78%	79%	80%	77%	77%
GRADE 7	71%	82%	79%	81%	78%	79%
GRADE 8	74%	76%	71%	77%	76%	76%

School Funding & COVID-19
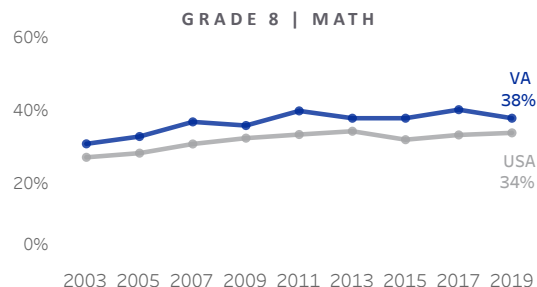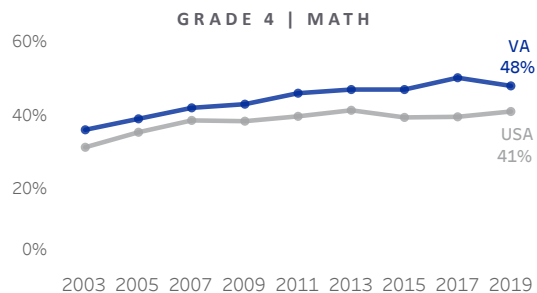
With depleted tax revenues and looming budget cuts in Virginia and other states, utilizing federal funding to supplement those losses is critical. In October, Governor Ralph Northam announced the allocation of $220,798,208 through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to fund K-12 schools. Funding allocated to schools ranges anywhere from $100,000 to $31,697,575.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

The charts below indicate that Virginia's NAEP proficiency rates have mostly increased in recent years and that Virginia continues to perform above the national average in these assessments, particularly in math in grades four and eight and reading in grade four. The most recent data, however, disrupts this recent increase, as proficiency rates are down in reading and math for fourth- and eighth-grade students, which reflects national trends for most states.

NAEP Proficiency Ratings Over Time – Virginia, 2003-2019

GRADE 4 | MATH

VA 48%
USA 41%

GRADE 4 | READING

VA 38%
USA 35%

GRADE 8 | MATH

VA 38%
USA 34%

GRADE 8 | READING

USA 34%
VA 33%

Average rates can mask variations in performance among subgroups. When proficiency rates are disaggregated by race and economic status, disparities in achievement can be seen. Achievement gaps among races/ethnicities on standardized assessments in Virginia have persisted across years with little sign of narrowing. In Virginia, Black students have consistently had the lowest proficiency rates. Hispanic students have performed better, while Asian and white students have regularly had the highest proficiency rates. Similarly, white and Asian students tend to graduate high school on time at higher rates than their Black and Hispanic peers.

2019 NAEP Proficiency Rates by Subgroup – Virginia

Subgroup	4th-Grade Math	4th-Grade Reading	8th-Grade Math	8th-Grade Reading
Asian	76%	63%	65%	59%
White	57%	46%	46%	41%
Black	26%	19%	16%	15%
Hispanic	36%	26%	30%	22%

2019 NAEP Proficiency Rates - Virginia vs. Neighboring States

GRADE 4 | MATH

State	
Massachusetts	50%
Virginia	48%
North Carolina	41%
United States	41%
Kentucky	40%
Maryland	39%
Washington, DC	34%
West Virginia	30%

GRADE 4 | READING

State	
Massachusetts	45%
Virginia	38%
North Carolina	36%
Kentucky	35%
Maryland	35%
United States	35%
Washington, DC	30%
West Virginia	30%

GRADE 8 | MATH

State	
Massachusetts	47%
Virginia	38%
North Carolina	37%
United States	34%
Maryland	33%
Kentucky	29%
West Virginia	24%
Washington, DC	23%

GRADE 8 | READING

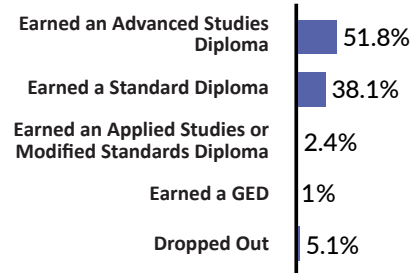| State	
Massachusetts	45%
Maryland	36%
United States	34%
Kentucky	33%
North Carolina	33%
Virginia	33%
West Virginia	25%
Washington, DC	23%

GRADUATION RATE

Virginia's On-Time Graduation Rate was 92.3 percent for the Class of 2020, a 0.8 percent increase from the previous year. This rate is a measurement of students who graduated in 2020 and entered ninth grade for the first time in 2016.

