



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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November 1, 2025

The Honorable Ghazala Hashmi
Chair, Senate Education and Health Committee
201 North 9th Street
Richmond, VA 23218

The Honorable Sam Rasoul
Chair, House Education Committee
201 North 9th Street, Room 910
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Chair Hashmi and Chair Rasoul:

Section [22.1-214.4\(5\)](#) of the *Code of Virginia* requires the Virginia Department of Education (the Department) to take specific steps to improve both the provision of special education and related services and the outcomes for students with disabilities. The law requires the Department to provide training, develop training modules, conduct reviews of individualized education programs (IEPs), and develop policies and procedures to improve the administration and oversight of special education in the Commonwealth.

The law also focuses on recruiting and retaining highly qualified special education teachers, aligning with the Department's priorities and initiatives and building upon the Virginia Board of Education's work to prioritize the development of policies that seek to improve long-standing teacher shortages across the Commonwealth. Importantly, this legislative mandate aligns with the [Executive Directive 3 - Addressing Teacher Shortages in Virginia Schools](#) (2022), which bolsters and strengthens the Department's ability to remove obstacles that prevented qualified individuals from filling teacher vacancies in critical shortage areas, such as special education. The Department's ongoing efforts to empower school divisions to recruit, grow, and retain highly qualified teachers remains a top priority.

Among other requirements, Chapter 451 and Chapter 452 (2021 SSI, Acts of Assembly) require the Department to develop and implement a plan for addressing teacher shortages in special education. Specifically, § [22.1-214.4\(5\)](#) requires the Department to take the following action:

5. *Develop and maintain a statewide strategic plan for recruiting and retaining special education teachers. At a minimum, such plan shall (i) use data analyses to determine the specific staffing needs of each local school division on an ongoing basis; (ii) evaluate the potential effectiveness of strategies for addressing recruitment and retention challenges, including tuition assistance, differentiated pay for special education teachers, and the expansion of special education teacher mentorships; and (iii) estimate the costs of implementing each such strategy, including the extent to which federal funds could be used to support implementation. The Department shall, no later than November 1 of each year, update the Chairmen of the Senate Committee on Education and Health and the House Committee on Education on its progress in implementing such plan.*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily Anne Gullickson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Emily Anne Gullickson, M.Ed. J.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

EAG/TBD/jmt

c: The Honorable Aimee Rogstad Guidera
Virginia Secretary of Education

RECRUITING & RETAINING SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Va. Code § 22.1-214.4 (5)



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KEY DATA POINTS

Based on various Virginia Department of Education (the Department) reports, including data from the [Position and Exits Collection](#) (PEC), the [Staffing and Vacancy Report](#), [Board of Education Annual Reports](#), [Educator Preparation Program \(EPP\)](#) enrollment figures, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and anecdotal evidence from educators and school leaders across the state, Virginia school divisions are successfully addressing localized educator shortages that predate, but in some areas of the Commonwealth were exacerbated by, the COVID-19 pandemic ([Breen, 2023](#)).

In the 2024-2025 school year, NCES reported Virginia's student-to-teacher ratio as 14:1. This maintains the lowest level in decades, indicating that class sizes are decreasing and remaining small. This can help relieve other teacher staffing issues. More recent reporting from the Department confirms that from the school year ended (SYE) 2024 – SYE 2025, 1,366 (+1.4%) more teachers were added to Virginia's public-school classrooms ([Staffing and Vacancy Dashboard](#)), 90.8% of whom are fully licensed ([School Quality Profile](#)).

For SYE 2024, of the 12,142 special educators holding current positions, 97.3% are fully licensed. Additionally, there are 852 (+5.7%) more paraprofessionals supporting Virginia's special education teachers throughout the period of SYE 2024 and SYE 2025. The data reflects teaching and paraprofessional positions filled by individuals serving in Virginia's classrooms.

