Commonwealth to Observe “School Readiness Month” in August
Virginia Early Childhood Foundation Shares Ten Tips for Families

Richmond, VA (August 2011) – The first day of school for the 2011-2012 academic year is just around the corner and the workforce of the mid-2020s is busy getting ready to start kindergarten. In recognition of the Commonwealth’s commitment to early childhood initiatives as the foundation for success in school and in life, Governor Bob McDonnell has proclaimed August as “School Readiness Month” in Virginia.

“The first five years are a once in a lifetime opportunity to make a positive and long-lasting impact on a young child’s school preparedness,” said Scott Hippert, President of the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation.

“It’s an unfortunate fact that about one in five children in Virginia start kindergarten without the necessary skill-set required for this structured learning environment,” he said. “School Readiness Month will focus attention on the importance of providing the next generation of workers with a smart beginning in the early years, which is essential to their success and to Virginia’s economic prosperity.”

During “School Readiness Month,” families can help their young children prepare for success in the classroom, whether that’s in a daycare, preschool or elementary school setting.

Some school readiness tips from the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation include:

1. Adjust bedtimes so that children will have enough sleep for those early-morning wakeup calls and enough time to eat a nutritious breakfast.
2. Contact the local school board for more information on registering a child for kindergarten if you haven’t already done so.
3. Call your school to see if there are opportunities for you and your child to take a tour or meet the teacher before the first day of school; ask if there are any supplies that your child should bring on the first day.
4. If your child will ride a school bus, contact the school to get the bus number, route and schedule in advance.
5. Make appointments for medical checkups; a health exam is required. If additional screenings and/or immunizations are identified, make any necessary appointments.
6. Encourage young children to have listening ears, walking feet and inside voices when they’re in a group setting; also, praise children when they follow directions, take turns and treat others with respect. This behavior is expected in a classroom.

7. Read aloud to young children every day, especially books with rhymes and big colorful pictures, which are favorites of preschoolers.

8. Play simple-yet-instructional games with young children. For example, “Go Fish” improves number recognition and Candyland helps children identify colors, which are important school readiness skills.

9. Plan fun family outings to provide young children with enriching school readiness experiences, such as visits to the library, the local petting zoo and the park.

10. Talk to your child about what to expect on the first day to make the transition easier; share your excitement about this new adventure.

NOTE TO FAMILIES: To get answers to frequently asked questions about school registration, you can dial 211 on your phone from any location in Virginia to reach “211 Virginia” and be connected to a Community Resource Specialist, or you can contact your local school division.

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About the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation: As an innovative leader in creating results-oriented initiatives and collaborative partnerships to help the Commonwealth’s young children achieve lifelong success, the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) acts as a catalyst for workforce development and economic prosperity. To learn more about the VECF and its many initiatives designed to transform future prospects for economic growth in Virginia, such as Smart Beginnings and the Virginia Star Quality Initiative, visit www.smartbeginnings.org.