Public High School Graduation Rate by Subgroup – Virginia, 2020

Subgroup	Rate
Asian	98.1%
Black	91.3%
Hispanic	81.9%
White	95.2%
Students of Multiple Races	94.2%
Economically Disadvantaged	89%
English Language Learners	73%
Students with Disabilities	90.4%
Overall	92.3%
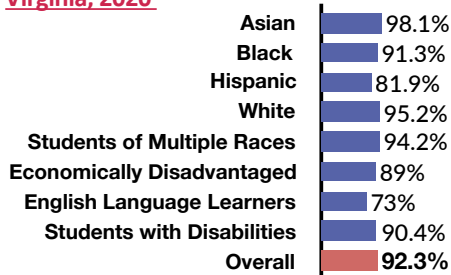
Outcomes for Students who Entered the Ninth Grade in 2016 - Virginia

Outcome	Percentage
Earned an Advanced Studies Diploma	51.8%
Earned a Standard Diploma	38.1%
Earned an Applied Studies or Modified Standards Diploma	2.4%
Earned a GED	1%
Dropped Out	5.1%

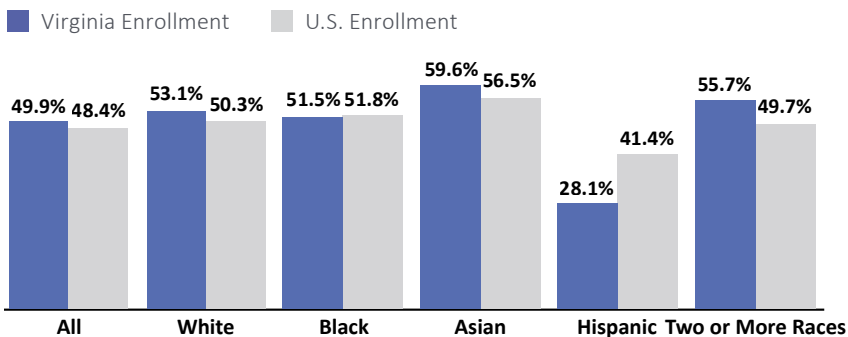# What Does the Early Childhood Landscape Look Like in the Commonwealth?

In 2019, there were 505,477 children between the ages of 0-4 in the Commowealth, a 0.95 percent decline compared to 2010. This age group makes up approximately 27% of the population of individuals in the Commonwealth under the age of 18. Throughout all states in the United States, children ages 0-4 comprise anywhere from 25 - 30 percent of the population of individuals under the age of 18.

Virginia's prekindergarten enrollment is higher than the national average, yet there are large disparities in enrollment by race. Enrollment of white children, Asian children, and children of two or more races is higher than the national average, while the enrollment of Black, Hispanic, and children of two or more races is lower than the national average. The greatest difference in enrollment rates between Virginia and the national average can be seen in Black and Hispanic populations, as the national average is more than 10 percentage points higher than the state enrollment rate.

Percentage of three- and four-year-olds Enrolled in Public & Private Pre-K Programs, 2018

Virginia Enrollment / U.S. Enrollment

Group	Virginia Enrollment	U.S. Enrollment
All	49.9%	48.4%
White	53.1%	50.3%
Black	51.5%	51.8%
Asian	59.6%	56.5%
Hispanic	28.1%	41.4%
Two or More Races	55.7%	49.7%

Number of Children Enrolled in Virginia Head Start Programs: 2010-2019

	Enrollment Change 2019	Change 2010-2019
< 3	4,165	1,655
3	6,289	675
4	6,382	-2,235
5	61	-382
Total	16,897	-287

Total Head Start enrollment in Virginia has remained relatively steady in the past, but there were significant increases in enrollment among children under the age of three, and significant decreases in enrollment for children aged four and five or older. Head Start and Early Head Start programs are administered by the Office of Head Start, located with the Administration for Children and Families at the United States Department for Health and Human Services.
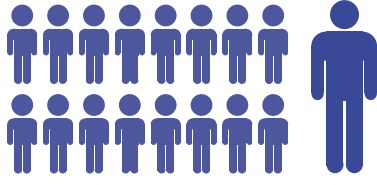
Virginia also has the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI), which distributes state funds to schools and community-based organizations to provide quality preschool programs for at-risk four-year-olds unserved by Head Start. VPI was created to reduce disparities among children upon formal entry to school. Virginia has seen a slight increase in the number of four-year-olds served by VPI over the past decade, growing from 15,314 in 2010 to 18,459 in 2020.

