

# ELEVATE <sup>E3</sup> EARLY EDUCATION



## THE WHY

**The research is clear:** reading proficiently by third grade is a critical predictor of academic and life success. When children cannot read, they cannot learn. **ALL children deserve to read by third grade.**

When our children don't have a strong foundation in reading, math, and writing, they will struggle in K-12, higher education and the workforce. **This is a problem that affects us all. Virginia needs students who can listen, read, think and write.**

- The first eight years are a critical time in language and literacy development. These skills form the foundation for reading.
- **1 in 4** kindergarteners are not meeting literacy benchmarks (VKRP, 2022).
- By third grade if a child is not reading, they are **4x more likely** to drop out of school (National Conference of State Legislators, 2019).
- **32% of Virginia's fourth grade** students performed at or above proficiency in reading (NAEP, 2022).
- Reading and math scores are stagnant (SOLS, 2023).
- **More than half** of 3rd and 8th graders failed reading (SOLS, 2023).
- A strong evidence-based reading program gives students the best opportunity to learn to read in kindergarten through third grade.



**Virginia is behind Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and Tennessee when it comes to helping all children read by third grade.**



These states have taken a back- to-basics approach grounded in science and have results to show for it. 30+ states passed laws on literacy instruction and improving third grade reading outcomes, **Virginia is now one of them.**



# THE 2023 LISTENING SESSIONS AND SCREENING EVENTS ACROSS VA

As part of E3: Elevate Early Education's Action Plan, the leadership wanted to convene business and civic leaders, school leaders, elected officials, parents, philanthropists, principals, current and retired teachers, reading specialists, school board members and university faculty to understand the challenges they were facing. A Superintendent's Roundtable discussion with the E3 Board of Directors kicked off the 2023 Listening Sessions. **Twenty-four listening sessions were conducted.**

The stakeholders were from areas across Virginia (Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Norfolk, Northern Virginia, Richmond, Roanoke and Virginia Beach). A series of semi-structured questions were asked during the interviews to illicit common themes, recommendations and challenges facing Virginia's children, families, teachers, schools and stakeholders.

E3 partnered with public media, philanthropists, policymakers, school divisions, libraries, the Youngkin administration, UVA and others to host six screening events of The Right to Read documentary with a panel of experts to raise awareness around the reading crisis and Virginia Literacy Act.

## THE CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY STAKEHOLDERS

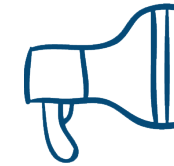
- There is a cumulative impact of the pandemic.
- Too many children are **not meeting third grade benchmarks.**
- Teachers are not prepared to teach the science of reading.
- **A lack of awareness** and understanding of the Virginia Literacy Act.
- There is a lack of evidence-based curricula that is focused on the science of reading and explicit literacy instruction.
- The K-12 funding formula is broken.
- Students are pushed through the education system without the foundational skills they need in math, reading and writing.
- Children, parents and families lack quality books and resources at home.
- There is a lack of affordable, high quality early learning programs for middle-income families.



# E3'S INITIATIVES

Throughout the listening sessions and screening events, stakeholders consistently identified these priority areas for our work:

## 1 RAISE AWARENESS



- Raise awareness around the reading crisis in communities across Virginia.
- Launch an awareness and advocacy campaign to build public support and call people to action.
- Advocate and coordinate the expansion of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) **and other book gifting programs** across the state to ensure every child from birth to age five has quality books at home.
- Reach and provide early literacy activities for families to help their children at home.

## 2 EDUCATE + INNOVATE



- Build, sustain, and invest in the implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act in partnership with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), UVA, and other stakeholders.
- Advance the concept of an innovative, public-private funding model for a Virginia Literacy Center or Foundation.
- Partner with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and school divisions to develop the Elevate Reading, Teachers and Schools pilot program focused on the implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act, best practices aligned with the science of reading, supporting teachers in the classroom and providing tutoring to **help children read by third grade.**
- Create a network of superintendents, principals, teachers, reading specialists, parents, libraries, tutors and others.
- Develop a replicable and scalable early literacy action plan in The New E3 School grounded in science to address language development and literacy gaps in young children before they enter kindergarten.
- Improve K-12 funding formula based upon JLARC Study recommendations.
- Monitor and influence the Joint Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Funding.

## 3 INCREASE EQUITABLE ACCESS



- Advocate for the Streamin3 curriculum model developed in The New E3 School by UVA to be expanded to more programs to improve access to quality.
- Improve access to quality early learning opportunities for middle-income families.
- Implement the Neighborhoods Matter Initiative to expand The New E3 School model.



# THE VIRGINIA LITERACY ACT

The Virginia Literacy Act (VLA) was passed in 2022 with bipartisan support in the legislature. During the 2023 Special Session, the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation and provided funding to extend the VLA through eighth grade. It is the most comprehensive policy in the nation. The VLA will ensure every teacher is using an evidence-based curriculum, train teachers on how to help children become strong readers, assess student learning, develop individualized reading plans, monitor progress, provide reading specialists, deploy reading coaches, improve teacher preparation programs and provide resources to families. This is good policy, and now we must ensure strong implementation across Virginia for all students, regardless of their zip codes. The law goes into effect and implementation begins during the 2024-2025 academic year.

Governor Youngkin and the legislature announced that the FY24 state budget includes a \$418m historic one-time investment in education. The Governor announced the **ALL IN VIRGINIA** campaign to complement the legislature's investment. The Virginia Department of Education developed an All In Tutoring Playbook, created a statewide absenteeism task force and will establish regional networks to help support school divisions with the implementation of the VLA.



**ACT NOW!** Early literacy matters for **ALL** children. Together, we can monitor every child's progress, provide intervention for struggling readers + **help every child read** by third grade.

**The Mission:** Elevate Early Education + The E3 School raise awareness, advocate and create innovative initiatives to give children equitable access to a high-quality education for the first eight years.

**JOIN US!**

Sign up to receive awareness and advocacy alerts.