For the first time in over 20 years, special education was not the number one critical shortage area going into the 2024-2025 school year. Additional funding, in the amount of \$857.1 million, has been allocated to specifically support Special Education since the 2020-2022 biennial budget through the work of Governor Youngkin and the General Assembly. Since SYE 2022, changes to Standards of Quality (SOQ) staffing ratios for special education students have increased the number of teachers required for Virginia's students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). As a result, Virginia's special education teacher vacancies increased from 654 to 784. This represents 6.10% of the special education teaching workforce, compared to 5.30% in SYE 2022.

Scott et al (2021) conducted national research on special education teacher attrition and retention by focusing on special education teacher persistence, intrinsic motivators, and satisfaction with salary. The study found that teacher persistence in special education is linked to a positive working/learning climate, as well as receiving strong support from administrators. Special education teacher persistence is not dependent on a single factor, but rather on the intersection of environmental and intrinsic factors. A 2024 white paper addressing national special education teacher shortages reported that, while the number of students identified as requiring specially designed instruction through special education is increasing, fewer people are choosing to enter special education (Bettini & Gilmour, 2024). The increase in the number of teacher vacancies reported in

this section correlates with the downward trend in traditional educator preparation program (EPP) enrollment.

According to data made available through the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE)'s Title II of the Higher Education Act's [website](#), enrollment in traditional Virginia teacher preparation programs for all students decreased from 13,511 students in the 2011-12 academic year to 9,069 in the 2021-2022 academic year (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). This mirrors national trends in other teacher preparation programs. The most recent USDOE report from 2024 shows the academic year (AY) 2022-23 students enrolled in Virginia teacher preparation programs have decreased by almost 369 new students to 8,700. Between AY 2020-21 and AY 2021-22, the number of teacher preparation completers increased by 388; however, between AY 2021-22 and AY 2022-23, the number of teacher preparation completers decreased by 39. Alternative education preparation programs have recently come into the spotlight as a way to combat teacher shortages by addressing barriers to licensure.

Data presented in the Commonwealth of Virginia's Critical Teaching Shortage Endorsement Areas has consistently found special education leading the top ten critical shortage teaching endorsement areas for the state. The Department's [December 1 Special Education Child Count](#) collection is a "snapshot" of students receiving special education services on December 1 each year. Additionally, the Department provides data and reports, by region and/or by school division, on the number of teachers with a special education endorsement and the demographics of the students with disabilities they serve. Furthermore, the Recruitment Incentive for Public Education (RIPE), a new data source, provides a snapshot of vacancies reported in mid-August. This data is consistent with data collected from school divisions on critical shortage endorsement areas and presented in the Department's Education [Workforce Data](#).

Virginia's Plan Progress to Date

As reported in previous years, in December 2020, the General Assembly's Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission (JLARC) released its report, K-12 Special Education in Virginia, which recommended that language be included in the Appropriation Act directing the Department to develop and maintain a statewide strategic plan for addressing the special education teacher shortage. In 2021, the Department responded with the creation of a comprehensive strategic recruitment and retention plan for special education educators and an internal working group that included staff from several offices within the Department, including Educator Preparation and Special Populations. Staff from these teams continue to engage in and support this important work. The Department regularly identifies strategies, activities, and approaches to build upon and strengthen the strategies outlined in the Department's initial strategic recruitment and retention plan for special education; current activities are informed by emerging needs of Virginia's school divisions and effective national and regional trends in educator recruitment and retention practices.