Significant changes were made at the legislative level in the early childhood space during the 2020 General Assembly, as the Virginia Legislature passed HB1012 and SB578, calling for the unifications of the Commonwealth's systems of child care and early childhood education. This legislation, signed by Governor Ralph Northam in July 2020, transfers child care program components, which include the Head Start Collaboration Office and child day programs from the Virginia Department of Social Services to the Virginia Department of Education. Additional provisions listed in the signed legislation include the requirement for providers accepting public funds to participate in a new quality rating improvement system, the creation of a Early Childhood Advisory Committee, and the requirement that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction report annually to the General Assembly on the progress of systems consolidation.

What Does the Teacher Landscape Look Like in the Commonwealth?

85,936 TEACHERS
Source

NATIONAL TOTAL:
3.1M (FALL 2017)

14 : 1 STUDENT PER TEACHER RATIO (FALL 2016)
Source

<

Source

NATIONAL AVERAGE: 16:1
(FALL 2016)

TEACHER PREPARATION, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

There are 36 colleges and universities in Virginia with approved educator preparation programs. Traditionally, most colleges and universities would require teaching candidates to first complete a bachelor's degree in subject areas such as math and social studies before entering a teacher preparation program, requiring a fifth year of school.

To streamline the process of earning one's teaching license, state policy boards for elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education approved 53 new teacher preparation programs and 25 new degrees in 2019, such as elementary education, middle education, and special education, allowing graduates to become teachers after earning four-year degrees in education.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) approved degree programs at seven of the Commonwealth's public institutions of higher education. The Board of Education, which sets standards for all teacher preparation programs in the state, followed with its approval of the new public preparation programs on June 20, 2019. The Board also approved new preparation programs at eight private colleges and universities.

Streamlining the teacher licensure process is one among several approaches to create strong and diverse educator workforces, but policymakers must incorporate additional strategies and investments to achieve this goal. As the Commonwealth's population becomes more diverse, so must its teacher workforce, as having more teachers of color in the classroom can improve student academic and social and emotional outcomes, particularly for students of color. Specific research on the subject includes a paper published in the National Bureau of Economic Research titled "The Long Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers." The paper, co-authored by researchers at Johns Hopkins University and American University, found that Black students who had just one Black teacher by the third grade were 13 percent more likely to enroll in college, and Black students who had two Black teachers by the third grade were 32 percent more likely to enroll in college.

Virginia collects data on teacher salaries and critical teacher shortage areas, but it does not collect data on the demographics of its teaching workforce; in fact, it is one of just a handful of states that does not do so. In terms of critical shortages, Virginia has identified several subject areas to have critical shortages during the 2020-2021 academic year, including special education, elementary education, and middle education.

Subject Areas with Critical Teacher Shortages, 2020-21

Special Education
Science (Secondary)
Elementary Education (Grades Pre-K-6)
Foreign Language (Pre-K-12)
Middle Education (Grades 6-8)
English (Secondary)
Mathematics (Grades 6-12)
Library Media (Pre-K-12)
Career and Technical Education
History and Social Science (Secondary)

TEACHER COMPENSATION

Virginia's average budgeted teacher salary was $60,265 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020. This is a 1.6 percent increase from the previous fiscal year. The Virginia Department of Education provides yearly data on classroom salaries, both budgeted and actual. Actual salary data is collected from Annual School Report (ASR) expenditure data submitted by each school division and regional program. Virginia ranks 28th nationally in average teacher salary, according to the National Education Association's 2020 Rankings and Estimates Report.

What Does Broadband Access in the Commonwealth Look Like?

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) defines broadband **as internet with a minimum download speed of 25 Mbps and a minimum upload speed of 3 Mbps**. Currently, 97 percent of Americans in urban areas have access to high-speed internet compared to 65 percent in rural areas and 60 percent on Tribal lands.

