
Virginia Department of Education

VIRGINIA STATE LITERACY PLAN

*Developed under the U.S. Department of Education
Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program*

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VIRGINIA STATE LITERACY PLAN

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) applied for and received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USED) in November 2010 under the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) project to develop a state literacy plan that would address the literacy needs of children from birth to grade 12. As required by the USED grant, the VDOE assembled a State Literacy Committee (SLC) to undertake this work. The SLC has 29 members who represent several state-level agencies, state universities, school divisions, and local schools (see Appendix B). To guide its work, the SLC created the following goal:

The goal of the Virginia State Literacy Plan is to ensure that all children have the necessary skills to become successful readers, writers, speakers, and listeners with the critical thinking skills that are required to be successful as they progress and transition through the stages of their lives from birth through high school graduation.

The SLC and a Steering Committee met several times between October 29, 2010, and January 31, 2011, to develop the Virginia State Literacy Plan by the February 1, 2011, deadline. The results of these meetings are in Section 2 and include literacy-related initiatives and programs currently in place, areas for improvement, and improvement goals to address identified needs.

Shared Goals and Objectives for Literacy

The missions, goals and services of several state agencies, foundations and advisory councils are central to Virginia's State Literacy Plan. These include the Board of Education, the VDOE, the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), the Library of Virginia, and the Virginia Early Childhood Advisory Council. These entities have many shared priorities related to education and literacy, as shown on the following pages.

Literacy-related Mission Statements, Goals and Objectives

	Board of Education Comprehensive Plan (2007-2012)	VDOE Strategic Plan (2010-2012)	Virginia Early Childhood Advisory Council & Smart Beginnings Initiative	VDSS Strategic Plan (2008-2013) & Head Start Goals (2008-2009)	Library of Virginia Strategic Plan (2008-2012)
Mission	Set education policy and provide leadership that improves the achievement of all students by advocating for effective programs that address individual and diverse learning needs of students, establishes high standards and has high expectations for learning, measures student performance, provides accountability to the public, and promotes a culture of lifelong learning.	Lead and facilitate the development and implementation of a quality public education system that meets the needs of students and assists them in becoming educated, productive and responsible citizens.	Promote the development of a coordinated, comprehensive, sustainable early childhood system that achieves positive outcomes for young children and families, promoting positive early development and a strong foundation for success in school and life.	People helping people triumph over poverty, abuse, and neglect to shape strong futures for themselves, their families and communities. (VDSS) Head Start promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services to children and families. (VA Head Start Association)	Preserve the legacy of Virginia's culture and history and provide access to the most comprehensive information resources for and about Virginia.
Goals and Objectives related to:					
Standards	Continue to enhance the quality standards for all public schools in Virginia.	Improve the quality standards for all public schools in Virginia.	Ensure accountability with program standards and measurement mechanisms to track identified outcome indicators.		
Preparation and Professional Development of Educators	Establish policies and standards that enhance the preparation, recruitment, and retention of educational personnel, including their meaningful, ongoing professional development.	Continue efforts to enhance the training, recruitment, and retention of highly qualified teachers, educational support personnel, and administrators, with a focus on the needs of “hard to staff” schools.	Promote a high-quality work force providing services for young children and families.		

	Board of Education Comprehensive Plan (2007-2012)	VDOE Strategic Plan (2010-2012)	Virginia Early Childhood Advisory Council & Smart Beginnings Initiative	VDSS Strategic Plan (2008-2013) & Head Start Goals (2008-2009)	Library of Virginia Strategic Plan (2008-2012)
		Ensure meaningful, ongoing professional development for professional educational personnel.			
Child Development and Student Achievement	<p>Provide leadership to help schools and school divisions eliminate the achievement gap between groups of students and increase the academic success of all students.</p> <p>Establish policies that support the attainment of literacy skills of all students, kindergarten through grade 12.</p>	<p>Provide leadership to help schools and school divisions close the achievement gap and increase the academic success of all students.</p> <p>Assist teachers to improve the reading skills of all students, kindergarten through grade 12.</p>	<p>Improve the quality of early care and education programs.</p> <p>Expand availability and access to high-quality early care and education programs.</p>	<p>Head Start Goals:</p> <p>Work cooperatively with partners to help ensure that young children are ready for school.</p> <p>Establish and nurture partnerships and collaborative efforts to build an effective early care and education system committed to achieving positive outcomes for children.</p>	<p>All Virginia youth will experience improved traditional and technological library services and programs that are targeted to enhance academic performance and to develop the strong information literacy skills necessary for the digital age.</p> <p>The annual statewide summer reading program will expand by developing partnerships with agencies serving children with disabilities and with public schools, especially those with high percentages of children receiving free and reduced-price lunches.</p>

SECTION 2: VIRGINIA STATE LITERACY PLAN

A. Literacy Support from Birth to Grade 12: Existing Initiatives and Programs

There are several statewide systems in place that form the foundation for Virginia’s State Literacy Plan and address the educational needs of children from birth through grade 12. The charts on the following pages provide an overall picture of the current statewide systems, services, assessments, and support for literacy provided by the VDOE, VDSS, and their partner agencies and organizations. This overall picture is meant to be a comprehensive listing of statewide programs supporting literacy but not an all inclusive list. Descriptions of all the initiatives and programs listed in the charts are available in Section 3. These initiatives and programs provide a structure for the Virginia State Literacy Plan, which contains the following components:

- Standards;
- Instruction and Interventions;
- Assessment Systems;
- Teacher Preparation and Licensure;
- Professional Development; and
- Data Systems.

Chart 1 lists the current initiatives and programs on the left with a note in the corresponding columns to the right indicating the grades, ages, and/or student groups served across the birth through grade 12 spectrum. Chart 2 displays the same initiatives and programs across the grades and age groups, showing how they align and provide continuity as children move from one stage of life to another.

In both charts, all student groups are served within the grade or age range listed, unless otherwise noted (e.g., “SWD” denotes services specifically for students with disabilities). For the purposes of this framework, “student groups” are defined as those under the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, as follows: racial and ethnic groups (Asian, Black, Hispanic, White, Other), limited English proficient students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students. The following abbreviations are used in the charts:

ELP = English Language Proficiency
LEP = Limited English Proficient
PreK = Prekindergarten
SWD = Students with Disabilities

Any acronyms or abbreviations not listed above are explained in Section 3 with the description of the programs.

Chart 1. Virginia State Literacy Plan: Components and State Initiatives

	Standards	Instruction & Interventions	Assessment Systems	Teacher Preparation & Licensure	Professional Development	Data Systems
	Grades, Ages and/or Student Groups (Birth through Grade 12)					
Early & Head Start Program Standards	Infant-PreK					
Foundation Blocks for Early Learning	PreK					
<i>English Standards of Learning (SOL)</i> and Curriculum Framework	K-12	K-12				
<i>English SOL</i> Assessments			3-8, and EOC			
College & Career Readiness	6-12	6-12			12	
Academic and Career Plan		6-12				
School Accreditation Standards	K-12					
World Class International Design and Assessment (WIDA) ELP Standards	PreK-12 LEP					
WIDA Assessing Comprehension & Communication in English, & Professional Development			K-12 LEP		K-12 LEP	
Project Graduation	9-12	9-12				
Professional Practice of Teachers	K-12					
Content Literacy Continuum		6-12			6-12	
Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI)		K-3	K-3		K-3	
Early Reading First		PreK				
Even Start Family Literacy		Birth-8 years				
Response to Intervention		K-12	K-12		K-12	
Strategic Instruction Model		6-12			6-12	
Striving Readers		6-8				
Child Observation Record			Infant-PreK			
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test & Expressive Vocabulary Test			PreK			
Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), Professional Development & Database			PreK-3		K-3	PreK-3
VA Alternate Assessment			3-EOC SWD			
VA Grade Level Assessment			3-8 SWD			
VA Substitute Evaluation Program			8-EOC SWD			
Licensure Requirements				PreK-12		
Professional Development Toolkit for Beginning Teachers					K-12	
Sheltered Instruction Observation Program					K-12 LEP	
Training/Technical Assistance Centers (T/TAC)					PreK-12 SWD	
Child Hands						PreK-K
Educational Information Management System (EIMS)						K-12

Key: EOC = End-of-course

As described earlier, Chart 2 displays the current literacy programs and initiatives and how they align across the grades and age groups of children from birth through grade 12.