In 2021, Virginia simultaneously partnered with the Center for Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform ([CEEDAR](#)), a national organization funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs. CEEDAR is dedicated to improving student outcomes by building the capacity of state personnel preparation programs (Virginia Technical Assistance, 2020). The purpose of the collaboration continues to be to work directly with school divisions to plan and implement evidence-based talent management strategies and with regional educator preparation programs (EPPs) to address special education teacher shortages within localities. The objective of the Department's work with CEEDAR is to support high-quality preparation for special education professionals, which will, in turn, increase student outcomes. Several members of the Department's core interagency team participate in the Virginia CEEDAR State Leadership Team (SLT). The Virginia CEEDAR team, in conjunction with other state agency technical assistance partners, institutions of higher education (IHE), allied professional organizations, and local school divisions, is working to create data-driven, evidence-based action plans to address retention and recruitment that begins with educator preparation programs. Team member participation and policy briefings on the topic from the [CEEDAR Center and the Center for Great Teacher and Leaders \(2020\)](#) affirm Virginia's development and implementation of a comprehensive, systemic approach that includes long-term strategies across the career continuum to address the persistent shortages in special education.

In January 2022, a formal Advisory Committee for Recruitment and Retention was established and launched to provide feedback on plan goals and strategies, as well as determine metrics for plan evaluation. Additionally, a new Special Education and Student Service Recruitment and Retention Specialist was hired in May of 2022 to provide expertise in the Office of Special Populations on special education recruitment and retention. The Department is also responsible for managing the Creating Capacity for Change and Continued Professional Growth grant from the U.S. Department of Education (Award H325P210003), which assists the Department's efforts to bolster special education teacher retention through the implementation of multi-tiered systems of support. This five-year grant just concluded year four of implementation. Data indicates that **over 95% of special education teachers participating in the pilot group were retained across a two-year period.**

Additionally, the Department is developing a comprehensive and coherent set of policies and practices that address the following goals:

- Goal #1: Reduce the barriers for qualified individuals to enter the profession as special education teachers.
- Goal #2: Attract and increase the number of candidates eligible to fill public school division's hard-to-staff positions, specifically in special education, and retain them once employed; and
- Goal #3: Strengthen strategies to recruit and retain a highly qualified educator workforce of special educators.

These goals have been reviewed by the Recruitment and Retention Advisory Committee and align with Governor Youngkin's Executive Directive 3 ([ED-3 Addressing Teacher Shortages in Virginia Schools](#)).

Strategies and Progress for Virginia's Plan

The Department continues to utilize resources from the USDOE's Office of Special Education Programs to support its efforts to focus on teacher recruitment and retention in the area of special education. For example, [OSEP's Attract, Prepare, and Retain Initiative](#) not only addresses critical shortages but also the causative factors that impact the professional pipeline of educators. The Department has utilized resources generated as part of this initiative to engage with the field, identifying and confirming leverage points within the system to support strategic change and inform recruitment and retention efforts. The Department has disseminated these resources and utilized these strategies not only in demonstration grant programs, but also in supporting conversations between local school divisions on creative and innovative programming to address critical shortage needs.

From these and other studies, the Department has utilized the following key strategies as part of the implementation of Executive Directive 3 and an overall strategic plan for recruitment and retention of the teacher workforce:

- Grow-your-own initiatives, especially those that help paraprofessionals become licensed teachers;
- Targeted incentives directed at teachers willing to teach in high need schools or subject areas, such as differentiated compensation;
- Prioritize recruitment and higher education partnerships that provide tuition for aspiring special education teachers and other hard-to-fill areas;
- Improved recruitment and hiring practices across divisions supported by technical assistance from the Department which addresses access and human resources practices;
- Improved school-level support for teachers, including formal induction and mentoring programs;
- Educated division leaders on universal teacher licensure to make it easier for special education teachers in good standing from other states to teach in Virginia;
- Use of interactive technologies to meet professional development needs; and
- The ongoing use of data metrics to develop and deploy recruitment and retention work.