Broadband vxpansion has been a top priority for state policymakers in recent years, particularly when it comes to expansion in schools. In 2015, the Virginia Department of Education, in conjunction with the Office of the Governor and

Percentage of VA Schools With Broadband by Year

Year	Percentage
2015	46%
2016	72%
2017	92%
2018	99%
2019	100%
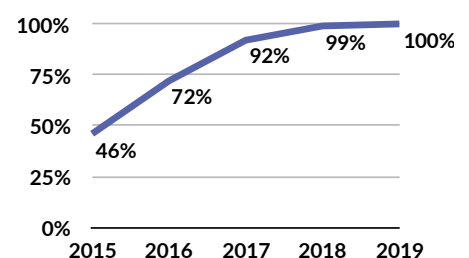
EducationSuperHighway, launched the K-12 Learning Infrastructure Program (KLIP), which supports "access to affordable, high-speed internet in every classroom in Virginia." Since the launch of this partnership, the Commonwealth has made significant progress in expanding broadband throughout the K-12 system, as seen on the accompanying graph.

This rapid expansion of broadband throughout the Commonwealth's schools should be celebrated; 100 percent of students now have broadband in schools, but internet speeds are not always strong enough for students and teachers to make good use of digital resources.

Between 2015-2019, median bandwidth speeds in the Commonwealth's schools increased almost five-fold, from **94kbps** to **455kbps**. Additionally, the Commonwealth has seen an 84 percent decrease in median cost per MBPS from 2015-2019.
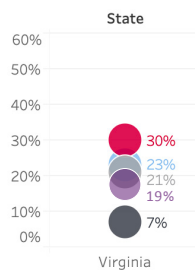
BANDWIDTH SPEED & CAPABILITIES	**100** kbps/student	**800** kbps/student	**1+** Mbps/student

	• Browsing • Online Testing	• Browsing
		 • Online Testing
		    • Light Video Collaboration
		    • Light Streaming Video
			• Browsing
			 • Online Testing
			 • Heavy Video Collaboration
			    • Heavy Streaming Video
			    • Online Educational Gaming
			    • Remote Instruction

Virginia has done remarkable work in recent years to ensure that their schools are connected to the internet. This development is great news for students and educators as the Commonwealth's education system integrates internet and technological resources to enhance learning – in the classroom. The current pandemic has illustrated an issue, however –many students lack access to the internet outside of the classroom. Though an already pressing problem, the inequities we see in internet access are exacerbated when students must learn remotely. The inequities observed in broadband and technological access can be coined by the following term: the "digital divide." The digital divide refers to the growing gap between those who have high-quality and reliable access to computers and the internet, and those who do not.
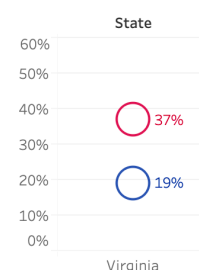
Additionally, the demand for educational technology is greater than ever, and because of that rising demand, technological shortages (specifically shortages of Chromebooks and iPads) mean that districts have been unable to acquire the resources their students need. Large school districts that possess significant buying power can use their size to their advantage to offer competitive bids on a limited supply. Most districts, however, do not have the resources to compete, creating a monumental challenge in ensuring that all households can access the technological devices necessary for a quality remote learning experience.

Policymakers and stakeholders from both sides of the aisle have, throughout the pandemic, called for the need to close the digital divide, and conquering this challenge will be quite difficult. In the United States, over 27 million households lack a desktop or laptop, and over eight million households lack any computing device. Virginia also faces significant challenges in expanding broadband and technological access:

Share Without High-Speed Home Internet By Race, 2019

State

60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10% 0%

30% (Black)
 23% (Latinx)
 21% (All)
 19% (White)
 7% (Asian)

Virginia

◻ All   ◼ Asian   ◼ Black
 ◻ Latinx   ◼ White

Rural & Urban Without High-Speed Home Internet, 2019

State

60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10% 0%

37% (Rural)
 19% (Urban)

Virginia

○ Rural   ○ Urban

Share of households in VA without a desktop or laptop: 20%

What Does the Higher Education Landscape Look Like in the Commonwealth?

The Commonwealth of Virginia has 70 institutions of higher education that are public two-year, public four-year, or private not-for profit four-year schools. Virginia's four-year public colleges are coordinated by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), and Virginia's two-year public community colleges operating within the Virginia Community College System (VCCS).
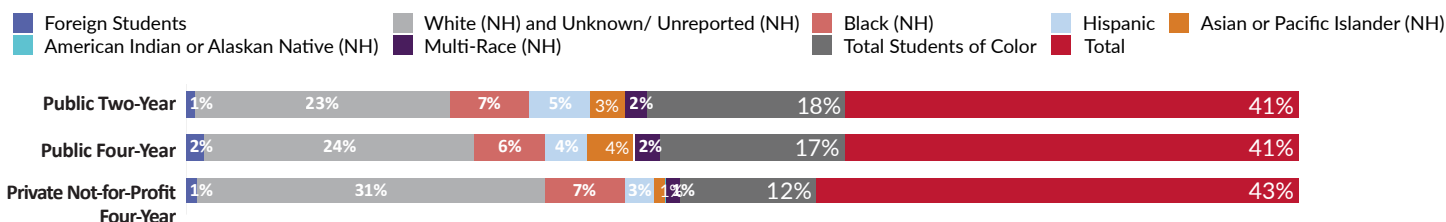
HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE IN VIRGINIA

