# Bridging Futures: Virginia's Collaborative Path to Secondary Transition Success

Rebuilding the Infrastructure of Transition through Interagency Collaboration

# Today’s Objectives

- The data story that drives our efforts
- The importance of interagency collaboration
- Collaborative response to rebuilding secondary transition

# Virginia's Collaborative Agencies

- Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)
- Department of Aging and Rehabilitation Services (DARS)
- Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC)
- I'm Determined Project (IMD)
- Center on Transition Innovations (CTI)
- Radford University (RU)
- Partnership for People with Disabilities (PPD)
- Wilson Workforce Rehabilitation Center (WWRC)
- National Technical Assistance Center on Transition-Collaborative (NTACT-C)

# Key Practices in Interagency Collaboration

- Mutual commitment among partners to support students across educational and post-school settings.
- Formalized agreements such as Interagency Collaborative Agreements or data-sharing protocols that define roles, responsibilities, and timelines.
- Active participation of agency representatives in transition planning and individualized education program (IEP) development.
- Cross-system coordination to ensure continuity of services during and after school.

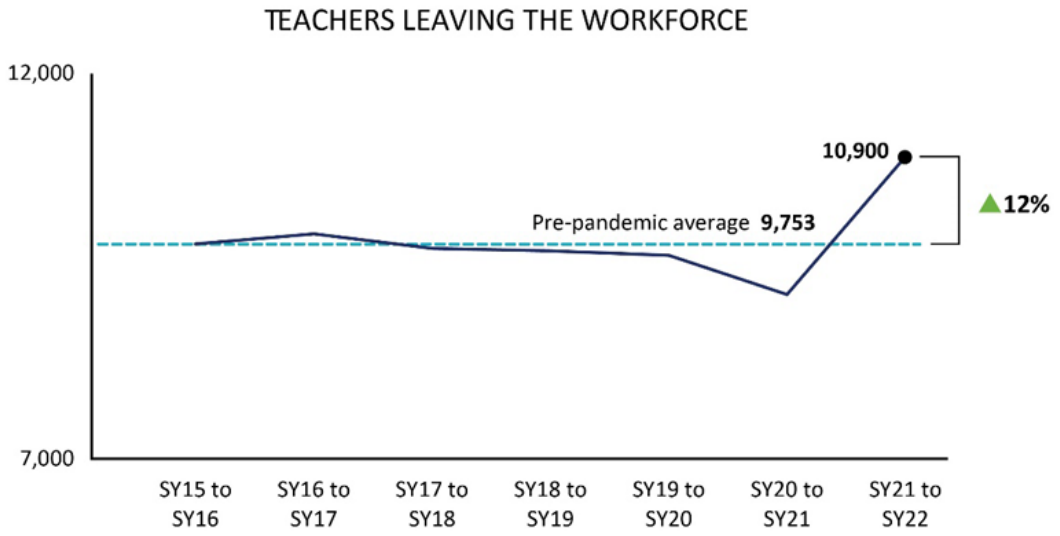
# Interagency Collaboration

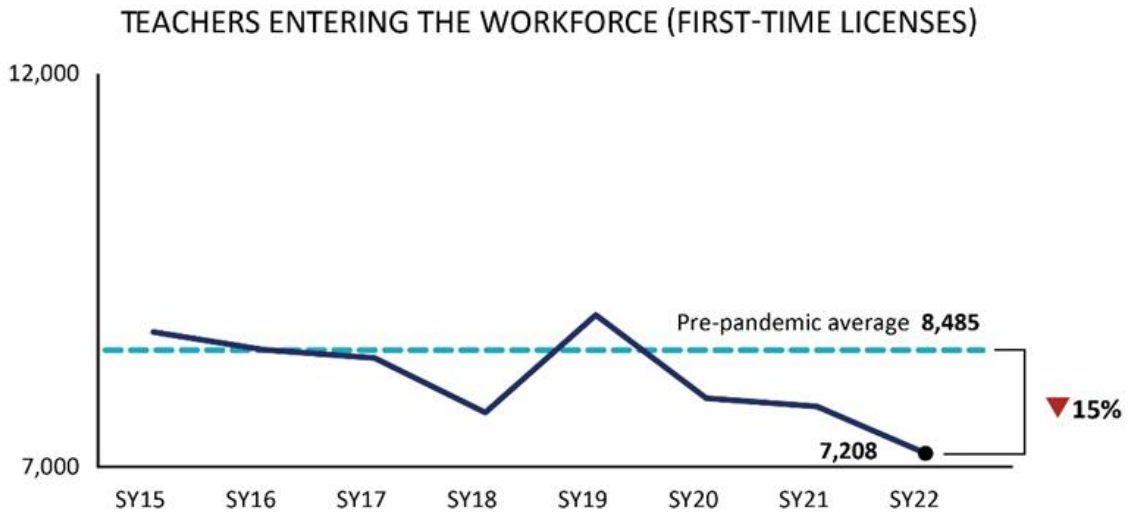
- Interagency collaboration is a **structured, purposeful partnership** among schools, community agencies, and service providers designed to deliver **coordinated, seamless transition services** to students with disabilities.
- It involves planning, communication, and accountability to ensure students receive the **supports, services, and opportunities** needed to achieve successful postsecondary outcomes.
- It’s not just cooperation. It is a **system-level strategy** for ensuring no student falls through the cracks during the critical transition to adulthood.

# Decline in Collaboration

- Virginia teacher turnover dropped and continued to increase after COVID.
- Facing teacher shortages, Virginia legislators propose ideas to increase pay and lighten workloads — over 15% of teachers report being “definitely” or “likely” to leave at the end of the school year.
- “I just found myself struggling to keep up.” Number of teachers quitting hits new high.
- At the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year, we saw a decline in teacher vacancy rates.