Below are the ongoing efforts being implemented in Virginia; each item includes a specific reference to the strategic plan goal that is supported. The strategies collectively provide a path to achieve the goals and preliminary annual metrics on impact collected by the Department in conjunction with local school divisions. They include the following:

- The removal of the VCLA as a requirement to earn a teaching license in Virginia (Goal 1);
- The addition of Special Education to the approved areas for the Career Switcher program (Goal 2, 3);
- Providing tuition assistance to add endorsement areas (Goals 2, 3);
- Offering licensure support for provisionally endorsed teachers (Goals 1, 2, 3);
- Supporting with the comprehensive retention planning within an MTSS framework through the Personnel Development Grant: Creating Capacity for Change and Continued Professional Growth (Award H325P210003) (Goals 1, 2, 3);
- Continued implementation of the [Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program](#) (Goal 1);
- The offer of differentiated salary structures or retention bonuses by school divisions (Goals 1, 2);
- Collaborating with IHEs and CEEDAR to focus on the incorporation of High Leverage Practices (HLPs) into teacher preparatory programs (Goal 2, 3);
- The implementation of the CEEDAR Technical Assistance Grant to the Department of Special Populations (Goals 2, 3);
- The hiring of dedicated staff at the Department to include: a director of apprenticeships, a special education resource development coordinator, an information technology specialist, and an education data specialist (Goals 2);
- The expansion of the Journey into Teaching Program (Provisional) into other Superintendents' regions (Goals 2, 3);
- The launch of the Marketing Campaign: [Becomeateacher.virginia.gov](#) webpage, and other state-level promotional materials (Goal 2);
- The maintenance of an online statewide recruitment system, which rolled out in 2023 in connection with the marketing campaign (Goal 2);

- The continued payments for internships for aspiring teachers (Goals 1, 2); and
- An ongoing collaboration with Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS) and Old Dominion University's Center for Implementation and Evaluation of Education Systems (CIEES) to develop evidence-based practice (EBP) modules for incorporation into teacher preparatory programs in Virginia (Goal 2, 3).

Two initiatives that were new in the 2023-2024 school year are already impacting school divisions: the additional alternate pathway to earning full certification from iteach as well as the Grow Your Own Teacher Apprenticeship grant. The 2024-2025 school year expanded upon the iteach program which is the alternate pathway to earning full certification and the Grow Your Own: Registered Apprenticeship initiative. The iteach system allows provisional licensed teachers to complete remaining teacher education courses asynchronously within a self-paced program at a much lower cost than traditional programs.

This program was approved by the Virginia Board of Education in July 2023 for more than twenty divisions under two conditions: first, they must maintain their accreditation through the Council for the Accreditation of Education Preparation ([CAEP](#)); and second, participating school divisions are required to have mentorship programs for New teachers.

Throughout the 2024-2025 school year new divisions were approved to partner with iteach. **The total number of divisions utilizing the iteach program in Virginia is now 100 divisions. From June 2024 to September 2025, 600 teachers completed the program, with 114 completers having a special education endorsement.**

There are 615 special education teachers hired in divisions and working in residency with their mentor teacher, 91 in adapted curriculum and 524 in general curriculum settings. **Additionally, there are 192 current Virginia iteach enrollments working towards a provisional license with a special education license.** To assure that this program provides high quality preparation for special education teachers, the Department's leadership and iteach have sought oversight from the Southeastern Cooperative Educational Programs (SECEP) to evaluate and recommend improvements in the program.

The Grow Your Own (GYO) or [apprenticeship programs](#) are designed as partnerships between local school divisions and higher education teacher preparation programs. Unlike traditional college teacher preparation programs, these programs allow aspiring educators to get the best of both worlds with extended apprenticeships and high-quality coursework. In the past, an aspiring teacher would have to complete almost all their coursework prior to a 12-week clinical experience. The apprenticeship model blends these two elements together, providing aspiring educators with practical extensions of coursework throughout their apprenticeship resulting in higher retention of theory and extensive opportunities to practice what they are learning. More importantly, the

apprentices become part of the school community and are more likely to stay in teaching than traditionally prepared teachers.

