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New Insight Region™ Report Examines Northern Virginia's Disparities in Preschool Enrollment

October 28, 2021 (Oakton, VA) – High-quality early education—particularly preschool—has the potential to narrow long-standing racial and economic achievement gaps, provide crucial relief to Northern Virginia's working parents, and produce stunning long-term returns on investment.

Unfortunately, lower-income children in Northern Virginia have one the lowest rates of preschool enrollment in the country—just **29 percent** of three- and four-year-old children at or near poverty are in school, compared to **41 percent** nationally.

The findings are in a new report released today by the Community Foundation of Northern Virginia's **Insight Region™** called [*Ready for Kindergarten, Ready for Life: The causes and consequences of Northern Virginia's preschool enrollment disparity.*](#)

“The average higher-income child in Northern Virginia's public schools is about 2.5 grade levels ahead of a child from a less affluent family. White children perform, on average, 2.4 grade levels above Hispanic students, 2.2 grade levels above Black students, and 0.2 grade levels below Asian students,” said Elizabeth Hughes, Senior Director of Insight Region.

The brief also explores how location, cost, and demand explain Northern Virginia's low rate of preschool enrollment among its most financially vulnerable children and concludes with recommendations on how to tackle these issues, along with addressing the quality of programs provided.

“If we don't solve the child care system, the challenges we have coming we're not ever going to solve the workforce issue either. It really goes hand in hand. If we have a strong early childhood system then we're really building a stronger workforce,” said Sallyann Bergh, Executive Director, Fairfax Futures.

“We have to solve the problem that parents can’t afford to pay anymore, and providers can afford to earn any less. So, what that means is additional public investment to treat childcare and early learning like a public good,” Emily Griffey, Chief Policy Officer, Voices for Virginia’s Children.

The report also includes a series of recommendations on how the community can fulfill the promise of preschool by (1) increasing the availability of high-quality preschool in Northern Virginia, (2) filling the gap between what families can pay and what providers must charge, and (3) supporting families who prefer parental- or relative-provided education.

*This report is part 3 of an Insight Region series on **Inclusive Prosperity** in Northern Virginia. Embargoed copies of the report will be available upon request before the event. Previous released briefs in this series can be found [here](#). Watch the report’s release event here: <https://youtu.be/Acbk2KOMPJU>*

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About Insight Region

The Insight Region™ Center for Community Research is a growing hub for reliable, well-researched, and actionable data and analyses on issues critical to Northern Virginia. Through this work, we seek to inform charitable giving, inspire civic and social action, and foster a more inclusive, prosperous region.

About Community Foundation for Northern Virginia

The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia grows philanthropy to respond to critical need, seed innovation and lead and convene the community. Comprised of donor advised funds, permanent funds, giving circles, and other charitable endowments, the Community Foundation connects donors to community and promotes a more equitable and inclusive prosperity that marries our economic strength with the full breadth of our diverse community. During the past 2 years the Community Foundation awarded \$20 million in grants and scholarships and now reports \$89 million in managed philanthropic assets. For more information please visit us at www.cfnova.org, follow up on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).