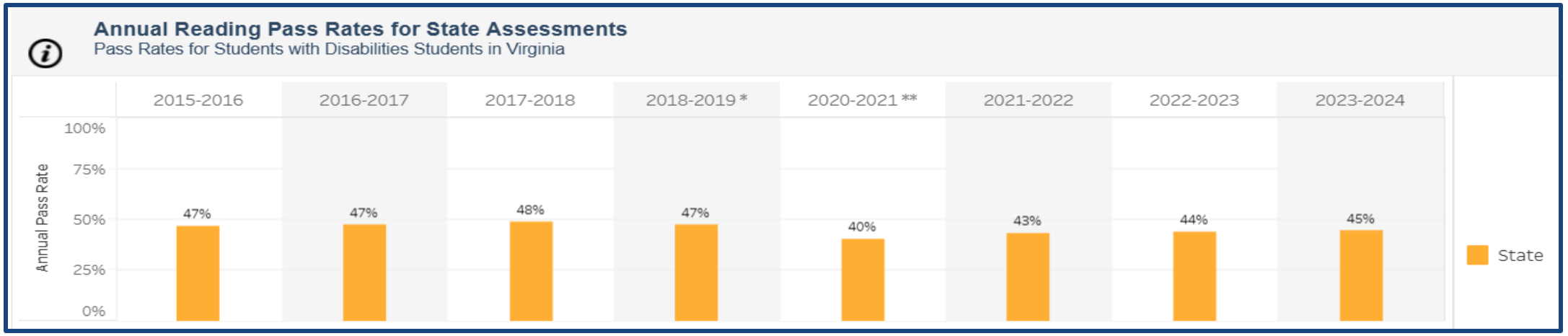
# Impact on the Workforce

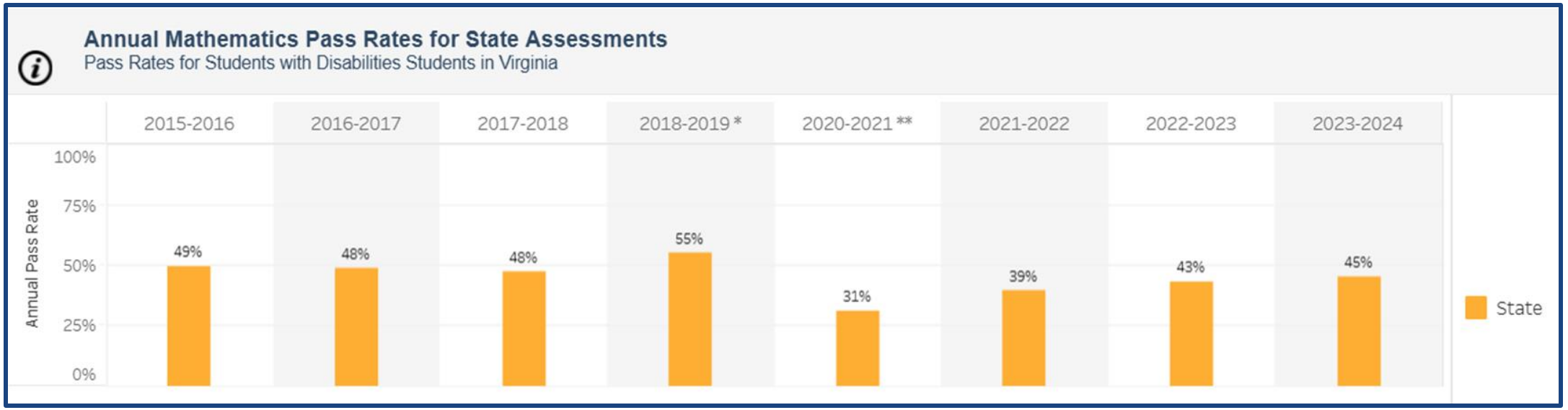



Source: Joint Legislative Audit & Review Commission (JLARC) analysis of Virginia Department of Education data, 2015-2016 to 2021-2022.

# Impact on Learning



# Evaluation Results of Coordination and Delivery of Services

- Completed for DARS through the Washington State University.
- Continue existing efforts to develop local, regional, and statewide capacity to improve the coordination and delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).
- Improve the statewide availability, accessibility, coordination, and quality of Pre-ETS with an emphasis on work-based learning.
- Increase the number of individual and shared professional development opportunities to enhance the knowledge and partnerships between service providers.

# Statewide Transition Plan

- Developed in response to the JLARC report:
  - Provide training on transition infrastructure development.
  - Implementation of best practices supporting transition.
  - Partner with agencies to provide training and resources to build awareness of and knowledge about transition planning and services.
  - Training and technical assistance for school counselors in understanding transition services.

# Collaboration Begins

# Virginia DCDT Pre-Conference 2023

- Goal: Collaborative professional learning