In a registered apprenticeship, an aspiring teacher spends an extended time in the classroom with a master teacher using an apprentice model. The apprenticeship provides 2,000-3,000 hours of on-the-job training with a master teacher in a school-based setting. At the same time, the apprentice receives at least 288 hours of coursework to complete a bachelor's degree and licensure requirements. Moreover, as an apprentice, the aspiring educator works as a classroom assistant getting paid at least \$14/hour. Apprenticeship programs produce educators who are well prepared without the financial barriers associated with traditional preparation since individuals are paid during their preparation and have the advantage of using federal workforce funds to cover a portion of program costs. **This low-to-no cost approach is the fastest-growing apprenticeship occupation in the Commonwealth.**

In partnership with Virginia Works, the Department was awarded \$6 million in competitive funding from the U.S. Department of Labor through the State Apprenticeship Expansion Funding (SAEF) opportunity in [July 2024 which was announced via a press release](#). In September 2024, the Department issued a request for applications to expand teacher apprenticeship programs throughout the Commonwealth. **This funding has enabled the Department to expand teacher apprenticeships to additional school divisions with 170 teacher apprentices projected to complete their program and be a teacher of record in the 2027-2028 school year.** The emphasis of the next class of apprentices will focus on reaching 50% of all apprentices coming from special education endorsements.

In addition, in December 2024, the Department officially registered the K-12 principal as an “apprenticeable” occupation with Virginia Works. In response to the newly registered occupation, the Department released [a call for grant applications in January 2025](#) to pilot the program across the Commonwealth. One key aspect of the grant criteria is the focus on high-quality clinical experience alongside Special Education leaders to ensure that apprentices are “Day 1” ready to assume a school leader position when they complete the program, including a foundational knowledge base in special education.

Legislation focused on a critical needs area was House Bill 269 (2024) Provisional (Career Switcher) licensure for special education candidates. House Bill 269 allows divisions to hire special education teachers who have completed 60% of the special education endorsement requirements as part of the Level 1 Career Switcher program preparation. Such career switchers must meet the remaining requirements as part of Level II and III preparation.

To assist local superintendents with filling vacancies, House Bill 632 (2024) established universal licensure by reciprocity for teachers holding valid out-of-state licenses with full credentials and at least three years of teaching experience in non-virtual classroom settings. These legislative changes, along with the Department teacher pipeline efforts,

are making progress to address the critical shortages experienced in struggling school divisions.

Efforts of the Department's Division of Special Education

The Department, in collaboration with allied professional organizations and technical assistance partners, as well as the Division of Special Education, prioritized funding to develop and expand statewide teacher induction options grounded in research to improve professional practice. Currently, four academies are designed to improve leading effective teaching and learning in our schools. Here are this year's updates on the impact of these academies:

- 1. Journey into Teaching Academy (JITA), statewide:** The Department is currently facilitating its seventh cohort of the Journey into Teaching Academy (JITA), a yearlong professional development program designed for provisionally licensed special education teachers entering their third year during the 2025-2026 school year. JITA serves as an induction program that goes beyond traditional mentorship to support the retention and overall effectiveness of these teachers as they navigate teaching, learning, and licensure requirements.

In partnership with the Department and regional Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTAC), JITA participants gain valuable knowledge and skills in areas such as content mastery, pedagogical strategies, collaboration and co-teaching methods, and special education processes and procedures. These experiences are intended to help teachers excel in their roles working with students with disabilities. Additionally, teachers have the opportunity to participate in the Department-sponsored summer academies, as well as supplementary seminars and workshops focused on preparing for the teacher licensure assessment. Before the current school year, the Academy served approximately 120 participants across Superintendents' Regions 1-5 and 7-8. Over the last seven years, the Department has provided one-time grant funding of approximately \$350,000 (aligned with Goals 1 and 2) to support this initiative.