Virginia's higher education landscape consists of public two- and four-year institutions of higher education, and private non-profit four-year institutions of higher education (IHEs). From the 2013-14 to 2018-19 academic years, enrollment trends varied among the types of IHEs. Four-year public and private not-for-profit IHEs saw slight increases in enrollment; two-year IHEs, however, have seen pretty significant declines in enrollment, as enrollment declined by over 40,000 students from the 2013-14 to 2018-19 academic years.

Institution Type	Number of Institutions	Enrollment (2019)	Degrees Awarded (2018-2019)	Graduation Rate
Public Two-Year	24	157,220	17,934	24.07%
Public Four-Year	15	168,444	53,551	70.0%
Private Four-Year	31	83,514	32,703	52.9%

WHAT TYPES OF STUDENTS ENROLL AT EACH TYPE OF INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION?

Student Enrollment at Virginia Institutions of Higher Education: Fall 2019

Legend:
- Foreign Students
- American Indian or Alaskan Native (NH)
- White (NH) and Unknown/ Unreported (NH)
- Multi-Race (NH)
- Black (NH)
- Total Students of Color
- Hispanic
- Total
- Asian or Pacific Islander (NH)

Public Two-Year	1%	23%	7%	5%	3%	2%		18%	41%
Public Four-Year	2%	24%	6%	4%	4%	2%		17%	41%
Private Not-for-Profit Four-Year	1%	31%	7%	3%	1%	1%		12%	43%

How is the Commonwealth Addressing Higher Education Access and Affordability?

College affordability is also a critical equity issue for low-income students, first-generation students, and students of color, as rising prices serve as an obstacle to enrolling and completing a postsecondary degree. The case for completing higher education is greater than ever, given the rise of "middle skill" jobs in the Commonwealth and nation.

The Commonwealth has addressed these trends through buy-in from leaders in different sectors. An important example of these efforts is the **Growth4VA** coalition, a grassroots effort of business, education, and community leaders. Growth4VA is led by the Virginia Business Higher Education Council in partnership with the Governor's Office and General Assembly to advance major strategies for economic growth and opportunity. Additionally, in December 2019, Governor Ralph Northam proposed the "Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back" program, otherwise known as the G3 Program. The G3 Program is among the first in the nation to provide wraparound financial support for low-income students with expenses including food, transportation, and childcare.

In the 2020 General Assembly, new leadership in the House of Delegates and Senate prioritized college affordability, pushing forth $440 million in new higher education investment, which, in the then-2020-2022 budget, included the following:

- $63 million for need-based student financial aid at public institutions;
- $12 million for tuition assistance grants at private nonprofit colleges;
- $71 million for the Governor's "G-3" community college affordability initiative;
- $80 million for in-state undergraduate tuition moderation incentive funding; and
- $23 million for institution-specific affordability initiatives.

These investments were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic recession that has accompanied it, forcing the legislature to suspend most new investments in higher education and to construct a new biennium budget that accounts for severe losses in state revenues. To compensate for depleted state revenues, the Commonwealth has used federal funding to ensure that Virginia's institutions of higher education (IHEs) were supported during the current recession. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Virginia's IHEs received $343,850,754 from the Higher Education Relief Fund in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). The table below illustrates how the funding from the Higher Education Relief Fund was allocated among Virginia's IHEs:

Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund: Virginia Total by Sector

| Sector	Institution Aid	MSI/SIP Funds	FIPSE	Total
Public	$210,573,740	$26,381,298	$2,095,389	$239,050,427
Private	$51,662,293	$14,632,261	$6,350,644	$72,645,198
For-Profit	$32,155,129	$0	$0	$32,155,129
Grand Total	$294,391,162	$41,013,559	$8,446,033	$343,850,754

In late September, the Virginia House of Delegates passed a new two-year, $134 billion budget, which includes significant investment in both broadband and technological infrastructures to accommodate remote learning for K-12 and higher education students. Additionally, higher education leaders in the Commonwealth have worked to prevent tuition increases for students.

