Statewide, only 53% of children entering kindergarten are “ready,” according to Florida’s Department of Education. For those who participate in VPK, the readiness rate climbs to 59%, which still leaves room for improvement. This year, two pieces of legislation aimed to improve Florida’s early learning programs.

**Professionalizing the early childhood workforce**


This bill requires the Office of Early Learning to establish pathways to professional development for early learning teachers in the School Readiness program. We know effective teacher-child interactions are the top predictor of child outcomes in preschool. Investing in professional development will improve teacher-child interactions and raise the quality of early learning programs statewide. HB 1027 is now awaiting the Governor’s signature.

**What would this legislation change?**

- The bill revises School Readiness preservice and in-service training requirements to integrate early learning professional development pathways.
- The Office of Early Learning must:
  - Develop early learning professional development training and course standards for School Readiness program providers.
  - Identify standardized early learning career pathways that allow early childhood teachers to access credentialing and certification that:
    - strengthens their knowledge and teaching practices; and
    - improves kindergarten readiness and early grade success outcomes for children.
- To the greatest extent possible, the established credentials and certifications must align with reading instruction training developed by the Just Read, Florida! Office and the Lastinger Center at the University of Florida for K-12 teachers, reading coaches, and school principals.
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VPK Accountability

These identical bills aimed to track student progress through grade two and set minimum standards participating VPK providers.

Sen. Harrell temporarily postponed this bill to review this summer with the Commissioner of Education. We expect similar legislation in the 2020 session.

What would this legislation change?

- Establish a fair assessment of VPK programs--focusing on teacher-child interactions and measuring the gains children make over the course of the year.
- Allow for early feedback to providers and parents, who can make timely changes to support children's development.
- Set performance standards for early math and social-emotional skills, as well as expectations for teacher professional development and training.
- Ensure VPK providers are assessed based on learning gains during the VPK year, and not by children’s test scores when they enter kindergarten several months after the end of the VPK program.