- 2. JITA, Northampton County Public Schools:** During the 2024–2025 school year, JITA continued to reduce teacher preparation and retention gaps in Northampton County Public Schools. In collaboration with Department staff, teachers developed knowledge and skills in pedagogy, content, inclusive education practices, special education processes and procedures, with a particular focus on multisensory reading. The Department allocated \$24,650 for the 2025–2026 school year to support teachers in earning the Orton-Gillingham Classroom Educator certification.
- 3. Special Education Teacher Support Academy, statewide:** The Department's Region 5 TTAC at James Madison University (JMU), in collaboration with JMU's College of Education and Content Teaching Academy, sponsored the Special Education Teacher Support Academy (SETSA) for the fourth consecutive year. SETSA is a four-day professional development program designed to build the capacity and efficacy of early-career special education

teachers (from their first through third year) and to reduce teacher attrition in K-12 classrooms. The Academy also welcomes experienced special educators who serve as mentors, supporting and learning alongside newer teachers.

SETSA offers targeted learning opportunities in professional knowledge, learning environments, instructional planning and delivery, and assessment. Participants gain skills in evidence-based strategies to design and implement instruction and supports tailored to students' unique needs. Key topics include high-leverage practices, specially designed instruction, co-teaching, math and literacy instruction, IEP development, collaboration with families and professionals, creating positive learning environments, transition planning, and fostering student self-determination.

Teachers leave the academy equipped with practical resources and access to ongoing regional TTAC support throughout the year. Over four years, SETSA has served 272 early-career and 69 veteran teachers across all Superintendent's Regions. Over the last five years, the Department provided one-time grant funding of \$739,100 to support this initiative.

4. **Towards Student Success: Special Educators – Provisional to Full Licensure, Superintendent Regions 2 and 3:** The Department's TTAC at the College of William & Mary, serving Superintendent Regions 2 and 3, hosted a year-long initiative to support provisionally licensed special educators, including those whose provisional licenses have expired. Participants, educators working toward full licensure, engaged in ongoing professional learning and development opportunities aimed at enhancing their pedagogical effectiveness. Topics included disability awareness, specially designed instruction, explicit instructional techniques, High-Leverage Practices, curriculum and assessment frameworks, multi-sensory learning strategies, strategy instruction, transition planning, and behavior intervention and support, among others. A key component of the program was preparation for licensure assessments. Eighteen participants met monthly from March 2024 through March 2025. Approximately \$13,500 was allocated to support this initiative.

Additional initiatives prioritizing early career teacher support, including paraeducators, are offered across the Commonwealth annually in partnership with the Council for Exceptional Children and the Virginia Council of Exceptional Children. During the 2024-2025 school year, **over 1,000 first- and second-year special education teachers and 165 paraeducators were offered a complimentary one-year professional membership, access to four live professional development sessions, including on-demand and archived resources.** Continuing with these efforts to strengthen educator effectiveness, the Department allocated funding for the 2025-2026 school year (Goals 1, 2, and 3).

The Department's Division of Special Education, in collaboration with the Office of Educator Preparation, will continue to build, promote, and advance practices within these academies to address critical educator shortages and effectiveness in special education instruction to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Continuing to

provide induction opportunities for aspiring and provisionally licensed educators affordable access to coursework has also remained a priority. To further support this important work, the Department offered intensive training opportunities through coursework with Radford University and Virginia Commonwealth University:

To increase the pool of eligible applicants for open special education teaching positions across the Commonwealth, the Department partnered with Radford University to deliver two compressed, seven-week asynchronous online courses for 98 individuals in summer 2025. The Department requires teachers hired as provisionally licensed special educators to complete coursework in 1) the competencies of foundations for the education of students with disabilities; and 2) the understanding and application of the legal aspects and regulatory requirements associated with identification, education, and evaluation of students with disabilities. This course, provided through the partnership, fulfilled this requirement for special educators. Over the past four years, the Department allocated \$321,090 for this project (Goal 2) to help ensure these educators are moving toward full certification.