Chart 2. Virginia State Literacy Plan: Alignment of Plan Components across Grades

Alignment and Transitions Across Grades				
	Early Childhood (Infant/Toddler - PreK)	Elementary (Grades K-5)	Middle & Junior High (Grades 6-8)	Senior High (Grades 9-12)
Plan Components				
Standards	Foundation Blocks			
	Early Head Start & Head Start			
	World Class International Design and Assessment ELP			
		English SOL and Curriculum Framework		
		Professional Practice of Teachers		
		School Accreditation		
		College & Career Readiness		
Instruction & Interventions	Early Reading First			
	Even Start (Birth-8 years old / grade 3)			
		Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) (K-3)		
		Response to Intervention		
		Curriculum Framework for English SOL		
			Content Literacy Continuum	
			Strategic Instruction Model	
			Striving Readers	
			Project Graduation	
Assessment Systems	Child Observation Record			
	Peabody Picture & Expressive Vocabulary Tests			
	EIRI / Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) (PreK-3)			
		English SOL Assessments (3-8 and End-of-Course)		
		VA Alternate Assessment (3-End-of-Course)		
		VA Grade Level Assessment (3-8)		
		VA Substitute Evaluation Program (8-End-of-Course)		
	World Class International Design and Assessment			
Teacher Preparation & Licensure	Licensure requirements (PreK-12)			
Professional Development	Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (K-3)			
		Professional Development Toolkit for Beginning Teachers		
		Sheltered Instruction Observation Program		
	Training/Technical Assistance Centers			
	World Class International Design and Assessment			
Data Systems	Child Hands			
	PALS Database (PreK-3)			
		Educational Information Management System		

B. Goals for Improvement

Virginia is proud of its educational accomplishments while, at the same time, recognizing that there are always unmet needs and improvements to be made. Among the needs identified by the Board of Education in its annual report, the following will be addressed in the State Literacy Plan goals for improvement.

- Addressing student needs in light of a persistent poverty rate that exists for children and families, which makes these children more likely to be unprepared for kindergarten, fall behind in grade school, or drop out of high school.
- Maintaining emphasis on quality programs for at-risk four-year-olds across the state in an era of reduced resources.
- Providing programs that address the increase in immigrant students – a large proportion of whom are also poor – who are more likely than others to drop out or leave school without the skills needed in a global marketplace.
- Eliminating gaps in graduation rates and student achievement, although improving, persist among Virginia’s African-American and Hispanic students and their white and Asian counterparts.
- Creating new resources for professional development that put usable information into the hands of those directly responsible for students’ learning.
(Virginia Board of Education, 2009 Annual Report on the Condition and Needs of Public Schools in Virginia, November 17, 2009).

Many improvement plans or activities that relate to the State Literacy Plan components are already in progress. For example, literacy-related **standards** have been updated with the revised *English SOL* (approved by the Board of Education in January 2010). Virginia will implement new *English SOL* assessments based on these more rigorous standards in 2013. Language and literacy **assessments** for English language learners (prekindergarten through third) are being expanded through the development of PALS Español. For **professional development**, Virginia’s comprehensive Teacher Equity Plan has been implemented since 2006, and for statewide **data systems**, the Educational Information Management System (EIMS) is being enhanced and expanded. To further improve systems and services for families with **children birth to age five**, the Smart Beginnings program has adopted a comprehensive improvement plan with goals, objectives, and expected outcomes in five areas: governance and financing, parent support and education, early care and education, health, and public engagement. This plan is being implemented by the VDSS Office of Early Childhood Development and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and is part of the Virginia State Literacy Plan improvement efforts.

The State Literacy Committee identified several new areas for improvement across the plan components and also generated many suggestions for potential improvement strategies. One area that emerged was **communication**. Communicating the goal of the State Literacy Plan is extremely important for its success and a unifying feature for all the suggested improvements. Related to the issue of communication, one pervasive suggestion for a means of achieving improvement goals was to develop a Web portal (Web portals contain all the features of typical Web sites but have a superior structure for searching and accessing information, including tools users can use to customize their requests, and services such as online messaging.). **Web portals** were recommended as a primary mechanism for disseminating information and resources, providing education degree

coursework, delivering professional development and, in general, enhancing all levels of communication and access. For that reason, it is understood to be a key part of the suggested improvement strategies without being described repeatedly in this section.

While more work needs to be done to refine and agree upon which improvement goals and strategies will be pursued, the charts on the following pages display the key ideas proposed by the State Literacy Committee. They are organized by the following categories:

- Communication and Alignment;
- Teacher Preparation and Licensure;
- Professional Development (PD);
- Instruction and Interventions; and
- Assessment Systems.

A description of any programs or services referenced by acronyms can be found in Section 3.

COMMUNICATION AND ALIGNMENT

Improvement Goals	Examples of Strategies
<p>1. Provide leadership from the state level for communicating information about and priorities for literacy across the PreK-12 spectrum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the State Literacy Plan goal (on page 1) to convey the message that focusing on literacy is a broad-based effort that encompasses all existing programming. • Give the goal and plan an “identity” (e.g., with a tagline or logo) and high visibility. • Use the State Literacy Plan as a vehicle for collecting and sharing information, and make the plan a “living document” (i.e., keep it up-to-date). • Create one or more Web portals as the primary mechanism to accomplish communication and information sharing.
<p>2. Improve communication and alignment of literacy-related priorities with key partner agencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the literacy goal and message with partner agencies and community organizations to build support for literacy and literacy-related activities especially among programs that provide family literacy, parent involvement, afterschool, and academic enrichment services. • Use the State Literacy Plan to inform public and private PreK providers about the goals of the Smart Beginnings initiative and expectations for high-quality services for early care and education. • Improve communication with institutions of higher education to create a stronger connection among research, training, and practice.
<p>3. Improve alignment of state, school division, and school-level literacy plans to create a comprehensive approach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve internal communication at the state level to enhance alignment of priorities, programs, partnerships, and use of resources. • Conduct a state-level needs assessment related to literacy priorities and examine allocation of existing resources. • Create a process and tools (e.g., plan template, needs assessment) to help stakeholders develop and align plans across PreK-12 funding streams and requirements (e.g., Title I, Title III, school improvement). • Assist school divisions in using the planning tools and analyzing student data and existing supports to develop school improvement plans that target student needs and maximize the use of existing resources.

TEACHER PREPARATION AND LICENSURE

Improvement Goals	Examples of Strategies
<p>1. Require coursework in literacy for teaching endorsement licensure requirements that addresses all student levels and content areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a literacy course for all educators, including administrators, that provides a common language and understanding of the continuum of literacy skills. • Develop content area reading courses (e.g., mathematics literacy, science literacy) to complement the “common” literacy course. • Revise competencies and licensure regulations to include the common literacy course and applicable content area course(s).
<p>2. Add an emphasis on cognitive and oral language development to PreK teaching endorsement requirements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review competencies for PreK-3 and PreK-6 teaching endorsement requirements to ensure a focus on oral language as part of literacy development. • Provide literacy-related strategies specifically addressing the needs of preschoolers in coursework for PreK-3 and PreK-6 teaching endorsement requirements.
<p>3. Improve partnerships between school divisions and colleges/universities to enhance preservice preparation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the relationship between college/university programs and school sites used for student teaching to enhance mentoring of student teachers and new teachers. • Provide ongoing professional development to supervising teachers who support preservice teachers to ensure that they have current information on best practices in literacy.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Improvement Goals	Examples of Strategies
<p>1. Ensure that professional development related to literacy is targeted to meet the needs of administrators, teachers, and students, and is accessible to all school staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extend the literacy focus across all ages/grades, teachers and content areas, as appropriate to meet student needs and related teaching strategies (e.g., instructional and comprehension strategies for adolescent literacy). ● Support ongoing communication among providers to enhance use of existing professional development systems and resources, and redesign/align professional development efforts, where necessary. ● Enhance professional development resources by expanding selected materials (e.g., the Toolkit for Beginning Teachers), adding materials from other programs (e.g., reading comprehension videos), and making everything accessible via a Web portal.
<p>2. Ensure that professional development related to literacy is research-based, job-embedded, ongoing, and includes coaching and mentoring.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highlight the importance of research-based professional development and other criteria for high-quality professional development. ● Assist divisions and schools with scheduling time for embedded professional development throughout the year at the building level. ● Define roles of embedded professional development providers (e.g., literacy coach versus reading specialist for PreK-12) to improve support for teachers and students. ● Identify or develop guidelines for a coaching model for use throughout the state. ● Include a focus on literacy in the current mandated mentoring for first-year teachers. ● Identify schools with high reading achievement results to be used as model schools.
<p>3. Build division and school capacity for providing professional development related to literacy, and decrease dependence on outside providers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide more train-the-trainer and turn-key training for school divisions. ● Identify “model schools” within school divisions, grouped by similar demographics, which can serve as training hubs for delivering professional development and disseminating best practices.