The State Council of Higher Education of Virginia releases an annual tuition and fees report highlighting trends in higher education costs in the Commonwealth. The main takeaways highlighted in the 2020-2021 report are the following:

- "Tuition and mandatory educational and general (E&G) fees (those fees related to instruction and supported by the state) increased by **$98** (1.1%) for in-state undergraduate students at the system level. Eleven institutions did not increase tuition and mandatory E&G fees in 2020-21.

- Mandatory non-educational and general E&G fees (those fees related to non-instructional activities) increased by **$81** (2.0%), the lowest percentage increase since FY2000.

- The average tuition and all mandatory fees for in-state undergraduates is **$13,015**, a **$179** (1.4%) increase from the prior year.

- Room and board charges average **$11,210** at baccalaureate institutions, an increase of **$209** (1.9%), the lowest percentage increase since FY2000.

- Total charges from baccalaureate institutions — the average sum of tuition, all mandatory fees and room and board — are **$25,112** for the 2020-21 academic year, an increase of **$413** (1.7%) for in-state undergraduate students, the lowest percentage increase since FY2002.

- **In 2020-21, Virginia undergraduate students will pay, on average, 51% of the costs related to education, while the state will provide 49%--** this is a one percentage point increase in the state support. SCHEV staff estimate that if the state funded at the level of the cost-share policy (67%), tuition could be as much as $2,800 (35%) lower than current levels.

- The total charges for in-state undergraduates as a percentage of per-capita disposable income **remains higher than the national average at 46.1%.**

- **Students who complete an associate degree at a community college and transfer to a baccalaureate institution can save an average of $19,028 of the cost of a bachelor's degree.**

- All institutions had the actual increases in tuition and mandatory fees lower than the projected increases in their six-year plans for in-state undergraduate in 2020-21."

State Investment In Public Institutions Over Time
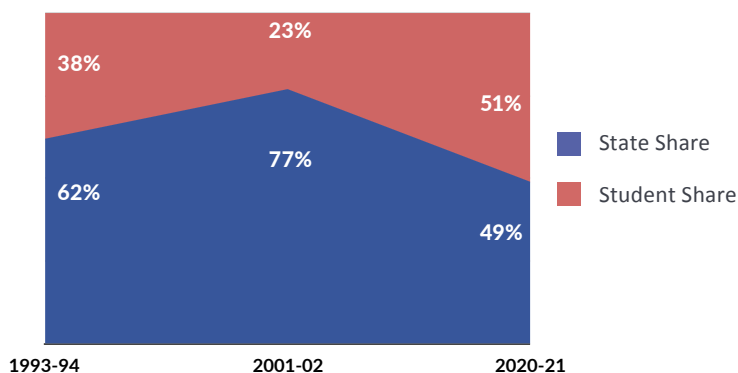
Note: these figures do not include investments in capital construction.

Though the advertised price of attending a public four-year institution is the same for all students, the net price that stud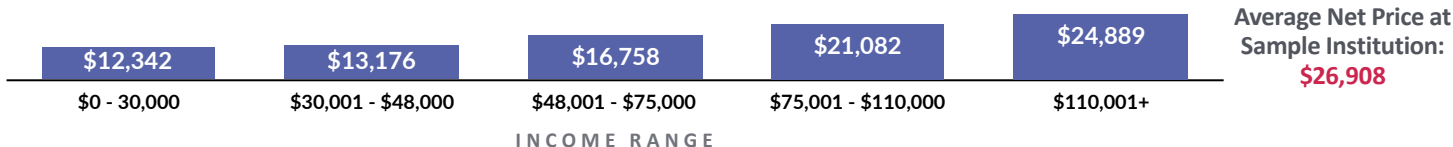ents pay varies significantly based on family income. On average, families in the lowest income bracket pay about **47 percent less** than those in the highest income bracket. In the 2020-21 school year, 23,000 Virginia residents attending an eligible private college or university will receive the Virginia Tuition Assistance Grant to contribute to tuition. New students enrolled in distance learning programs are not eligible to receive the grant; however, students enrolled in distance learning programs who were receiving funds from the program in the 2019-2020 academic year will continue to receive funds.

Virginia continues to expand state financial aid funding for public institutions of higher education. From FY 2004 - FY 2020, total general fund financial aid increased by 211 percent at four-year institutions and 341 percent at two-year institutions. Despite these increases, tuition has grown more quickly than the average student financial aid awards at both two-and four-year institutions.