- Supporting Agencies:
  - VDOE
  - DARS
  - Virginia Division on Career Development and Transition (VADCDT)
- Target Audience:
  - VR Counselors
  - Educators
- Consisted of a panel discussion with all stakeholders.

# Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors and Teacher Cross Training

- Focus: Increase stakeholder capacity
- Supporting Agencies: VDOE, DARS, CTI, and TTAC
- Target Audience: 43 school divisions, 78 teachers
- Action Steps:
  - IEP development training for VR counselors
  - Pre-ETS and VR training for teachers
  - Family engagement and secondary transition
  - Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) Program Process
  - Panel discussion with VDOE, DARS, and PPD
  - VCU Field Operations
  - Tour of Willson Workforce Rehabilitation Center

# Secondary Transition Content Academy

- Goal: Increase the use of the Standard Diploma
- Supporting Agencies:
  - VDOE
  - DARS
  - TTACs
  - WWRC
  - RU
- Audience:
  - Transition Leaders
  - Educators
  - Administrators

# Content Teaching Academy

Desired Outcomes:

- Develop an understanding of the Tree of Influence and the relationship among indicators.
- Develop an understanding the components of compliance Indicator 13 and its importance in IEP development.
- The role of DARS in providing Pre-ETS and VR services.
- Tour of Wilson Workforce Rehabilitation Center.