INSTRUCTION AND INTERVENTIONS

Improvement Goals	Examples of Strategies
<p>1. Promote a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction across grades and subjects at the school level that emphasizes the essential components of reading and writing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emphasize the importance of research-based, high-quality instruction for all programs of study (general academic, advanced, and career and technical education) and its relationship to outcomes for all students. ● Encourage schools to establish Literacy Teams to develop and oversee plans that are inclusive, streamlined, data-driven, and include progress monitoring and accountability measures. ● Include school librarians on Literacy Teams and in schoolwide literacy improvement plans. ● Identify, collect, and provide a myriad of instructional resources, via a Web portal, that are organized to maximize ease of navigation and usefulness (e.g., include a guide and menus categorizing the resources in a logical, user-friendly way).
<p>2. Improve how reading specialists, literacy coaches, and librarians are used for both teacher support and student interventions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage divisions and schools to create staffing plans that address the need for and best use of specialists. ● Promote using reading specialists and literacy coaches to enhance the skills of classroom teachers through mentoring, modeling, and training in the use of effective instructional strategies. ● Promote using librarians to assist teachers and students with choosing materials/resources related to curricular and learning needs and training in media and information literacy skills.
<p>3. Expand initiatives and evidence-based models throughout the state to address the individual learning needs of and instructional approaches for all students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourage school divisions to implement comprehensive models (such as Response to Intervention, Content Literacy Continuum, Strategic Instruction Model) that provide a schoolwide, systematic approach to addressing the needs of all learners PreK-grade 12. ● Encourage school divisions to align intervention plans and reallocate, as necessary, existing services and funding to ensure that appropriate interventions are available to all students from PreK through grade 12. ● Identify interventions that address the literacy needs of struggling adolescents, especially at the high school level.
<p>4. Ensure that digital literacy is woven throughout curriculum and instruction for all programs of study.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highlight how digital literacy is addressed in the 2010 <i>English SOL</i> and the Curriculum Framework. ● Use library and technology staff and resources to enhance integrating educational technology into the curriculum. ● Include digital literacy information and resources on instructional Web portal.

ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS

Improvement Goals	Examples of Strategies
<p>1. Develop statewide literacy assessments that expand upon current PALS assessments (screening, formative, and diagnostic).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seek funding to support PALS-PreK. ● Finish development of PALS Español for ELL PreK-3. ● Develop PALS assessments beyond third grade (up to sixth or eighth grade).
<p>2. Improve the sharing of student achievement data across grades, especially transitions between PreK and K, elementary to middle school, and middle to junior/senior high.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue enhancement of EIMS to allow student data to be collected, analyzed, and shared with appropriate school staff for the purpose of improving individual education plans and instruction for students.
<p>3. Enhance support for use of assessments, including professional development in designing and implementing formative assessments, interpretation of results, and use of data for instruction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote better use of existing PALS, EIRI and RtI professional development and support services for using data to identify student needs and inform instruction. ● Identify assessments that address literacy skills at the adolescent level that can be used statewide to inform intervention strategies needed and their effectiveness. ● Provide training and support for the use of adolescent literacy assessments.

C. Future Use and Development of the State Literacy Plan

The development of Virginia's State Literacy Plan is only the beginning of an effort that has a great deal of promise to deliver a strong and consistent message about the crucial role of literacy in the lives of Virginia's young citizens and the future of the Commonwealth. The SLC has outlined several steps it will take to continue to develop the plan, including steps that can be taken immediately and those that will require long-range planning and the prioritizing of goals to be pursued.

1. Identify which improvement goals and strategies can be accomplished with current funding and which would require new or additional funding. Based on this, prioritize which goals and strategies will be pursued, both in the short-term and in the long-term.
2. Continue to develop the improvement goals and strategies and distinguish activities and responsibilities by state, division, and local levels.
3. Continue to develop the State Literacy Plan by cross-referencing existing needs assessments and improvement efforts to create a plan that is both more comprehensive and focused on unmet needs.
4. Develop a template for school divisions and local schools to develop their own literacy plans similar to the State Plan, for example: (a) listing the programs they have in place; (b) identifying gaps and needs; (c) creating improvement goals and strategies.
5. Collaborate with key partner agencies to explore which literacy-related agency goals and programs can be better aligned to maximize services to constituents and effectiveness of services.
6. Inventory existing resources on VDOE and partner agency Web sites (especially professional development providers), and make suggestions for ways to enhance organization of and access to the resources.
7. Publicize and post the State Literacy Plan on the VDOE Web site.

SECTION 3: DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING LITERACY INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

This section contains descriptions of current literacy programs and initiatives that are part of and support the State Literacy Plan presented in Section 2. The Virginia Department of Education, Virginia Department of Social Services, Virginia State Library, and key agencies, organizations, and universities that partner with Virginia's state agencies provide these services and support for children from birth through grade 12. While this is not an exhaustive list, it contains a majority of state-level systems and programs related to literacy. This information is organized into the following areas: preschool, kindergarten through grade 12, standards, assessments, teacher accreditation, professional development, and data systems. Web links are provided for access to complete information on many of the initiatives and programs.

Preschool/Early Childhood Education Programs

Early Reading First (ERF). Early Reading First is a discretionary, competitive grant awarded by the United States Department of Education. The Early Reading First program supports the development of early childhood centers of excellence that focus on all areas of development, especially early language, cognitive, and pre-reading skills for children primarily from low-income families. In Virginia, Early Reading First grants have been awarded to Virginia Commonwealth University (2004, 2006 and 2008, to work with Virginia Preschool Initiative and Richmond City Public Schools Head Start), and Norfolk City Public Schools (2009). The United States Department of Education discontinued Early Reading First funding for new grantees as of 2011, so no competition will be held.

Even Start Family Literacy Program. Even Start is designed to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and low literacy for low-income families, with children ages birth through eight, through the integration of early childhood education, adult education, parent education, and interactive parent-child literacy activities. States receive formula grant funds from the USED and subsequently award competitive subgrants to LEAs or eligible public and private agencies. In 2003, there were 21 programs; due to cuts in federal funding, there were five grantees in 2010. Grantees must align their curricula with Virginia's Foundation Blocks and administer the PALS-PreK, PPVT and EVT as part of their child assessments.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/federal_programs/esea/title1/part_b/even_start/index.shtml

Office of Early Childhood Development. Established in 2008, the Office of Early Childhood Development is a joint office between VDOE and Virginia Department of Social Services and is responsible for coordinating services for children from birth to age five, including the Virginia Preschool Initiative, Head Start, childcare subsidies, provider services and other state-level efforts to advance early childhood development and learning. This interagency effort incorporates existing staff, functions, programs, and funding streams to maximize opportunities for Virginia's children to reach kindergarten prepared for school success. Through this office, Virginia's early childhood initiatives are coordinated: Smart Beginnings, the Governor's Working Group on Early Childhood Initiatives, Virginia Star Quality Initiative, the School Readiness Task Force, and others.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/index.shtml

- **State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care.** The Council promotes the development of a coordinated, comprehensive, sustainable early childhood system that achieves positive outcomes for young children and families, promoting healthy early development and a strong foundation for success in school and life. The Council is managed by the Office of Early Childhood Development and includes representatives from the following agencies: Departments of Education, Commerce and Trade, Health and Human Resources, Finance, Social Services, Behavioral Health and Rehabilitative Services, and Medical Assistance Services; Head Start State Agency and State Head Start Collaboration Project; State Council of Higher Education for Virginia; Virginia Community College System; Virginia Economic Development Partnership; Governor's Office; local early childhood providers; and the business community.
- **Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI).** Established in 1995, the VPI provides quality preschool programs for at-risk four-year-olds who are not served by Head Start programs. VPI distributes state funds to school and community-based organizations. The program currently serves over 14,000 children. Grantees must align their curricula with Virginia's Foundation Blocks and administer the PALS-PreK screening.

Virginia Head Start State Collaboration Office. This is a federally funded program administered by the Virginia Department of Social Services that creates a partnership at the State level to support the development of multiagency and public/private partnerships to help build early childhood systems, enhance access to comprehensive services for low-income children, and involve Head Start in State policies affecting low-income families.

<http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/headstart.html>

Read-A-Book Program. This is a self-study program administered by the Virginia Department of Social Services that allows early childhood professionals to earn credit for training clock hours by reading children's literature and books on early childhood education and child development. The VDSS Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Development collaborated with the Library of Virginia to place books in each of the 350 public libraries across Virginia. The Read-A-Book Program focuses on the importance of incorporating children's literature across the curriculum, reading to and with young children daily, understanding early brain development, fostering language and literacy development, and communicating successfully with young children.