Tuition Snapshot of the Commonwealth's Two- and Four-Year Institutions

Institution Type	Average Tuition and Mandatory E&G Fees, 2020-2021	Amount Increase from 2019-2020	Percentage Increase from 2019-2020
Public Two-Year	$4,606	$111	1.2%
Public Four-Year	$9,385	$0	0.0%

Average Net Price of Tuition Paid by Student or Family by Income Range

Average Net Price at Sample Institution: $26,908

$12,342	$13,176	$16,758	$21,082	$24,889
$0 - 30,000	$30,001 - $48,000	$48,001 - $75,000	$75,001 - $110,000	$110,001+

INCOME RANGE

When it comes to a nationwide ranking of states with the highest percentage of high school seniors who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, which is required in order to receive any type of federal student aid funding, Virginia has been in the middle of the pack for the last two years. For the current FAFSA completion cycle (2020-21), 23.2 percent of Virginia high school seniors have completed the FAFSA – this is the 24th highest rate in the nation. For last year's cycle (2019-20), a total of 61.7 percent of high school seniors completed the FAFSA – which also put Virginia in the 24th ranked spot. The chart below reveals estimates on the number of high school seniors in the 2020-2021 class, by district, who have completed the FAFSA.

Are Virginia's Students College and Career Ready?

FAFSA Completion Rates, Class of 2020, Regional States

State	National Rank	Completion Rate
Tennessee	1	74.9%
District of Columbia	3	66.9%
Maryland	11	60.5%
West Virginia	14	59.2%
Kentucky	15	58.8%
North Carolina	20	55.5%
Virginia	21	55.5%

Percent of 12th Graders Completed FAFSA (as of 07/03/2020)

Given labor market trends in the past decade, the case for getting a postsecondary education is greater than ever. Too few students in the Commonwealth are graduating college or career ready. Two-thirds of high school graduates will enroll in some form of postsecondary education, but 15 percent of those enrollees will need remediation in math, and eight percent in English.

Value	Significance
4 out of 5	The number of CEOs who say that skills gaps in creativity and problem-solving make hiring difficult.
11.6 million	The number of jobs added to the U.S. economy between January 2010 and January 2016. Workers with a high school diploma or less gained only 80,000 of the jobs in this time frame, a fraction of the 5.6 million jobs that were lost by these workers in the recession.
72%	The percentage of Americans who say that education should be a top priority for leaders.
1 in 8	The number of students who will not graduate with their high school class in Virginia.

SAT TESTING

Almost every high school student in Virginia takes a college entrance exam to prepare for their higher education future. In 2020, 65 percent of students in Virginia took the SAT assessment, a three percent decrease from 2019. Despite school closures in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many students in the Commonwealth were able to take the SAT before the onset of the pandemic. Many institutions of higher education require students to include college entrance exam results as a part of their application. The SAT requires students to pay fees associated with the test, although there are fee waiver applications available for students from low-income families.

The College Board, which administers the SAT, has established official "college readiness benchmark" scores – if a student's score is at or above the benchmark, they are less likely to require remedial courses in college. For both exams, the average scores of students in Virginia exceed both the college readiness benchmarks and the average national scores.

SAT Performance by Subgroup - Class of 2020
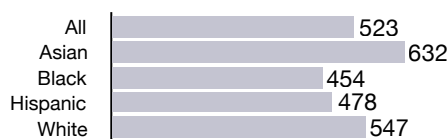
SAT SCORE | ERW*

VIRGINIA

All	567
Asian	608
Black	496
Hispanic	542
White	588

SAT SCORE | MATH

All	549
Asian	632
Black	472
Hispanic	523
White	565

*Evidence-Based Reading & Writing

UNITED STATES

All	528
Asian	585
Black	473
Hispanic	491
White	557

All	523
Asian	632
Black	454
Hispanic	478
White	547

480 | College Readiness Benchmark   **530** | College Readiness Benchmark

POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS – VIRGINIA AND U.S.

