

Kaine confident pre-K plan support growing

By SHAWN DAY 247-4816

November 3, 2007

York — - At a conference for elementary school principals Friday, Gov. Timothy M. Kaine praised the efforts of public school system administrators and expressed confidence in gaining support for an expansion of pre-kindergarten programs.

Kaine, speaking at the Williamsburg Marriott at Kingsmill, touted his plans to increase pre-kindergarten programming to more students in low-income families as an investment.

The plan, estimated to boost state spending on preschool from \$50 million to \$125 million, shouldn't be scrapped because weaker forecasts for state tax revenue next year could mean a tighter budget, he said.

Expanding preschool opportunities to children who qualify for free and reduced-price lunches will produce a financial return in the form of fewer students repeating grades, he said.

Kaine said that every year, about 50,000 children repeat a grade, costing the state close to \$400 million.

The expanded program also will help schools develop — and help students achieve — what Kaine called "standards of excellence" in academic subjects.

The three-day Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals annual conference wrapped up Friday.

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