<http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/readbook.cgi>

1-2-3- READ! This is a researched-based, storybook-focused curriculum developed by Child Development Resources that has been proven to result in children (birth to age 3) achieving significant, measurable gains in their language and cognitive development. 1-2-3 READ! is designed to build emergent literacy in infants and toddlers through a carefully planned set of experiences that lay the foundation for reading and writing success. The 1-2-3 READ! Virginia Early Literacy Training is a two-day course designed to assist caregivers in working with infants and toddlers in a group setting. <http://cdrhelpdesk.org/123READ/>

Virginia Early Childhood Foundation. The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation was created in late 2005, establishing a strong platform in the private sector to champion the Commonwealth's focus on investment in early childhood development. The Foundation's mission is to provide leadership and foster Smart Beginnings for all young children in Virginia and through them, a vital future for the Commonwealth. Serving as a lever for state-to-local interaction, the Foundation

provides grants, training and technical assistance to local and regional coalitions focused on early childhood systems that support delivery of a continuum of high-quality services for children and families at the local level. The Foundation also collaborates with state government, the business community, parents, and early childhood leaders to implement long-term strategies for improving school readiness for Virginia's children ages birth to five. <http://www.vecf.org/>

- **Smart Beginnings Coalitions.** In partnership with the Office of Early Childhood Development, the Foundation works to spearhead efforts relating to the Smart Beginnings strategic plan to improve, integrate, and evaluate all early childhood services, infrastructure, and public engagement efforts in Virginia. The goal of the Smart Beginnings initiative is to improve school-readiness for all children ages birth to 5. The Foundation supports four types of competitive grants, based on available resources, and currently provides funding for 31 grantees. <http://www.smartbeginnings.org/>
- **Virginia Star Quality Initiative.** The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation serves as the hub for the Virginia Star Quality Initiative, the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The QRIS has been piloted in public and private preschool programs in over 13 communities, with approximately 150 programs and 350 classrooms. In the second pilot year, 2008-2009, 10,000 children in center-based programs participated in this initiative.

Virginia Early Head Start Programs. Created in 1995, Early Head Start is a federally funded community-based program for low-income families with infants and toddlers (birth to three) and pregnant women. Its mission is: to promote healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, to enhance the development of very young children, and to promote healthy family functioning. Currently in Virginia, there are 11 Early Head Start programs throughout the state.

Virginia Head Start Programs. Head Start is a national, federally-funded child development program for children from birth to age five. Head Start provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition, dental, mental health, social services and parent involvement opportunities to low-income children and their families. Currently in Virginia, there are 48 Head Start programs. For all Early Head Start and Head Start program sites combined, there are 758 classrooms serving 15,673 children. <http://www.headstartva.org/>

Library of Virginia Reading Programs. The Library of Virginia works collaboratively with state organizations to promote library services and the love of reading to children and young adults. The Library has supported reading programs since 1982 with funding from the Institute for Museum and Library Services and the Library of Virginia Foundation.

<http://www.lva.virginia.gov/lib-edu/LDND/youth-services/>

State library programs include the following:

- **Every Child Ready to Read @ your library.** This Early Literacy initiative is a joint project of the Public Library Association and the Association for Library Service to Children, both divisions of the American Library Association. This initiative has been embraced by the Library of Virginia and Virginia's public libraries. The six early literacy skills are incorporated into infant, toddler and preschool storytimes that are offered by public libraries throughout the year.
- **Winter Reading Program.** This annual read aloud program was developed for families and young children to be used by public libraries throughout Virginia. It incorporates the Virginia Department of Social Services Milestones in Childhood Development, as well as the six early literacy skills in the Every Child Ready to Read program.

- **Early Literacy Training.** “Early Literacy and Books: Making the Connection” is a four-week, online training course that teaches library staff about the six early literacy skills. “Early Literacy Enhanced Storytimes” is a follow-up four-week course that teaches library staff how to include the early literacy skills into library programs.
- **Early Literacy Activity Centers.** Making the library welcoming to the youngest citizens and providing materials to develop early literacy skills is the goal of the Library of Virginia’s Early Literacy Activity Center program. Each Early Literacy Activity Center contains educational and manipulative items for parents or caregivers to use to enhance the library experience and to teach early reading skills through play. By the end of 2011, at least 70 early literacy activity centers will be placed in public libraries.

Elementary School Programs and Initiatives

Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI). Established in 1997, the EIRI is designed to reduce significantly the number of children with reading problems through early diagnosis and immediate intervention. As a result of the intervention services, the essential reading skills of the identified students will be improved by the end of each grade level, kindergarten through third grade. Funding is provided for the development and implementation of assessment instruments (PALS), and for intervention services for those students needing additional instruction.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/english/elementary/reading/early_intervention_reading.shtml

Virginia Response to Intervention (RtI) Initiative. Launched in 2007, RtI is a comprehensive student-centered assessment and intervention model used to identify and address individual student difficulties before referral to special education. VDOE offered RtI Institutes (statewide training sessions) open to all school divisions from 2007 to 2009. There are 16 pilot schools located in: Alleghany County, Augusta County, Bath County, Gloucester County, Loudoun County, Manassas Park City, Martinsville City, Mecklenburg County, Northampton County, Portsmouth City, Prince Edward County, Prince William County, Pulaski County, Shenandoah County, and Smyth County. School divisions must apply to VDOE to participate in the pilot.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/response_intervention/index.shtml

Secondary School Programs and Initiatives

Content Literacy Continuum (CLC). In 2004, VDOE was awarded a competitive State Personnel Development Grant from the USED Office of Special Education. One of the project’s activities was implementation of the CLC. The CLC is a coordinated and aligned schoolwide approach to improve literacy for all students in secondary schools using a five-level model incorporating the research-validated Strategic Instruction Model (SIM). In partnership with the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, VDOE established two demonstration sites in Botetourt County and Hanover County, and 14 regional CLC sites.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/content_literacy_continuum/index.shtml

Strategic Instruction Model (SIM). SIM is a research-validated adolescent literacy model to promote effective teaching and learning of critical content in schools. Through the Training/Technical Assistance Centers (T/TAC), the SIM project provides coordinated statewide professional development targeted to general and special education teachers in middle and high

school. SIM is funded by the State Personnel Development Grant.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/content_literacy_continuum/index.shtml

Striving Readers. VDOE won a competitive grant from the USED for the Striving Readers program in 2009; the grant operates until 2012-2013. (Funding for Striving Readers has been discontinued, so there will be no further grants.) Striving Readers is designed to increase the reading achievement of students who are two or more years below grade level in grades six through twelve. The Virginia Striving Readers Intervention Initiative includes three school divisions (Norfolk City, Richmond City, and Roanoke City) housing nine Title I-eligible middle schools serving struggling adolescent readers in grades seven and eight. The grant includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention program implemented in the participating schools.

Project Graduation. Project Graduation provides remedial instruction and assessment in reading and writing for high school students at risk of not meeting diploma requirements. Project Graduation includes academies during the school year and summer, online tutorials, and multiple opportunities for retesting to help students master the content needed to pass Standards of Learning tests, including assessments required to earn verified credit toward the Modified Standard Diploma. The Summer Project Graduation program assists seniors who did not graduate with their class due to insufficient verified credits, and rising high school seniors, rising juniors, and rising sophomores who have passed the course but still need to pass the associated SOL assessment in order to earn a verified credit to complete their diploma requirements.

PreK-12 Standards

Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL). In 1995, Virginia established the rigorous content standards known as the SOL. The SOL set forth learning expectations for grades K-12 in the following areas: (1) English, (2) Mathematics, (3) Science, (4) History/Social Science, (5) Technology, (6) Fine Arts, (7) Foreign Language, (8) Health and Physical Education, (9) Economics and Personal Finance (10) Driver Education. Students are assessed in English and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and when they complete certain high school level courses. *Science* and *History SOL* assessments are administered in grades 3, 5 and 8, and at the end of certain high school courses in these respective subjects. Revisions to the *English SOL* were adopted in January 2010. **The Curriculum Frameworks** for English, mathematics, science and history/social science detail the specific knowledge and skills students must possess to meet the standards for these subjects.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/index.shtml (general) and

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/english/index.shtml (English)

SOL-related resources include the following:

- **Enhanced scope and sequence guides** provide sample lesson plans and instructional resources to help teachers align their classroom instruction with the standards.
- **Test blueprints** detail specific standards covered by a test, reporting categories of test items, number of test items, and general information about how test questions are constructed.
- **Released tests and test items** are representative of the content and skills included in the SOL assessments and present the format of the tests and questions.

World Class International Design and Assessment (WIDA) English Language Proficiency (ELP) PK-12 Standards and Instructional Resources. The WIDA Consortium is a nonprofit cooperative of states working together to meet the federal requirements for English Language Learners (ELLs) with innovative standards and assessments. Virginia is one of 23 member states in the consortium. The WIDA standards incorporate performance indicators for ELL students from PreK through Grade 12 in five content areas, and address the four language domains (listening, speaking, reading, writing) for each content area. The five content areas of the standards are: Social and Instructional Language, English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/esl/standards_resources/index.shtml

Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Comprehensive Standards for Four-Year-Olds in Literacy. Published in 2007, the Foundation Blocks provide a set of minimum standards in literacy, mathematics, science and social science, physical and motor skill development, and personal and social development concerning the skills and knowledge that four-year-olds need to be successful in kindergarten. The Foundation Blocks are aligned with the Virginia Kindergarten SOL and PALS PreK and K assessments. http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/index.shtml

Virginia's Accreditation Standards. Virginia's revised accreditation standards require high schools to meet an annual benchmark for graduation increasing targets for all students. The new accountability requirement — and others approved as part of a revision of the Standards of Accreditation — will be phased in beginning with the 2011-2012 school year. The requirements include: (1) Developing an Academic and Career Plan for every middle and high school student, beginning with students entering the seventh grade during the 2010-2011 school year; (2) Prescribing rigorous requirements for the new Standard Technical Diploma and the new Advanced Technical Diploma; (3) Requiring all students, beginning with students entering the ninth grade in 2010, to successfully complete a one credit course in economics and personal finance to earn the Standard, Advanced Studies, Standard Technical or Advanced Technical Diploma. In addition to the focus on high school, the accreditation benchmarks for English in grades three through five are increasing from 70 percent to 75 percent in 2010-2011.