Advanced Placement Courses	Advanced Placement (AP) allows high school students to take rigorous coursework and, with a successful score on the final exam, students can earn college credit, saving the students time and money in college as they skip introductory courses. In the 2019-2020 academic year, 75,244 Virginia students were enrolled in AP Courses; 148,670 AP exams were distributed among those students. Virginia students' AP exam scores, on average, exceeded the national average.
Dual Enrollment	Dual Enrollment provides high school students with the opportunity to enroll in college courses and earn college credit while still in high school. In some cases, high school students can even graduate with an associate degree. This helps students by reducing the amount of time it takes to earn a degree and by reducing the associated costs. Dual Enrollment in the Commonwealth's program also contains a CTE component.
Career and Technical Education (CTE)	CTE courses provide students with the knowledge, skills, and training to be successful in the workforce. In the 2016-17 school year, 642,165 Virginia middle and high school students participated in CTE coursework.
STEM Education	In July 2019, Governor Ralph Northam established the Virginia Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Education Commission. Since its establishment, the Commission has been tasked with developing a unified statewide vision and set of goals to inform how the Commonwealth prepares its students for STEM jobs of the future.
Work-Based Learning	Work-Based Learning opportunities give students access to real workplace experiences through programs such as apprenticeships, internships, experiential learning, and school-based enterprises.

CURRENT ATTAINMENT RATES BY COUNTY

This map shows the percentage of residents in each Virginia county who have attained at least an associate degree. The five counties with the highest percentages of postsecondary attainment are all concentrated in the populous Northern Virginia suburbs: Falls Church, Arlington, Loudoun, Alexandria, and Fairfax. Other high-attainment counties that are more geographically disbursed across the Commonwealth include Lexington, Williamsburg, and Albemarle. There are 47 counties in Virginia where less than 30 percent of the population has attained a postsecondary degree, including seven counties with attainment rates of less than 20 percent.

2017 Attainment Rate (Associate Degree or Higher) by County
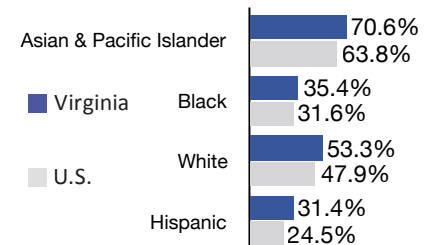
13.8%   85.2%
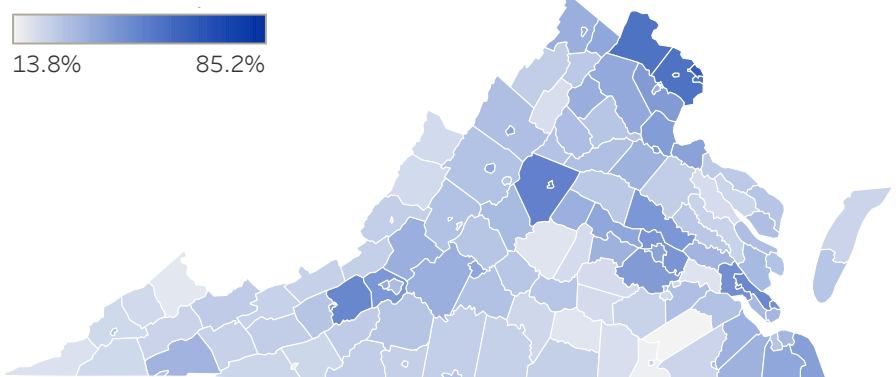
CURRENT ATTAINMENT RATES BY SUBGROUP: VIRGINIA AND U.S.

There are significant gaps in the attainment rates of different subgroup populations in Virginia. The Asian population has the highest attainment rate (70.6 percent), which surpasses the Commonwealth's goal of 70 percent by 2030. Notably, a higher share of Virginia adults holds a postsecondary degree than the national average among every subgroup.

The proportion of Virginia's population holding less than a high school degree is less than the national average, while the proportion of those holding a bachelor's degree or higher is greater than the national average. Research finds that the type of postsecondary credential one holds can play a large role in short and long-term employment outcomes.

Current Attainment Rates by Subgroup - Virginia and U.S.

Subgroup	Virginia	U.S.
Asian & Pacific Islander	70.6%	63.8%
Black	35.4%	31.6%
White	53.3%	47.9%
Hispanic	31.4%	24.5%

Current Attainment Rates by Level of Education – Virginia & U.S.

Level	% of population (VA)	% of population (U.S.)
< 9th Grade	3.1%	4.3%
9th - 12th Grade (no diploma)	5.5%	6.5%
HS Graduate (incl. GED)	19.5%	21.9%
Some College (no credential)	14.9%	16.1%
Short-term Credential	7.4%	8.1%
Assoc.	8.4%	9.2%
Bach.	23.7%	21.4%
Grad. or Prof. Degree	17.5%	12.5%