

Goal 1: Improve and strengthen local school districts and the early childhood care and education (ECCE) system, to prepare all students with the knowledge and skills they need for a rewarding life and career.

The early childhood care and education and K-12 education systems are foundational for preparing our children to be individuals who can thrive in their working life and as members of our communities. These systems are also key elements that enable caregivers to participate in the workforce and can help to retain and attract individuals and families in the region. A skilled workforce and quality educational institutions are in turn important considerations for the business community; additional aspects of workforce development are covered in the Workforce Development Goal (#2) below.

Strategy 1.1 Support efforts to ensure children from birth to age five have access to affordable, quality childcare.

Actions	Prospective Partners
A. Track and share data with regional partners on kindergarten readiness, and on childcare program availability (overall provision in the region, geographic gaps, affordability issues, etc.).	Thrive Birth to Five (TB5), PlanRVA, Community Stakeholders (e.g., Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF)).
B. Compile data and information that could support employers considering providing daycare or partnering with daycare providers or considering benefits that provide subsidies or scholarships. Consider seeking funding for a pilot program.	TB5, Community Stakeholders, PlanRVA, Employers.
C. Work with localities to create resource guides; consider existing regulations and policies that impact childcare providers (zoning requirements, Comprehensive Plans, etc.).	Localities, PlanRVA, TB5, Community Stakeholders.
D. To reduce the ECCE workforce shortage, share information on the low wages issue and investigate solutions.	TB5, Community Stakeholders (e.g., VECF).
E. Support state or regional investigation of approaches used in other states that may be feasible, such as locality-option childcare center property tax credits, or the Michigan Tri-Share Program.	TB5, PlanRVA, Community Stakeholders (e.g., VECF).



Project of Note: In FY26, Thrive Birth to Five is working with Reinvestment Fund on an *Early Childhood Care and Education Gap Analysis*.

Strategy 1.2. Encourage school district investments in programs and curricula that prepare students for success, and community investment in wrap-around services to support students.

Actions	Prospective Partners
A. Support the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing (CCAM) as it serves as our region's coordinating entity for the GO TEC program, a talent pathway initiative that introduces middle school teachers to strategic technology and engineering sectors.	Commonwealth Center for Advanced Manufacturing (CCAM), GO Virginia, School Districts, Localities.
B. Support and encourage investment in after-school and summer programs.	School Districts, Localities, Community Stakeholders (e.g., YMCA, NextUP RVA).

Strategy 1.3. Encourage expansion of secondary school (middle/high school) Career and Technical Education (CTE) and dual degree program opportunities.

Actions	Prospective Partners
A. Compile and share regional CTE offerings. In coordination with other efforts listed in the Workforce Goal, consider whether additional analysis is needed to determine gaps and possible strategies for adding capacity.	ChamberRVA, CCWA, PlanRVA, School Districts, Localities, Community Stakeholders.
B. Investigate funding through GO Virginia or other sources for implementation.	PlanRVA, Localities, Industry employers

Strategy 1.4. Provide information and opportunities for middle and high school students to learn about regional career options and entrepreneurship.

Actions	Prospective Partners
A. Consider regional collaboration on internship programs for high school students (e.g. ChamberRVA V-Top program, Partnership for the Future Program).	ChamberRVA, School Districts, Community Stakeholders, Non-Profits
B. Support Mission Tomorrow and other similar programs.	ChamberRVA, Community Stakeholders.
C. Share information and collaborate with high school career services staff and counselors.	ChamberRVA, CCWA, Community Stakeholders, Localities, School Districts.