Virginia College & Career Readiness Initiative. In 2010, VDOE collaborated with the Virginia Community College System and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to launch this initiative. The initiative is designed to ensure that college- and career-ready learning standards in reading, writing, and mathematics are taught in every high school and to strengthen students' preparation for college and the work force before leaving high school. The English Performance Expectations (EPE) have been approved by the Board of Education. The English capstone course being developed will be for seniors who have passed both the end-of-course SOL reading and writing assessments, but are not necessarily ready for college credit-bearing work. This course will be an intensive reading, writing and research class based on the EPE that will be piloted in fall of 2011. http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/college_career_readiness/index.shtml

Virginia Standards for Professional Practice of Teachers. These professional development standards were developed as a resource for school divisions in the implementation of the Virginia Board of Education's performance standards and evaluation criteria for teachers. The standards are designed to provide a conceptual model of good teaching. They represent the knowledge and skills that are common to all teachers from Prekindergarten through Grade 12. The standards help

teachers reflect on student learning and teaching, and to develop professional development plans to improve teaching practice. The standards are intended to guide the development of all teachers throughout their careers as they continually seek to improve their practice.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/regulations/prof_practice_standards.pdf

PreK-12 Assessments

Child Observation Record (COR). This instrument is generally used in tandem with the High/Scope curriculum and includes two formats: *Infant/Toddler COR*, for children ages six weeks to two years, and the *Preschool COR*, for ages 30 months to six years. The *Infant/Toddler COR* measures six areas of development: Sense of Self, Social Relations, Creative Representation, Movement, Communication and Language, and Exploration and Early Logic. The *Preschool COR* measures Language, Mathematics, Science, Initiative, Social Relations, Creative Representation, and Music and Movement. The COR is used by many Virginia public preschool programs and Head Start programs.

Expressive Vocabulary Test (EVT). The EVT is a norm-referenced, standardized assessment that measures expressive vocabulary skills starting with children 30 months of age. Virginia Even Start programs are required to use it.

Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT). The PPVT is a norm-referenced, standardized assessment that measures receptive vocabulary skills starting with children 30 months of age. Virginia Even Start programs are required to use it.

Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS and PALS-PreK). PALS is a screening, diagnostic and performance-based assessment designed to guide instruction by highlighting children's literacy strengths and needs. It was developed by the University of Virginia with support from VDOE starting in 1997, and comes in levels covering Prekindergarten through third grade. The PreK version measures the following early literacy skills: name writing, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness (beginning sound and rhyme), and print and word awareness. The K-3 version measures the following literacy skills: orthographic knowledge (word recognition, spelling), oral reading (accuracy, fluency, rate, comprehension), alphabets, and phonemic awareness. PALS-PreK and PALS are used by 99 percent of Virginia's school divisions. PALS-PreK is also used by all Early Reading First and Even Start programs, and by some Head Start programs. <http://pals.virginia.edu/>

Virginia Alternate Assessment Program (VAAP). The VAAP is designed to evaluate the performance of students with significant cognitive disabilities who are working on academic standards that have been reduced in complexity and depth. This content is derived from the SOL and is referred to as the Aligned Standards of Learning (ASOL). Students with disabilities in grades 3 through high school assessments who participate in the VAAP are required to submit evidence in the same subject areas as required of their nondisabled peers in the same grade level. High school students are required to submit evidence in reading, writing, mathematics, science and history/social science by the end of 11th grade.

Virginia Grade Level Alternative Assessment (VGLA). The VGLA is available for students in grades 3 through 8 as an alternative assessment for SOL testing. Students who qualify for VGLA

are required to demonstrate individual achievement of grade-level content standards as presented in the SOL test blueprint for the academic content area in which they are being assessed. The VGLA is only available to eligible students with disabilities and eligible students with limited English proficiency.

Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments. The SOL set forth learning expectations for grades K-12 in the following areas: (1) English, (2) Mathematics, (3) Science, (4) History/Social Science, (5) Technology, (6) Fine Arts, (7) Foreign Language, (8) Health and Physical Education, (9) Driver Education, (10) Economics and Personal Finance. Students are assessed in English and Mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and when they complete certain high school level courses. *Science* and *History* SOL tests are administered in grades 3, 5 and 8, and at the end of completing high school courses in these respective subjects. Revisions to the *English* SOL were adopted in January 2010, and new test items will be implemented in 2013.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/index.shtml

Virginia Substitute Evaluation Program (VSEP). The VSEP is an alternative method of assessing students who by the nature of their disability are unable to participate in the SOL assessments, even with testing accommodations. The VSEP provides eligible students with the opportunity to earn the requisite verified credits for a standard or advanced studies diploma or to meet the requirements of a modified standard diploma through nontraditional means.

WIDA ACCESS for ELLs. Virginia uses the ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners) test for ELL students to ensure they are reaching state targets for language progress and proficiency.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/esl/standards_resources/index.shtml

Teacher Accreditation and Licensure

More than three dozen public and private colleges and universities throughout Virginia offer programs of study for aspiring educators and continuing education opportunities for veteran teachers. The Praxis I (Reading, Writing, and Mathematics) assessment is required as the test for entry into a Virginia teacher preparation program. The SAT and ACT scores may be used as substitute tests. The Virginia Communications and Literacy Assessment (VCLA) may be used as a substitute test to meet the Reading and Writing assessment requirements. There are several routes for individuals to become licensed in Virginia:

- **Approved Program** – Individuals may complete a Virginia state-approved teacher preparation program or an alternative state approved program.
- **Reciprocity** - Out-of-state candidates may qualify for a Virginia teaching license by meeting certain conditions, including: (1) holding a valid, current teaching license from another state; and (2) holding a national certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards or a nationally recognized certification program recognized by the Virginia Board of Education.
- **Alternative Licensure** - An alternative route to licensure is available through the recommendation of the individual's employing Virginia school division or nonpublic school. Individuals must hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university. A three-year nonrenewable license can be issued based on that plus an individual's completion

of endorsement course work, experiential learning (five years of documented work experience), or by meeting the provisional-special education requirements.

- **Career Switcher Alternative Route** - This program allows individuals from various occupational and life experiences to become classroom teachers, thereby increasing the quantity and diversity of applicants to the profession. Individuals interested in enrolling in a Career Switcher Program must apply for admission directly to a certified program provider.
- **Virginia Troops to Teachers** - The goal of this program is to recruit quality teachers for high-need subject areas from eligible military personnel for schools that serve low-income families throughout the U.S. and assist military personnel in making a successful transition to second careers in teaching. Awards are available for eligible military personnel to pay for tuition to any approved teacher licensure program.

For initial licensure, the following assessments are required:

- **Communication and Literacy Assessment** - Virginia Communication and Literacy Assessment (VCLA)
- **Content Assessment** - Praxis II (if applicable)
- **Virginia Reading Assessment (VRA)** (if applicable) - This test is required for those seeking an endorsement as a reading specialist or for initial licensure with endorsements in any of the following endorsements (teaching areas): Early/Primary PreK-3, Elementary Education PreK-6, Special Education-General Curriculum, Special Education-Hearing Impairments, and Special Education-Visual Impairments. The Reading for Virginia Educators (RVE) assessment will replace the VRA on July 1, 2011.

Reading Specialist Endorsement Requirements. The candidate must have completed an approved graduate-level reading specialist preparation program (master's degree required) that includes course experiences of at least 30 semester hours of graduate coursework in the competencies for the endorsement, as well as a practicum experience in the diagnosis and remediation of reading difficulties. The individual also must have at least three years of successful classroom teaching experience in which the teaching of reading was an important responsibility.

Professional Development

Virginia High Quality Professional Development Criteria. In 2004, VDOE released the criteria for professional development, which describes 10 factors associated with the development and delivery of effective, ongoing teacher training.

Virginia English SOL Professional Development. The VDOE provides professional development related to the scope and sequence of instruction for the *English SOL*. The resources available include video vignettes where Virginia elementary teachers demonstrate vocabulary and comprehension strategies that can be used in elementary classrooms to promote students' skills. The strategies can be adapted and used with students at all grade levels.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/english/elementary/reading/reading_vocabulary_strategies.shtml

PALS Professional Development for K-3. Through a subcontract with UVA, VDOE provides ongoing professional development to schools and teachers related to the PALS assessments and data-driven instruction and interventions. Training and resources provided include:

- The Early Reading Interventions Symposium, held annually since 2007 to provide targeted professional development for teachers in effective reading instructional practices.
- Electronic lesson plans for teachers focused on small group literacy instruction.
- PALS Quick Checks for teachers to use for progress monitoring.
- Web-based Database for teachers, which includes Assessment Wizard, longitudinal cohort data analyses, progress monitoring reports and other tools.