# Staying the Course to a Standard Diploma

- Goal: Increasing the Use of the Standard Diploma
- Supporting Agencies:
  - VDOE
  - DARS
  - Virginia TTACs
- Audience:
  - Special Education Directors
  - School Division Administrators
  - Transition Leaders

# Desired Outcomes for Staying the Course to a Standard Diploma

- Objectives:
  - Review of division graduation and indicator data
  - Training in Career and Academic Plan Development
  - Develop a collaborative relationship with school counselors as part of transition planning and services
- Importance of DARS involvement:
  - Support during the IEP meeting
  - Funding source
  - Pre-ETS counselor support
  - Work-based learning opportunities
  - VR support

# VDOE-Sponsored Academies: Growing Our Own

# Aspiring Special Education Leaders Academy (ASELA)

- Goal: To assist school divisions with succession planning
- Supporting Agencies:
  - NTACT-C
  - VDOE
  - CTI
  - TTACs
  - DARS
- Target Audience:
  - Educators aspiring to be leaders

# Purpose of ASELA

- The academy is designed for educators who aspire to be in a leadership position and who are not currently a director of special education.
- Individuals must be nominated and complete an application to be considered for selection into this Academy.
- A year-long program which includes workshops, seminars, observations, assignments, and field experiences.

# Application and Acceptance Process

- One application per school division, state-operated program, regional program, and training/technical assistance center may be submitted.
- The application must be submitted through their director of special education to the division superintendent's office.
- Candidates for ASELA may include administrators holding entry-level positions, teachers, student services staff members, and related services staff members who have demonstrated leadership.
- All candidates must possess at least a master's degree or be near completion of such and be endorsed by their director of special education and division superintendent or designee.

# Statewide Transition Leaders Academy (STLA)

- Purpose: To increase the capacity of those leading secondary transition
- Supporting Agencies:
  - VDOE
  - CTI
  - NTACT-C
  - TTAC
  - DARS
- Target Audience:
  - Division-level transition specialist

# Processes and Procedures of STLA

- Provide professional learning to one transition leader per school division so they may lead transition efforts.
- One cohort every three years that includes 32 school divisions each cohort.
- New school division representative each year.
- Commence two days each month.
- Training provided on all aspects of leadership, transition, High Leverage Practices, and Specially Designed Instruction.

# STLA and DARS Cross Training

- Cross Training with DARS and 32 School Divisions:
  - Lead by NTACT-C
  - DARS VR counselors and their assigned division were paired
  - Allotted collaborative planning time
  - Developed next steps to best serve their unique populations

- Division-Level Collaborations:
  - Start on Success
  - Project Search
  - Discovering Me – Student leads IEP Meetings

# TTAC and DARS Collaborative Efforts

- James Madison University
  - Community of Practice collaboration with CTI and DARS to increase Pre-ETS capacity
  - Community Mapping Event
  - DARS presentation during Transition Fairs at local schools
- William and Mary
  - Hosted information tables at “Intelligent Lives” movie screening
  - Presented to DARS VR counselors to build capacity and awareness as they engage with all stakeholders

# Examples of TTAC and DARS Collaborative Efforts

- Virginia Commonwealth University
  - Include WWRC and DARS in special presentation on Pre-ETS
  - Assist with connecting DARS counselors with specific school divisions

- Radford University
  - Partnered with DARS on the *CREATE* and *Ambitious Postsecondary Transition* events designed to support transition leaders in local divisions