The Department also partnered with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) through its collaboration with VCU TTAC to provide grant funding for coursework aimed at increasing the pool of eligible candidates for provisional licensure and strengthening the special education workforce. During the 2024 and 2025 academic years, 48 individuals completed one of three required special education courses aligned with licensure requirements. The Department allocated a one-time grant of \$206,000 over the last two years to support this initiative.

- **Radford Teaching Preparation Project: Hearing Impairments PreK-12:**
The purpose of this program is to provide training for full-time undergraduate and graduate students seeking an endorsement in [Hearing Impairments in PreK-12](#). In addition, educators currently working under provisional licensure-serving students with Hearing Impairments and persons seeking an add-on endorsement in this area will be served through part-time studies. Specifically, classes for professional development for teachers, speech language pathologists, early interventionists, interpreters, and other service providers are offered through coursework and summer institutes. The Hearing Impairment/PreK-12 Preparation and Professional Development Program Web site may be accessed at the following link:
<https://www.radford.edu/content/grad/home/academics/graduate-programs/education/special-education/deaf.html>. **During the 24-25 academic year, the Radford Teacher Prep Hearing Impairment project served 1 IHE; 195 cases of course enrollment. The Department allocated continuing grant funding of \$180,000 during this year (Goals 1, 2).**
- Additionally, the Department's **Office of Educator Preparation and Division of Special Education** provide federal grant funding for teacher recruitment in specific special education teaching endorsement areas. Virginia is unique in that we have several consortiums and specialty programs that provide

coursework and financial support towards endorsements in the area of special education. A sample of projects listed below demonstrates the extensive support in this area, including relevant strategic plan goal alignment.

- **Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Special Education Adapted Curriculum: Supporting Students with Severe Disabilities and Autism:** The following institutions are part of a consortium that offers an endorsement in [Adapted Curriculum K-12](#): George Mason University, James Madison University, Old Dominion University, Norfolk State University, Radford University, and Virginia Commonwealth University. Utilizing distance education and a shared program of study and coursework, participating universities provide initial licensure in special education, adapted curriculum and add-on endorsement programs, and continuing education courses to enable teachers to meet the state required competencies for highly qualified teachers of students with severe disabilities. (Additional information may be accessed at the Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Special Education Adapted Curriculum website.)

During the 2024-25 academic year, the Consortium has served 6 IHEs; 437 cases of course enrollment. The Department allocated continuing grant funding of \$584,285 this period for tuition (Goal 2).

- **Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Visual Impairment (VI Consortium):** The [VI Consortium](#) is comprised of three universities in Virginia that are working together to develop and implement a statewide program to meet the initial and continuing education needs for teachers of students with visual impairments in Virginia. Utilizing distance education and a shared program of study and coursework, participating universities provide coursework toward licensure with an endorsement in visual impairment, and continuing education courses to enable teachers to meet the state required competencies for highly qualified teachers of students with visual impairments. Additional information may be accessed at the Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Vision Impairment website. **During the 2024-25 academic year, the VI Consortium served 3 IHEs; 110 course enrollees. The Department allocated continuing grant funding of \$349,121 during this period for tuition (Goals 1, 2).**

Federal programs have provided funding for the majority of the initiatives highlighted in this report. Federal funding will be utilized to underwrite the cost of new and expanded strategies through 2025. Any additional funding requests to the General Assembly will be based on a determination of the successful outcomes of program components.

As a part of the continued implementation of Executive Directive 3 and the strategic plan, the Department will have an increased ability to support school divisions in the effective recruitment and retention of special education staff by:

- Using state-level data to identify gaps and strengths in human capital resources;
- Reducing barriers for qualified individuals to enter the profession as special education teachers;
- Adding microcredential opportunities for upskilling General Education teachers in special education best practices;
- Increasing the pipeline of licensed candidates to fill existing school division special education positions;
- Expanding and improving practices in human capital management for divisions;
- Strengthening strategies and resources to recruit and retain a highly qualified teaching workforce for the state; and
- Operationalizing metrics for evaluation of the strategic plan and yearly progress.