Professional Development Toolkit for New and Beginning Teachers. In collaboration with teacher-training professors, educational faculty from Virginia Commonwealth University, the Commonwealth Educational Policy Institute (CEPI) and K-12 educators, the VDOE created this toolkit for new teachers based on 12 topics identified in a 2006 field study conducted by CEPI. The toolkit contains a research-based set of 45 video clips and accompanying materials focused on effective classroom methods and best practices. Topics include: Classroom Control & Discipline, Teaching Strategies & Practices, Technology Use & Integration, Parent Communication, Unmotivated Students, Time Management, and Diverse Learners.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/career_resources/prof_dev_toolkit/index.shtml

Instructional Consultation Team (ICT) Initiative. Established in 1999 by the VDOE Office of Student Services, the ICT model provides a structured problem-solving process focused on teacher and student growth. The ICT process involves data collection and progress monitoring in evaluating the effectiveness of student and class responses to instruction. VDOE currently provides technical assistance and support to more than 30 schools. Professional development is provided through the T/TACs. (*see below*)

Training/Technical Assistance Centers (T/TAC). T/TAC are funded by VDOE to improve educational opportunities and contribute to the success of children and youth with disabilities. For 2010-2011, T/TAC have the following statewide projects: early childhood transition and preschool; instructional consultation teams; literacy and academic instruction for special educators; literacy for middle and high schools.

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/tech_asst_prof_dev/ttac/index.shtml

Sheltered Instruction Observation Program (SIOP). VDOE provides support for school divisions to attend this training, provided by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), concerning migrant ELL and LEP students. The SIOP model incorporates integrated language and content methods, standard-based language and content objectives, language strategies, cooperative learning strategies, and the integration of student's background knowledge.

WIDA Professional Development. Through its membership in the WIDA Consortium for ELLs, Virginia teachers have access to professional development in areas that include: assessment, curriculum and instruction, and school improvement initiatives.

Vision to Practice Conferences. The VDOE holds an annual professional development conference entitled *From Vision to Practice* that focuses on a different theme every year. Started in 2005 as part of statewide efforts to improve student outcomes and close the achievement gap, conference themes have included "Growing SySTEMic Literacy Across the Content Areas," "Effective Reading/Language Arts Instructional Strategies" for teachers from schools in Title I School Improvement, and "Seven Million Minutes from Prekindergarten to Graduation."

Data Systems

Educational Information Management System (EIMS). Virginia is one of 20 states to receive a 2010 Longitudinal Data Systems Grant from the USED, funded through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (ARRA). The grant allows VDOE to enhance the existing EIMS and put additional high-quality, actionable data into the hands of teachers, administrators, researchers, policymakers and the public. The VDOE, in partnership with the Office of the Governor, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), the Virginia Community College System, the Virginia Information Technologies Agency, and Virginia work force agencies, will establish a comprehensive, longitudinal P-20 data system. Specific improvements funded by the grant include:

- An integrated student-teacher information system that matches individual teachers to students.
- A longitudinal-data linking and reporting system with the ability to link information from multiple state agency data sources, including PK-12, higher education, and work force systems.
- A data management and control system that enables VDOE to maximize data quality, ensure accessibility with appropriate security, and enhance the usefulness of the data in both existing and proposed systems.
- A mechanism for postsecondary institutions to receive student transcript data.
- A Web-based portal providing one-stop access to education and work force data by policymakers, educators, the public, program directors and researchers. Data protected by state and federal privacy laws will be accessible to authorized users only.

PALS Database. The University of Virginia PALS Office maintains an extensive data system for the VDOE in which all PALS-PreK and PALS K-3 data collected by participating VDOE and VDSS preschool programs and elementary schools are entered. Local and division-level staff can access a variety of reports based on their individual data, including longitudinal cohort data analyses and progress monitoring reports.

Project Child HANDS (Helping Analyze Needed Data Securely) Integrated Data System.

Virginia is piloting a data system to permit statewide analyses of early care and education data from multiple state agencies. Project Child HANDS is led by the VDSS in partnership with VDOE and Virginia Tech. The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The central aim of Project HANDS is to develop a comprehensive and secure data system that will capture data from various sources/systems and allow integrated data queries that will assist in policy-making and decision-making at the administrative levels. Examples of initial queries are: what types of child care programs are chosen by parents receiving financial assistance for child care, what is the quality of the care, and how these children are doing in kindergarten. The plan is to eventually link this data with health data.

APPENDIX A: STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND PERFORMANCE

This section contains background information on child and school student demographics, and selected state statistics on school children's academic performance in literacy-related assessments and successful graduation from high school.

Virginia Child Demographics

PreK-Kindergarten (children under 6):

- In 2008, there were approximately 630,000 children under the age of six. The percentages of children by race/ethnicity were: 56 percent White, 23 percent Black, 11 percent Hispanic, 6 percent Asian, 4 percent Bi/Multi-racial. Approximately 40 percent of children are identified as low-income, with 8 percent living in extreme poverty. (*National Center for Children in Poverty*).
- In 2009, approximately 122,000 children ages 3 to 5 were not enrolled in a nursery school, preschool, or kindergarten program (*Kids Count*).
- According to the *Kids Count Data Center*, in 2007 approximately 163,000 children were in family-based childcare, representing 27 percent of children under age six in Virginia.
- In 2008-2009 there were 15,673 children enrolled in Head Start (14,081 children) and Early Head Start (1,592 children). (*Virginia Head Start Association Annual Report 2008-2009*). Approximately, 14 percent of Head Start children and 15 percent of Early Head Start children had identified disabilities.

School-age Children:

- Of the 1.2 million students served in 1,880 schools, the percentages of children by race/ethnicity were: 58.2 percent White, 26.4 percent Black, 9.2 percent Hispanic, 5.9 percent Asian Pacific, and 0.3 percent American Indian. (*National Center for Education Statistics 2008-2009*).
- In September 2009, 86,751 Limited English Proficient (LEP) students were receiving services. (*Virginia Department of Education, LEP Population by Language, September 2009*).
- The special education child count data for children ages birth to 22 was 165,874 children. (*Virginia Department of Education, Total for Students with Disabilities by Disability and Age, 0-22+, December 1, 2009*).
- Poverty distribution is uneven across the state with rural counties and central cities having highest percent of students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (*VDOE Strategic Plan 2010-2012*). By 2008-2009, 34.6 percent of students were identified as eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program. (*Virginia Board of Education, 2009 Annual Report on Condition and Needs of Public Schools, November 17, 2009*).

Assessment Data and Student Performance

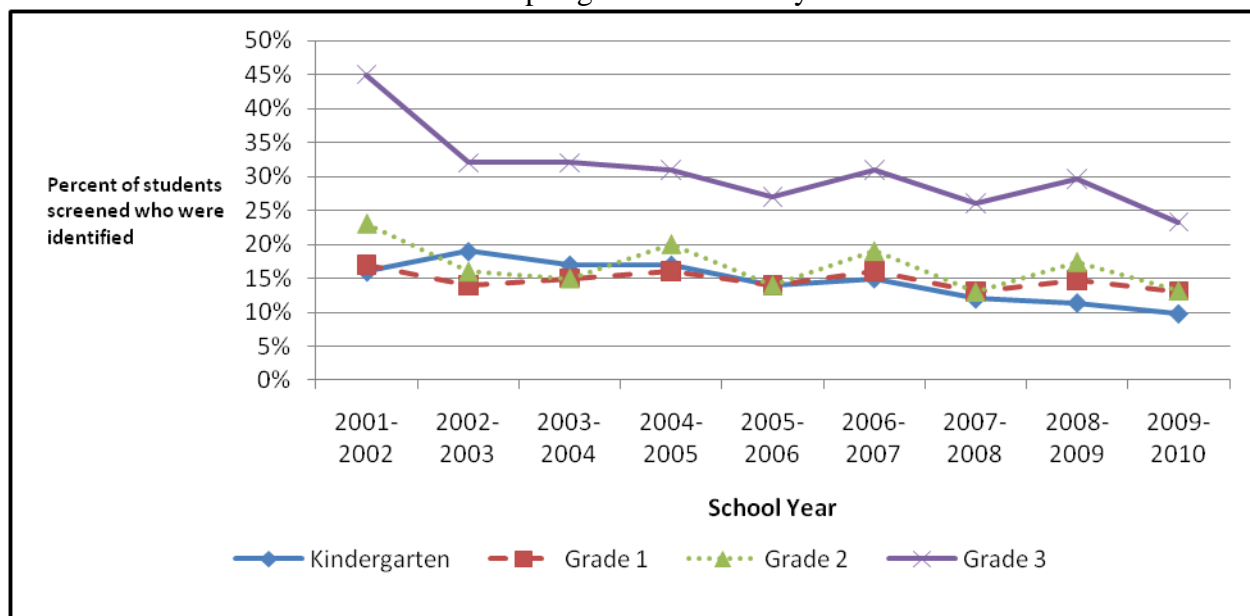
Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) The three primary goals of the Early Intervention Reading Initiative (EIRI) are: (1) to identify children who are below grade-level expectations to the extent that they require additional early literacy instruction; (2) to guide teachers' planning and delivery of assessment-driven literacy instruction; and (3) to help assess the impact of early literacy instruction for children who are identified as needing intervention.