# DARS Interagency Service Delivery Model

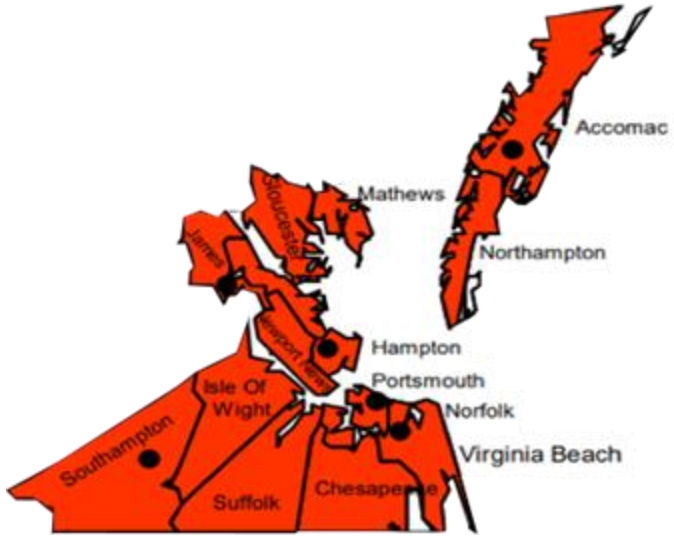
- Three-year project rollout across six DARS districts
- Pilots an interagency approach to enhance communication and collaboration of service
- Provides professional development and technical assistance
- Development of a Pre-ETS sequencing guide, Provider Work-Based Learning course, Model Best Practices Resource, and an online resource hub (preets.org)

# Partners in Collaboration

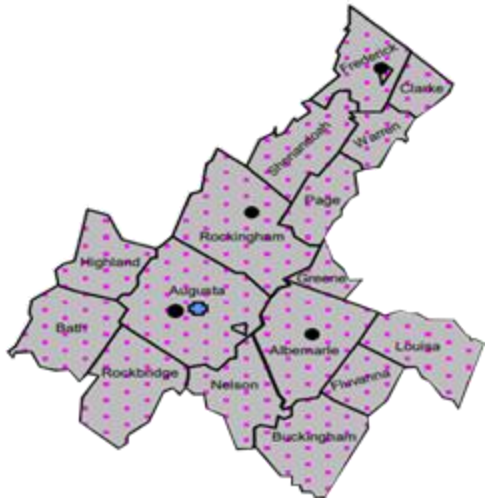
**School Division**
Lead agency responsible for ensuring students, families, and case managers are informed of services and supports available through VR.

**Vocational Rehabilitation**
Lead agency responsible for that determining eligibility for Pre-ETS and VR services and ensuring their effective delivery.

# Division Implementation 2023-2024




- Gloucester County Public Schools
- Hampton City Public Schools




- Fluvanna County Public Schools
- Albemarle County Public Schools

# DARS Data Collection

Focus Groups

Needs Assessment

Wider Collaboration

# Partners in Collaboration

- Albemarle County
  - The number of students receiving services has **increased by 50%** in both schools.
- Fluvanna County
  - Pre-ETS services has **increased by 20% to 30%, including 31 new Work-Based Learning Experiences, 30 PEERS, and 36 enrolled in the ACE course**.
- Hampton City
  - The number of students receiving Pre-ETS Services has increased by **380.71%** since 2023-2024, growing from **52 to 250 students**.
- Gloucester County
  - **37% increase** in Pre-ETS is expected for Spring and Summer 2025, tripling Pre-ETS offerings from 2023 to 2024.

# Pre-ETS Resource Hub

**For more information, visit [preets.vcurrtc.org](preets.vcurrtc.org)**

# Resources for Administrators

- National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT:C)
- Taxonomy for Transition Programming 2.0
- Predictor Self-Assessment-Instructions and Action Planning Guide
- Predictor Implementation School/District Self-Assessment (PISA)
- Predictors of Post-School Success
- VDOE: Special Education for Families
- Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC)

# Resources for Administrators

Tree_of_Influence.pdf

High-Leverage Practices | High-Leverage Practices

IRIS Evidence Based Practices

Critical Decision Points | Virginia Department of Education

Graduation | Virginia Department of Education

Leadership Academies | Virginia Department of Education

# Contact Information

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- VCU's Center on Transition Innovations
  - Kendel St John: Transition Training Associate
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# Questions