The impact of the EIRI program can be highlighted as follows:

- Ninety-nine (99) percent of Virginia's school divisions are participating in EIRI.

- Each year since 2001, approximately a quarter-of-a-million children have been screened to identify early reading problems; on average more than 42,000 children have received reading intervention services under EIRI each year since 2001.
- Since 2003, between 35 and 49 percent of students identified for intervention at the end of kindergarten were no longer identified as needing additional literacy instruction in spring of grade one (see Figure 1).
- Since 2003, between 27 and 44 percent of students who score below benchmark at the end of grade one were no longer identified as needing additional literacy instruction in spring of grade two (see Figure 1).
- Compared to nine years ago, more of Virginia’s students are successfully reading by third grade. The achievement gap has narrowed noticeably between white students and other groups whose performance has typically lagged behind. The statewide grade three passing rate in reading for all students rose from 72 percent in 2001-2002 to 83 percent in 2009-2010. This represents an overall gain of 11 points. (*Virginia Department of Education, January 2011 Early Intervention Reading Initiative Briefing*).

Figure 1: Percent of students identified to receive additional reading instruction based on screening in spring of each school year



Standards of Learning (SOL) English Assessments. The Virginia SOL assessments are standards-based tests designed to measure student performance on Virginia’s content standards in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and history and social science. The SOL tests contain primarily multiple-choice items except for the writing tests administered at grades 5, 8 and high school, which include writing prompts in addition to multiple-choice items.

On the SOL English Assessment, more of Virginia’s students have met minimum proficiency standards in each grade level every year since 2002-2003. Students in grades three and eight had the lowest percentage of students passing the statewide assessments in 2002-2003, and the pass rates for third- and eighth-grade students also showed the largest gains since 2003 – 14 and 18 percentage points, respectively. All subgroups showed increases in reading pass rates during that same period.

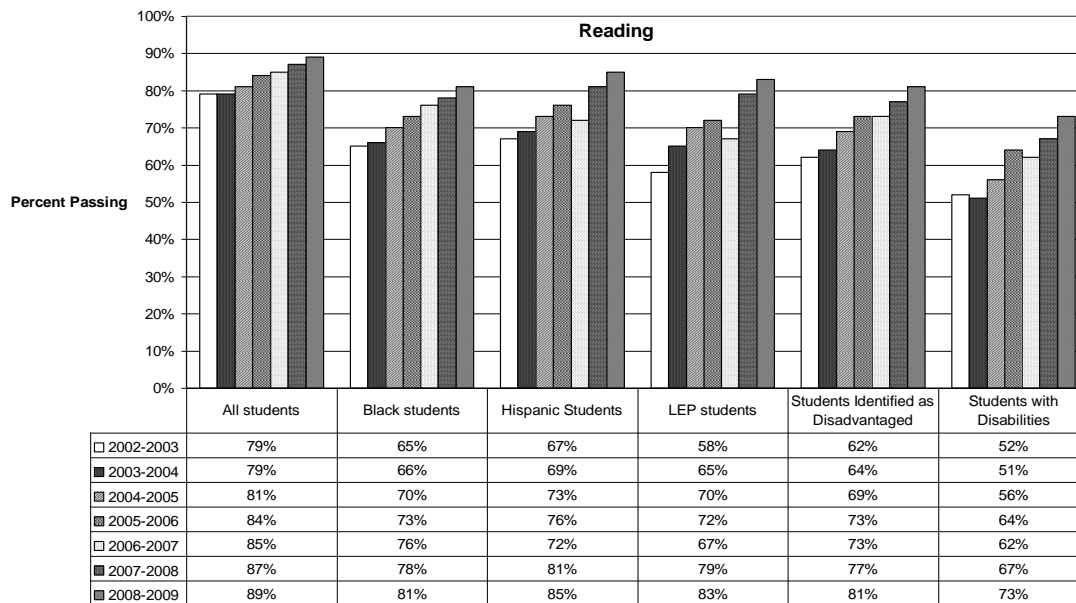
Simultaneous to successfully increasing the percent of students who achieve proficiency on statewide reading assessments, Virginia has narrowed the gap between the percent of students passing assessments in each subgroup. A summary of the data is shown in Table 1 and Figure 2.

Table 1: SOL English Assessments 2007-2010

Percentage of Students Passing/Tested							
Student Subgroup English Performance	Type	2007-2008		2008-2009		2009-2010	
		Passed	Tested	Passed	Tested	Passed	Tested
All Students	State	87	100	89	100	89	100
Black	State	78	99	81	100	81	100
Hispanic	State	81	100	85	100	85	100
White	State	91	100	93	100	93	100
Students with Disabilities	State	67	99	73	99	73	99
Economically Disadvantaged	State	77	99	81	100	81	100
Limited English Proficient	State	79	100	83	100	83	100

Source: Virginia Department of Education, Report Card 2009-2010

Figure 2: Percent of students earning proficient or higher on Virginia’s statewide reading assessments from 2002 to 2009.



Source: Virginia’s 2010 Race to the Top Application, March 24, 2010 Virginia Department of Education News Release

Standards of Learning (SOL) Writing Assessments. On the SOL Writing assessment, the percentage of all students meeting minimum proficiency standards since 2007 was high (89-90 percent). For subgroups of students, performance ranged from 61-62 percent (for students with disabilities) to 92-93 percent (for white students). While performance for all subgroups of students was virtually flat from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009, all subgroups improved in the writing assessments in 2009-2010 by between one and three percentage points. A summary of the data is shown in Table 2 on the next page.

Table 2: SOL Writing Assessments 2007-2010

Percentage of Students Passing/Tested							
Student Subgroup Writing Performance	Type	2007-2008		2008-2009		2009-2010	
		Passed	Tested	Passed	Tested	Passed	Tested
All Students	State	89	97	89	97	90	97
Black	State	82	96	83	96	84	96
Hispanic	State	83	89	83	90	85	90
White	State	92	98	92	98	93	98
Students with Disabilities	State	61	87	61	88	62	91
Economically Disadvantaged	State	79	93	80	94	83	94
Limited English Proficient	State	78	82	78	82	81	82

Source: Virginia Department of Education, Report Card 2009-2010

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

NAEP is known as “The Nation’s Report Card.” NAEP has been an operational national assessment since 1969, and Virginia has participated in NAEP state testing since its inception in 1990. Virginia’s NAEP average scale scores in reading, mathematics, and science tend to be above the national public school average scores with gains made in grade four reading, mathematics, and science and in grade eight mathematics and science since the state’s Standards of Learning assessment program began in 1998.

NAEP Reading Results. The average reading scores of Virginia students on the 2009 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) were significantly higher than the average scores of their national and regional peers:

- Virginia’s average grade four score in reading of 227 was seven points higher than the average score of 220 for the South and the nation.
- Students in only one state – Massachusetts – performed at what the national testing program described as a statistically higher level on the fourth-grade reading test.
- Virginia’s average grade eight score in reading of 266 was five points higher than the average for the South and three points higher than the average for the nation.
- Fourth-grade African-American students in Virginia again outperformed their national and regional peers, and in no state did black students perform at a statistically higher level in either grade. Achievement gaps between black and white students at both tested grade levels were statistically unchanged from 2007, when the national reading tests were previously administered. (*Virginia Department of Education, September 13, 2010 News Release*).

In grade four reading, all student subgroups made numerical gains in average scale score from 2003-2007, and the percent of students scoring at or above basic and proficient also increased during this time. Virginia’s average scale scores and percent scoring at or above basic and proficient are also higher than the national profile for all subgroups. Between 2003 and 2007, students eligible for free- and reduced-priced lunch and black students showed statistically significant increases in their average scale scores; during that same time period, the percentage of all students, black students and students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch earning scores that were at or above basic also showed statistically significant increases. Virginia’s NAEP grade eight reading scores exceed those of the nation as a whole and are higher than all but five states. Virginia’s subgroups’ NAEP grade eight

average scale scores also exceed those of the national profiles for all student groups except white students; and the percent of students at or above basic and at or above proficient exceeds the national profile for many subgroups. (*Virginia 2010 Race to the Top Application*).

While Virginia’s scores are higher than the national profile, Virginia’s NAEP results since 2003 suggest that the Commonwealth continues to have significant work to do in order to ensure all students are prepared to enter high school with the literacy skills needed for success. Virginia’s NAEP results on the grade eight reading test have not changed statistically since 2003, despite more students passing state assessments. Both the average scale scores and cumulative percent reaching basic, proficient and advanced have numerically decreased or remained the same for all students and most subgroups. (*Virginia 2010 Race to the Top Application*). This is shown in Table 3. Average reading scale score results are based on the NAEP reading scale, which ranges from 0 to 500.

Table 3: Fourth and Eighth Grade Results on the NAEP Reading from 2003-2009

	Reading – Grade 4				Reading – Grade 8			
	2003	2005	2007	2009	2003	2005	2007	2009
Virginia	223	226	227	227	268	268	267	266
Nation (public)	216	217	220	220	261	260	261	261

Source: *Virginia’s 2010 Race to the Top Application, March 24, 2010 Virginia Department of Education News Release*

Graduation Requirements and Graduation Rates

The 2000 *Standards of Accreditation* established more rigorous graduation requirements for Virginia’s Standard and Advanced Studies Diplomas, effective with the ninth-grade class of 2000-2001. In addition to increasing the number of required standard credits (achieved by successfully completing the course), a minimum number of verified credits (achieved by successfully completing the course and attaining a passing score on the state assessment for that course) was also added. The Board of Education also added an additional diploma – the Modified Standard Diploma – available only to students with disabilities who were not able to earn a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma as determined by their Individualized Education Program (IEP). (In Virginia, students with disabilities have the opportunity to remain in school until age 22 to complete a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma after earning a Modified Standard Diploma.) Through the 2000 *Standards of Accreditation*, the Commonwealth of Virginia defined its three academic high school diplomas, the Standard Diploma (22 standard credits, with 6 verified credits), the Advanced Studies Diploma (24 standard credits, with 9 verified credits), and the Modified Standard Diploma (20 standard credits with assessed measures of numeracy and literacy).

Despite the increased graduation requirements for Virginia’s graduating class of 2004, the majority of these students earned a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma, providing a substantive foundation for workplace readiness and college-level work. These two diplomas respectively constituted 47 and 48 percent of the 2004 graduates or 95 percent collectively. Noteworthy of the Virginia reform and the Commonwealth’s march to world-class performance, in spring 2009, this level of diploma attainment had shifted to 42 and 53 percent respectively for each of the diplomas with an on-time, cohort graduation rate of over 82 percent. In May 2006, and again in February 2009, the Virginia Board of Education adopted revisions to the *Standards of Accreditation*, fine tuning and enhancing the range of rigor for student achievement, school performance and accreditation, graduation, and specifics related

to turning around “Schools in Warning” and “Schools with Accreditation Denied,” i.e., failing schools. Among the most critical elements of the 2009 revision were:

- the addition of two new challenging academic diplomas, the Standard Technical and Advanced Technical Diplomas (22 and 24 standard credits respectively, with additional coursework specifications)
- increasing the number of Standard Credits for the Advanced Studies Diploma from 24 to 26
- school-level graduation benchmarks necessary for high school accreditation (*Virginia 2010 Race to the Top application*)

Graduation Rates. In 2008, Virginia’s graduation rate was the fourth highest among 18 states using the new measurement methodology adopted by the National Governors Association. (*Council on Virginia’s Future, 2009*). This on-time, cohort graduation rate permits certain students with disabilities and English language learners to have their cohorts adjusted consistent with their educational plans. In 2008 and 2009, using an accurate count of Virginia’s students, the on-time graduation rates were 82.16 and 83.22 percent, respectively. (*Virginia 2010 Race to the Top Application*).

More than 85 percent of the students in the class of 2010 graduated on time with a diploma, (*VDOE News Release, September 30, 2010*). The Commonwealth’s 2010 “Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate” of 85.5 percent expresses the percentage of students who were first-time ninth graders during the 2006-2007 school year and earned a Board of Education-approved diploma within four years. The 2010 graduation rate is more than two points higher than the four-year rate of 83.3 percent for the class of 2009, and more than three points higher than the four-year rate of 82.1 percent for the class of 2008. Of the 98,027 students in the 2010 graduating cohort, 8,018 (8.2 percent) dropped out (including students whose status in previous years would have been reported as undetermined) and 341 (0.3 percent) were reported as being on long-term medical/family leave or expelled for one year with the potential of returning to school. (*VDOE News Release, September 30, 2010*).

For a sixth consecutive year, the number of Virginia students graduating with an Advanced Studies Diploma increased, and the number of advanced diplomas awarded exceeded the number of Standard Diplomas. Of the 98,027 students in the 2010 cohort, 83,768, or 85.5 percent, earned a Board of Education-approved diploma:

- 45.7 percent (44,802) earned an Advanced Studies Diploma (including International Baccalaureate), compared with 44.2 percent of the 2009 cohort’s four-year graduates and 43.6 of 2008’s four-year graduates.
- 35.8 percent (35,054) earned a Standard Diploma
- 1.8 percent (1,745) earned a Modified Standard Diploma
- 2.2 percent (2,161) earned a Special Diploma

Of Virginia’s 324 high schools, 183 achieved graduation rates higher than the state rate of 85.5 percent, two schools equaled the state rate, and 139 were lower. Sixty-five school divisions had graduation rates higher than the state’s, one division equaled the state rate, and 65 divisions had rates that were lower. (*VDOE News Release, September 30, 2010*).

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

In 2009-2010, 60 percent (1,104 out of 1,836) of Virginia’s public schools made “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) by meeting or exceeding all No Child Left Behind (NCLB) objectives. In terms of school divisions, 9 percent (12 out of 132) made AYP. Both percentages were lower than the results from 2008-2009, when 71 percent of schools and 45 percent of school divisions made AYP. Among the reasons for the decline, two factors had the most impact: new Virginia accountability requirements for high school graduation, and changes in federal policies concerning the testing of students with disabilities. Forty-one high schools and nine school divisions missed the AYP graduation benchmark solely because of the new requirements, and 87 schools and 15 school divisions did not make AYP because of the change in pass rates for students with disabilities. However, when looking at individual student performance rather than benchmark targets, overall achievement was steady in reading (89 percent of students passed state tests in 2008-2009 and 2009-2010) and improved in mathematics (88 percent of students passed state tests in 2009-2010, compared to 86 percent in 2008-2009). (*Virginia Department of Education, August 12, 2010 News Release*).

APPENDIX B: STATE LITERACY COMMITTEE

VIRGINIA STATE LITERACY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Virginia Department of Education

Helen Barrier
TTAC Coordinator and SIM Professional
Developer
Virginia Polytechnic Institute

Zelda Boyd
Director, Office of Early Childhood Development
Division of Child Care & Early Childhood
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Laura Burton
Reading Recovery Teacher
DJ Montague Elementary School
Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools

Dr. JoAnne Carver
Director of Teacher Education
Virginia Department of Education

Dr. Cynthia Cave
Director, Office of Student Services
Virginia Department of Education

Ann Conners
Principal
Spotswood Elementary School
Harrisonburg City Public Schools

Laura Jo Darcy
Reading Coach
King George Elementary School
King George County Public Schools

Dr. Mark Emblidge
Director, The Literacy Institute

Dr. Jaye Harvey
Special Education Coordinator
Roanoke City Public Schools

Kendall Hunt
Striving Readers Grant Specialist
Office of Standards, Curriculum, and Instruction
Virginia Department of Education

Dr. Marcia Invernizzi
Henderson Professor of Reading Education
University of Virginia

Jacquelyn Kelley
English Specialist
Office of Standards, Curriculum, and Instruction
Virginia Department of Education

Elaine Layman
Principal
John Tolbert Elementary School
Loudoun County Public Schools

Dr. Teresa Lee
Learning Disabilities and Attention Disorders
Specialist
Office of Special Education Instructional Services
Virginia Department of Education

Charlie Makela
Supervisor, Library and Information Services
Arlington Public Schools and President,
Virginia Educational Media Association

Dr. Tom Manthey
Adolescent Literacy Specialist
Office of Special Education Instructional Services
Virginia Department of Education

Adria Merritt
Reading Specialist and President, Virginia
Association of Teachers of English

Dr. John Nunnery
Interim Executive Director
The Center for Educational Partnerships
Old Dominion University

Dr. Kathryn Patterson
English Language Arts Supervisor
York County Public Schools

Judy Radford
ESL Coordinator, Office of Program
Administration and Accountability
Virginia Department of Education

Tracy Robertson
English Coordinator
Office of Standards, Curriculum and Instruction
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Judith Sams
Business and Information Technology Specialist
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Wenda Singer
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Division of Childcare and Childhood Development
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Dr. Jamelle S. Wilson
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APPENDIX C: RESEARCH DOCUMENTS

VIRGINIA STATE LITERACY PLAN RESEARCH DOCUMENTS

Birth to Age 5

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